

James 25-06-01a

Greetings. This is the 1st of June, 2025. We are at Grace and Truth Bible Church, prosecuting our study of the book of Jacob, commonly known as James.

We are in chapter 1, and we have come to a fresh section here, beginning in verse 9. And this section extends through verse 12. In my Bible, 12 is split off into the next section, which I think is a mistake. We'll see why.

But verses 9 through 12 of James chapter 1, this is our study this morning. It is the contrast between being lowly and being rich. What does it mean to be humble? What does it mean to be plousios, P-L-O-U-S-I-O-S, plousios.

This is the word translated rich. We have a very important exhortation and encouragement here in our passage. We'll take a look at it once we take a moment to dedicate our time and our attention to God and ask His blessing on our fellowship and on our study.

Father, we are grateful as always for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, seated at this very moment at Your right hand, representing us, interceding for us, representing our present and future salvation in a dramatic and incarnate way. We thank You for the blessed hope and the certain expectation of His return for us to take us to Himself and present those of us who are qualified before Your throne. We have that as our goal, as our hope, and we ask that our study this morning will contribute to it as the Holy Spirit uses the truth of Your Word to cleanse us, to prepare our hearts, to guide us, to motivate us, and to encourage us to walk in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus in faith and obedience with the confident expectation of the fulfillment of Your promises and the accomplishment of the purpose for which You brought us into this world.

We pray Your blessing on each heart that has voluntarily come to refresh at the oasis of Your Word and the fellowship of like-minded believers. We pray that each one will receive a blessing, that Your Holy Spirit will comfort and encourage every one of us, draw us closer together and closer to You through our Lord Jesus Christ. We ask it in His name.

Amen. You remember the context. You can glance quickly through it.

It should resonate. Each verse, each word in those verses ought to bring to mind some encouraging and uplifting and motivating truths that we have seen over the past many weeks. We begin now in verse 9 of chapter 1. Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away.

For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass, its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits. We need to add one more verse.

Verse 12. Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he has been approved, he will

receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him. Why is it necessary to include verse 12? It seems as though our author begins a thought and then immediately gets diverted and never returns to it otherwise.

Because he says in verse 9, let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation. And I say, as he goes off on this seeming tangent of the rich and his humiliation, whatever happened to the lowly brother? I need some more information about this exaltation of the lowly. What are you talking about? Why didn't you balance that and flesh it out? He actually does.

Look at the chiastic structure of verse 9, 10, 11, and 12. With a four verse section, what would you expect? The outside two verses are going to correspond, illuminate, and connect to each other. And the inner two verses will connect and relate and illuminate each other.

And that's exactly what we have here. To find out what it means for the lowly to glory in his exaltation, you have to have verse 12. What is the exaltation of the humble? It is the crown of life.

That is the expectation. What kind of lowliness is in view? What kind of exaltation is in view? How can boasting be legitimate? This word for boasting is many times found in a negative connotation. You go back to Ephesians 2, 8, and 9, for by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves.

It, salvation by grace through faith, is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. That would be a bad kind of boasting. We need to understand boasting in its biblical meaning and its context.

When is boasting a good thing? When is it a bad thing? Here, manifestly, this is a good thing. So, how do we know what's what? Understanding the chiastic structure. I would encourage you, when you mark your Bible, or at least mentally make a connection, A and A prime are verse 9 and verse 12.

One cannot be adequately understood without the other. And inside that, you have the rich. I would think that humility would be contrasted with arrogance, wouldn't you? Let the humble be blessed and let the arrogant rascals.

Pride goeth before a fall, haughty spirit before destruction. Down you go, you arrogant rascals. Not so.

The contrast here is the humble, and we'll see the fleshing out of that biblical idea and that biblical vocabulary, with the rich. And so, we have some ground to cover in the scriptures. What do the scriptures say about these? Let me ask you at the outset, here's my introductory question.

Are you humble or are you rich? And the answer to that second idea may surprise you, because what do you mean by rich? What is exaltation? What is humiliation? And so on. This is very

practical. This entire first chapter of James, that we have covered thus far, has been intensely practical, so applicable to almost any circumstance you can think of, and certainly aspects of our lives at all times.

These things pertain, and we've seen the intense practicality of the first eight verses. So we pick up here in verse nine, let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation. Observation is our first step.

What do you see in this verse that gives you a clue to its interpretation, to its meaning? Let me put it this way. Would this be different if the word brother was not there? It's not any old lowly person. If you look around today, in our culture, in our sort of self-defined types of righteousness, poverty is a horrible wrong that needs to be rectified.

And if I give something to a poor person, that poor person deserves it irrespective, without any other context or qualification. Somebody that's poor, somebody needs to give them something. Poverty, bad.

Having more stuff, good. And if I help any poor person, I have done a righteous thing. Notice what scripture says.

The humble, the lowly, in contrast to the rich, you would say the poor, have a qualification. When we look at the world, we remember our spheres of love. This is a lowly brother.

We looked at brother up above in verse two, my brethren. This is addressed to believers. This particular group of believers has a Jewish background.

They are scattered in the diaspora, but they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is after Pentecost. And therefore, they are church.

Brothers and sisters are not in the Israelite or Judaistic sphere. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. So this is a fellow believer in the Lord Jesus.

Let the lowly, the word here for lowly is from the Greek word tapenos, T-A-P-E-I-N-O-S, T-A-P-E-I-N-O-S. And pain is right in the middle of that, accidentally so. Let's take a look at how this word is used in scripture to understand it.

What does it mean to be lowly? Tapenos. The very first place we find this in the New Testament is in Matthew chapter 11 verse 29 in the words of the Lord Jesus. Remember the passage, take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls.

This locates tapenos in the heart. It is an attitude of heart. It isn't first and foremost a commentary on your possessions or your economic status or even how you are treated by others.

Jesus says, you need to have the humility to shoulder my yoke. He doesn't say stand still while I put this yoke on you. He says, take my yoke upon you.

This is voluntary. Take my yoke. A yoke is a harness in which work is done and benefit is gained by the one who controls the reins, who directs the effort of the yoke of oxen or whatever else is in the yoke.

Take my yoke. Undertake to accomplish my work, my purpose. Respond to my guidance.

Take my yoke upon you and learn. Be instructed. Come to know things.

Eventually turn your knowledge into wisdom as we've seen in the immediately preceding context of James chapter one. If you lack wisdom, ask of God. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, Jesus says.

Learn from me. I am gentle and I am tapenos of heart. Who owns the cattle on a thousand hills? Whose father is the creator, ruler and owner of all things? In what sense is Jesus lowly? The Lord Jesus.

He is speaking here in the earlier days of his incarnate ministry. And what is his aspect? What is his demeanor? What is his example among the people of Israel as he presents to them the good news of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven? Is he carried about in a litter the way the Ethiopian eunuch was when Philip encountered him? Is he dwelling in a palace worthy of his status and his importance as the son of God and savior of the world? Perspectively, he is putting on no airs. He doesn't ride a stallion around with kingly robes.

When he is eventually presented to Israel in the tragic entry, he is lowly riding on the foal of a donkey. It is not human accomplishment. It isn't human respect.

It isn't the accolades or the esteem of the world at large that counts. Jesus says, I am not looking for that in my heart, nor should you take on the yoke and learn. I am gentle.

I am lowly in heart. If you take my yoke and learn, oddly enough, taking on the yoke and responding to the guidance and the direction of the Lord, what is the result? You will find rest for your souls. It's so typical of the unexpected turn, the oppositeness of so much of scripture, that when you take on a yoke as though you're going to do work, you actually find rest for your soul.

My yoke is easy and my burden is light, he will go on to say. That's Matthew 11, 29. So first of all, we understand that this is a characteristic of the Lord Jesus himself, who did not think his high status and equality with God was a thing to be held onto and paraded before men.

He humbled himself, took on the form of a servant, and came in the likeness of men. Humility is in the heart. And this is where even as we undertake to do the work that God assigns us, we actually find rest for our souls.

That's 11, 29 of Matthew. Matthew chapter 18, verse four, this humility, this typanos attitude, whoever humbles himself like this little child seated in Jesus lap as he speaks, whoever humbles

himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. What do we learn from this verse? Humility is something we choose, opt for, adopt for ourselves.

We don't wait for God to humble us if we want this reward, if we want to be great, if we want to be useful, if we want to be important in the work of God in the future kingdom, we humble ourselves and take on the same sort of rights, privileges, and aggressiveness of a child, which a well-behaved child should be not at all. We humble ourselves as a little child. This is the path to greatness.

Another one of those unexpected turns. It is the opposite of human expectation that if I want to excel, I've got to work and slave and trample others and climb to the top. Jesus says, humble yourself and you will be great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 23, verse 12, all of this is necessary to understand our passage. How can the humble, how can the lowly glory in exaltation? Matthew 23, 12, whoever exalts himself is going to be torpedoed, so to speak, is going to be humbled, is going to be made lowly. If self-exaltation, self-promotion, self-aggrandizement, looking out for number one and trying to get ahead in our own way and for our own gratification, God is going to humble that person.

If we try to succeed in our own way for our own purposes and disregard who we are and why we're here in the Lord, we are going to be brought low. Matthew 23, 12, whoever exalts himself will be humbled. There's only one worthy kind of exaltation, one kind of worthy promotion, and that is that which comes from God.

If God promotes you, my old pastor used to say, then you are truly promoted. Self-promotion will always fail. Divine promotion is eternal.

It is an unrevocable gift. Exalt yourself will be humbled. He who humbles himself will be exalted.

This is something we have to do for ourselves. Jesus has said it twice now. We humble ourselves.

In the celebration song of Mary, after Gabriel comes and delivers the news that she is going to be the mother of the Christ child, that the power of God's spirit is going to overshadow her and she is going to have the privilege of bringing the Savior into the world in the physical sense, she sings what is known as the Magnificat in Latin. And part of it in Luke 1, 48, she is praising God. She is thanking God.

She is exalting God. And she says the reason in Luke 1, 48, he, God has regarded the lowly state, the typanos of his maid servant. Why did God choose Mary? Because she was already a young lady who had humbled herself and was compliant and obedient to the will of the Father.

He has taken his maid servant who is humble and henceforth all generations will call me blessed. And that has certainly been true. Four verses later in Luke 1, 52, she says, God has put

down the mighty.

He has taken them down. He has dethroned them. He has pushed them off of their high places.

He has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted the tyranos, the lowly. This is something God does. Exalting ourselves will always fail.

Exaltation from God is a tremendous blessing and gift. You find this mentioned in Luke chapter three, verse five, every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low. The crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways made smooth.

The hills made lowly. The exalted places will be brought low. It's a figurative way of saying the same thing that Mary said two chapters earlier.

Jesus emphasizes this. It isn't just stated in Matthew. It's also in Luke 14, 11, whoever exalts himself will be humbled.

He who humbles himself will be exalted. Obviously will be exalted. Who is the one bringing that about? It is God himself.

When you have the Pharisee praying, Jesus describes this scene where he is saying, Lord, I thank you that I am not like other men. I am so good and righteous and I'm grateful that I'm such a hotshot in the spiritual realm. And the other man stands there beating his breast, saying, Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner, looking to God for forgiveness, for cleansing, for the reconciliation, the redemption, the propitiation, the opportunity to be washed and made clean.

Have mercy on me, a sinner. Jesus says in 1814 of Luke, I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. And he who humbles himself will be exalted.

What did the specific exaltation consist of in this word picture from the Lord Jesus? Justification. This is acceptance, cleansing and removal of guilt in God's eyes. He is justified.

He went to his house justified, justified in the eyes of God. In Romans chapter 12, verse 16, Paul says, be of the same mind toward one another. Ah, spheres of love.

We're in the one another category, right? It is so clear. Once you see the spheres of love in scripture, you can't unsee them. What are the responses? What are the proper behaviors to express love? It depends on what sphere of love people are in.

This is clearly Romans 12, 16. We're in the one another sphere. So what happens in the one another's category? Be of the same mind toward one another.

Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the Tyranos. Seek out, cultivate and maintain fellowship with believers who are humble, who have this lowly attitude, who are not exalting themselves, who aren't putting themselves first. Be like-minded.

Find others who appreciate humility and the waiting for the fulfillment of the promise for exaltation later on. I'm not trying to get ahead now. I'm not trying to vindicate, justify, defend, promote myself now.

I am going to patiently wait. I'm going to take on the yoke of the Lord Jesus and learn from Him, and He will comfort my soul, and we will be exalted in due time. Be of the same mind toward one another, Romans 12, 16.

Do not set your mind on high things. Notice, who is in control of what our mind is set on? We are. You choose what to think about.

You choose what to worry about. You choose what to prioritize. What you decide is important.

Do not set your mind on high things. Associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

Where does our wisdom come from? James has already told us in our just preceding couple of verses. If we lack wisdom, let us ask of God. He will give to us without recrimination, without shame or embarrassment.

Wisdom comes from God. Wisdom does not come from my own machinations and calculations. I look to God for my wisdom.

I ask Him for wisdom, and when it comes from Him, I value it. I prize it, and that is what I set my mind on. Where is the wisdom that comes from God? 2 Corinthians 7, verse 6. God comforts the downcast.

Downcast there is typanos. Comfort comes to those who do not esteem themselves, do not think of themselves more highly than they ought to think. It is hard to be humble.

There used to be a song, back when I was a disc jockey. Lord, it's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way. I can't wait to look in the mirror.

I get better looking each day. To know me is to love me. I must be a heck of a man.

Oh, Lord, it's hard to be humble, but I'm doing the best that I can. We choose our attitude. God comforts the lowly.

It isn't downcast, like I'm a victim of circumstance. This is an attitude and an approach to life that I have chosen. I want to stay in harness with the yoke of the Lord Jesus.

I want to learn from Him, knowing I will receive comfort from God. God comforts the downcast, the lowly. Paul says, I received this comfort when Titus came to me.

We can be comforted in the presence and the fellowship of fellow believers. Paul the apostle received comfort from God through the presence of a fellow like-minded believer, Titus. 2

Corinthians 7.6. He goes on to use this word a few more times in 2 Corinthians, but I want to move to Ephesians chapter 4, to which you may want to turn.

Ephesians chapter 4. Paul says, I therefore, if you remember long ago, our study of Ephesians, in this context, we have seven therefores, and there are five references to walking. Seven therefores and five walks. Therefore walk.

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of your calling with which you were called. What is the nature of this calling? What does God call us to do? Here we are. It's Sunday.

It's June the 1st. What am I supposed to be doing? To what has God called me? To what has God called you? What's our priority today? What's the most important thing we should try to get done as we do all of our stuff? Walk worthy of our calling. Okay, I'm ready to do that.

What is a worthy walk? Describe for me, explain to me what this worthy walk is that God in heaven, through the Lord Jesus Christ, has called us to. We walk, verse 2, with lowliness. Lowliness, *Taipeinas*.

It's the first item in the list. A worthy walk is, first of all, humble, not seeking its own, not proud, not taking the bit in its teeth and trying to run in the direction of its choosing. The very first stated characteristic of a worthy Christian walk is humility, not deciding, I know best.

I will look to God for what is best. I will rely on Him. I will trust in Him.

I am going to assume that whatever is going on is a part of my yoke, and I am here to learn. Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called with *Taipeinas*. This is actually *Taipeina Frosuna* here, which is humble thinking.

Humble thinking, lowliness, and gentleness. I am gentle and lowly in heart, Jesus said. You have the same combination here, to emulate the Lord Jesus, to represent Him on this earth.

What kind of representation is it? Should we fashion a whip of cords and go drive the money changers out of the temple? To walk worthy of our calling, to represent the Lord Jesus, to take His yoke and learn from Him, is to be lowly and gentle. And those very same two words that Jesus used are used here, lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another. What kind of things do we have to bear with? Do we have to bear with lowliness and gentleness and love and joy and peace and patience and the fruit of the Spirit in others? What is it we have to bear up under? What is it we have to endure and bear like a cross? It's when we fail each other, when we sin against each other, when we fall short, when our fallen nature squeezes out under pressure and is offensive and harmful to others.

If we are the other who has been offended, who has been sinned against, who has been defrauded of the brotherly love that is our due, what is our response? Do we respond in kind? Do we meet evil with evil? Do we, well, you've upped the ante, I'm going to up the ante. You've

accelerated, I'm going to accelerate. You've called out a bigger army, I'm going to call out a bigger army.

What do we do? Bear with lowliness, gentleness, with long-suffering. What kind of long-suffering? Remember the fruit of the Spirit, long-suffering, gentleness. These are the same things.

Bearing with one another in love. What kind of love? Neighbor love? Outsider love? Enemy love? Where's your clue? Bearing with one another. This is in the one another sphere.

This is with those of us who know better and should soon be recovering and returning to a life that witnesses to and expresses the fruit of the Spirit. If this goes on for a pattern and a period of time, we're not a one another anymore, and we may have to move this person to the neighbor sphere. You're near me, but you're not in my intimate fellowship.

You can have co-workers, but you don't live with them. You can have those with whom you have even regular contact, but neighbors, generally in the city, there's a fence between your yards. There are limits to the intimacy level.

It's neighbor love. If neighbor love isn't working and isn't accomplishing the objective, you may have to move that person to those who are outside love. Work quietly, mind your own business, do no harm.

And if they begin to be an enemy and to attack and to vilify and to stir up trouble, now you're in the love your enemy. Do good to those who hate you. Pray for those who spitefully use you.

You're praying for them because you're not really talking to them anymore. You love them at an even greater distance. We've been through this many times, but notice lowliness and gentleness, long-suffering, gentleness and long-suffering right there in the list.

Lowliness is what Jesus expressed and what we are to choose to have. We choose to be lowly. We humble ourselves and trust that God will exalt us to the extent and at the time of his choosing, which will be best for us and for everyone.

Bearing with one another in love. We bear with when it is in the one another category. There may be other responses in the outer spheres.

Why? Verse three, endeavoring to keep, to preserve the unity of the spirit. The unity of the spirit is strictly in the one another sphere. Neighbors are not always one with us.

They are not always unified. They cannot always reciprocate. And someone who cannot reciprocate and isn't like-minded with us has to start moving into the outer rings of love.

Because we bear with one another because we're endeavoring to preserve that bond of unity, that spirit and bond of peace. If it doesn't work, if the other person's not willing to be peaceful, if they're not willing to be united and reconciled, this is the Lord Jesus saying, if someone has

ought against you, attempt to be reconciled. If they refuse, try again with a few more people.

If they try again, it becomes an issue that affects the whole group. And if they still refuse to be reconciled, they move a couple of rings of love out. You treat them as a heathen and tax collector.

You don't persecute them. You don't prosecute them. You don't judge them.

You don't malign. You don't try to punish them. You stay away from them.

You avoid the tax collectors. You avoid the sinners. They're not in your inner circle of intimacy.

Why? Verse four, there is one body and one spirit. You were called in one hope of your calling. Remember your calling.

Worthy of the calling, verse one. Paul says, this is God laying down the rules for our conduct, our interactions, our relationships. This is what we are called to.

One body, one spirit. You were called in one hope of your calling, which is that in humiliation, in suffering, in hardship, in difficulty, you await with confidence the exaltation that will come in God's time, in God's way, to God's extent. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all, who is above all, through all, and in all.

So how important is it for us to understand what this lowliness is? We want to identify ourselves with this statement. I am a brother and I want to be a lowly brother. I want to be humble.

I don't want to be plagued with the symptoms and the presence of haughtiness, of self-promotion, of selfishness, self-gratification. I want what I want. I want it now.

I want you to comply. Humility. Let God promote, let God exalt, let God flesh out the specifics of our calling.

So we've covered the first four or five words here. Let the lowly brother. We know what a brother is.

We are getting a good idea from the New Testament scriptures of what lowliness is. How does this proceed? We'll see it when we come back from the break.