

James 1:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

Analysis

But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. The rich believer is likewise to boast in being "made low" (tapeinōsis, ταπεινώσις), for temporal wealth is ephemeral like grass. James invokes Isaiah 40 to show that riches wither under the burning heat (kausōn, κάυσων). The imagery reinforces Jesus' warning that worldly treasures decay; only treasures in heaven endure.

By pairing verses 9 and 10, James levels status distinctions in the church. Reformed theology affirms that justification eliminates boasting in worldly assets; the cross humbles the rich and lifts the poor. The wealthy are called to glory in their humiliation because in Christ they become servants, stewards rather than owners.

Historical Context

Some members of James's audience were relatively wealthy merchants or landowners who had embraced Christ. In a first-century honor culture, their social capital tempted them to expect preferential treatment. James, writing from Jerusalem with apostolic authority, reminds them that persecution could strip wealth overnight, as happened during famines and political upheavals.

His teaching dovetails with Paul's admonitions in 1 Timothy 6 for the rich to be

humble and generous. The diaspora situation—where fortunes were uncertain—made James's warning urgent.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. In what ways can you intentionally boast in Christ rather than success or assets?
2. How might God be calling you to embrace practical humility with your resources?
3. Whom can you bless this week to demonstrate that riches are temporary?

Interlinear Text

ὁ	δὲ	πλούσιος	ἐν	τῇ	ταπεινώσει	αὐτοῦ	ὅτι	ὥς
G3588	But	the rich	in	G3588	is made low	G846	because	as
	G1161	G4145	G1722		G5014		G3754	G5613
ἄνθος	χόρτου	παρελεύσεται						
the flower	of the grass	he shall pass away						
G438	G5528	G3928						

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 1:24 (Parallel theme): For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

1 John 2:17 (Parallel theme): And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Job 14:2 (Parallel theme): He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.

1 Timothy 6:17 (Parallel theme): Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

Matthew 5:3 (Parallel theme): Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.

Psalms 103:15 (Parallel theme): As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

1 Corinthians 7:31 (Parallel theme): And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

Isaiah 40:6 (Parallel theme): The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field:

Isaiah 66:2 (Creation): For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

Matthew 6:30 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?