

Rich Man, Poor Man

James 1:9-11

I. The Gospel Is The Great _____ Between The Poor And Rich (9)

⁹Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, ^{10a} and the rich in his humiliation,

A. The Principle: The Materially Poor Can Boast In Being Spiritually Significant Through Salvation (9)

⁹Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, (cf. 4:16; Rom 3:27; Eph 2:9; 1:7,11)

B. The Contrast: The Materially Rich Can Boast In Being Worldly Demeaned Through Salvation (10a)

^{10a} and the rich in his humiliation, (cf. Mk 4:19; Lk 12:15; 1 Tim 6:9-10)

II. The Gospel Is The Great _____ On What Really Matters In Life (10b-11)

A. The Example: The Material Things In This World Are Ephemeral (10b – 11a)

^{10b} because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. ^{11a} For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes.

B. The Moral: The Material Pursuits Of The Rich Are Empty (11b)

^{11b} So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

Conclusion:

1. Become spiritually rich by trusting in Christ's salvation

2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

2. Boast to others in what Christ has done for you through salvation.

Discussion:

1. How can one who is materially poor enjoy being spiritually rich in Christ?
2. How can one who is materially rich enjoy being spiritually rich in Christ?
3. How can we change our thinking that all boasting is wrong so we can boast about the accomplishments of Christ?

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I. The Gospel Is The Great Equalizer Between The Poor And Rich (9)

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Ie/ The first TV mini-series that I remember was an event was "Rich Man, Poor Man." The drama between the poor and rich is as old as the lines of Cain and Seth. James gives the solution to this conflict and drama.

1. Economic disparity in the United States has become greatest among Asians

- "Today, income inequality in the U.S. is greatest among Asians. From 1970 to 2016, the gap in the standard of living between Asians near the top and the bottom of the income ladder nearly doubled, and the distribution of income among Asians transformed from being one of the most equal to being the most unequal among America's major racial and ethnic groups."
- BY [RAKESH KOCHHAR](#) AND [ANTHONY CILLUFFO](#). Income Inequality in the U.S. Is Rising Most Rapidly Among Asians, 7/12/18

<https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/07/12/income-inequality-in-the-u-s-is-rising-most-rapidly-among-asians/>

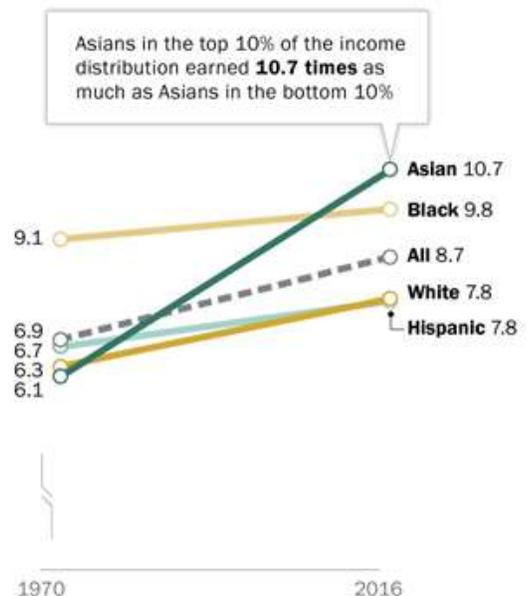
2. Of course, it doesn't matter what nationality you are if you're poor. It's tough.

- Several years ago, we had to stop skiing at our CTF snow trips because it was something only the wealthy in our church could afford and it was tough on those whose families could not afford it. The point of these trips is fellowship – not be entertained according to your wealth.
- Our family doesn't have the bank account to drop extra funds into the Building Program. So we are making products to sell at the church's craft fair to give towards the Building.

3. James Dobson comments on the struggle of many adolescents: "It's a feeling hopelessness that we call '**inferiority**.' It's that awful awareness that nobody likes you, that you're not as good as other people, that you're a failure, a loser, a personal disaster; that you're ugly, or unintelligent, or don't have as much ability as someone else. It's that depressing feeling of worthlessness." (*Preparing For Adolescents*, p. 13)

From lowest to highest: Income inequality in U.S. increased most among Asians from 1970 to 2016

Ratio of income at the 90th percentile to income at the 10th percentile



Note: Whites, blacks and Asians include only non-Hispanics and are single-race only in 2016. Hispanics are of any race. Asians include Pacific Islanders. Income is adjusted for household size. See Methodology for details.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 1970 decennial census and 2016 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

"Income Inequality in the U.S. Is Rising Most Rapidly Among Asians"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

- “Three things that teenagers *must* have in order to feel good about themselves:”
 - Dissatisfied with some feature of their bodies (ugly, unattractive) – no one posts ugly pictures on Instagram
 - Unintelligent & dumb
 - Measuring worth by money
 - Adults never grow out of these youthful comparison points: looks, intelligence and money
4. James knows that Christians struggling with poverty dispersed throughout the Mediterranean coast because of religious persecution are struggling. He gives the comforting reality that the Gospel changes the lives of believers.
- There is a joy to be found in trials
 - Christlike maturity and wisdom is the real treasure in life
 - Being saved in Christ gives the same status to the rich and poor

Proposition: James gives us a real reason to boast – the Gospel gives the rich and poor the superior status and life focus. To be a child of God is the superior status. Eternal values is a superior life focus.

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A. The Principle: The Materially Poor Can Boast In Being Spiritually Significant Through Salvation (9)

Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation,

- James is advocating boasting.
- But isn't boasting a sin?

James 4:16 As it is, you **boast** in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. (ESV)

Romans 3:27 ²⁷ Can we **boast**, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. (NLT)

Ephesians 2:9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can **boast** about it. (NLT)

- **We're boasting about Christ, not ourselves!**
 - Romans 3:27 and Ephesians 2:9 states we can't boast about anything **we did** for our salvation, but James gives us encouragement to boast about what **Christ does** through our salvation.
- “boast” = *kauchastho* = glory, brag

- D. Edmond Hiebert: "a strong personal reaction, a feeling of pride or exultation in the condition mentioned" (*The Epistle Of James*, p. 89)
- Spiros Zopdhiates: "to profess loudly something that you have a right to be proud of" (*The Epistle Of James and the Life of Faith*, p. 46)
- Christ exalts the lowly brother – the poor person (contrasted by rich in the next verse)
- The poor person has been elevated in status to Son or Daughter of God.

James 2:6 ⁶But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court?

- James later tell us how the poor man is frequently oppressed at the hand of the rich.
- The Gospel of Christ changes that.
- This doesn't mean the poor will become materially prosperous
- Nor does this mean that we won't be ridiculed and oppressed by the rich

Ephesians 1:7,11 ⁷In him we have **redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the **riches of his grace**, ⁸which he **lavished** upon us, ... ¹¹In him we have obtained an **inheritance**,

- "redemption" = *apolutrōsis* (ἀπολυτρωσις)
 - "Redemption" = 10x in NT, 7x in Paul's epistles, 3x in Ephesians (1:14; 4:30)
 - Thayer: "to redeem one by paying the price, to let one go free on receiving the price" (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*)
 - Hoehner: "set free on the basis of a ransom paid to God by Christ's death" (*Ephesians*, p. 206)
- "riches of his grace"
- "lavished" = *perisseuo* = overabundance, overflowing, exceed above measure
- We are now children of the King!

B. The Contrast: The Materially Rich Can Boast In Being Worldly Demeaned Through Salvation (10a)

^{10a} and the rich in his humiliation,

- "rich"
- "humiliation" – the rich no longer find their status as elevated by the world, but sourced in their relationship to Christ – thus a "humiliation" in terms of the worldly status
 - Henry Alford: "he glories in his debasement" (*The Greek New Testament*, Vol. 4, Pt 1, p. 278)
- The rich are no longer evaluated by the world by their wealth and possessions, but are now seen as being connected to Christ
 - Ie/ It's being **Tebowed** – the best college QB (University of Florida) in our day, an adequate NFL quarterback, well-spoken, charismatic, popular, wealthy (net worth in

2019 is \$4 million) – but is blackballed because he is a Christian – NFL teams didn't want the distraction of the Tebow effect – much of it related to his faith

- The rich are **saved** and **spared** from the **scam** of wealth

Mark 4:19 but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

Luke 12:15 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

We find our identity in:

- Our Profession
- Our Possession

1 Timothy 6:9-10 ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

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- Ie/ My wife has enjoyed succulents, but has never cared much for flowers
- She warned me early on in our relationship that she's not impressed by flowers so much – they're already dead when you bring it home from the florist
- But she likes the enduring succulents – not as striking as a rose, iris or tulip – but she finds beauty in what grows with endurance
- Flowers are beautiful, but quickly fading
- Ie/ Our cactus had a beautiful flower that lasted one day
- Beauty fades

B. The Moral: The Material Pursuits Of The Rich Are Empty (11b)

^{11b} So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

- The rich are like the flower – beautiful for a time, but fading
- Wealth is fleeting
- The rich are to boast in their humiliation

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