

James 1:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

Analysis

Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: The "brother of low degree" (adelphos ho tapeinos, ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινός) is commanded to "rejoice" (kauchasthō, καυχάσθω) in exaltation. James transforms boasting into gospel celebration: the humble believer is lifted by union with Christ, seated in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). The paradox underscores the kingdom reversal inaugurated by Jesus.

The term tapeinosis (ταπείνωσις) in verse 10 will describe the rich being made low; thus James redefines honor. Reformed theology insists that all believers share the same inheritance, so economic poverty neither diminishes nor enhances spiritual standing. The poor brother can glory because God has set love upon him, making him rich in faith (2:5).

Historical Context

Most recipients of James were materially poor, displaced from Judea, and pressured by wealthy landowners (cf. 5:1-6). Under Roman patronage systems, social honor depended on wealth; James as Jerusalem's pastor lifts their eyes to Christ's valuation. His message harmonizes with Paul's teaching that God chooses the lowly to shame the strong (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

The diaspora context meant believers often served as day laborers or artisans, lacking civic power. This exhortation dignifies them within the covenant community, countering the disdain they experienced from society.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does your view of success align—or clash—with James's call for the poor to boast in exaltation?
2. What habits help you celebrate God's valuation rather than society's metrics?
3. How can your community tangibly honor brothers and sisters of low degree?

Interlinear Text

Καυχάσθω δὲ ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινὸς ἐν τῷ
Let G1161 G3588 the brother G3588 of low degree in G3588
G2744 G80 G5011 G1722

ὕψει αὐτοῦ
is exalted G846
G5311

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 19:1 (Parallel theme): Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

2 Corinthians 6:10 (Parallel theme): As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

Revelation 2:9 (Parallel theme): I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

Luke 1:52 (Parallel theme): He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

