

**James 1:9** But the poor believer must keep on celebrating [ IM #6 ] in the sphere of exaltation in his high status of the royal family of God. (EXT)

**James 1:10** and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. (NASB)

1. Verse 10 emphasizes the details of life. The rich man is used to illustrate this. Because of his wealth, he is able to accumulate numerous things that add to his temporal happiness.
2. Many theologians who approach verses 9 and 10 assume the person in verse 9 is a believer because he is poor.
3. On the other hand, they conclude that the man in verse 10 is an unbeliever. There is an erroneous and judgmental attitude by many in Christianity that asserts that rich people are by definition unbelievers.
4. It is not a subject on which we should dwell, but numerous believers in Scripture were wealthy and we noted several.
5. The Tanakh identifies several wealthy biblical heroes including Abraham, Job, Joseph, David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah.
6. In the New Testament, several men are indicated as possessors of wealth: Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, Zacchaeus, Zebedee, and his sons, James and John.
7. None of these men was perfect yet each placed his faith in Messiah. Their distractions were common to fallen man, but their strength was found in their development of grace orientation.
8. Each by grace was saved through faith in Messiah, not by means of wealth, power, or works. They each had their episodes of human viewpoint, but they also achieved greatness when they were oriented to grace.
9. It doesn't matter whether a believer is poor or rich. The issue is the development of grace orientation which requires concentration on and consistency in application of grace to the details of life.

10. To broaden our understanding of the principle of grace orientation we took time to study that doctrine and contained in lesson numbers, JAS1-43 through -48. We'll note a few highlights.
11. Grace is all that God is free to do for mankind without compromising His divine essence.
12. Grace is free, unmerited favor and unfailing love from God alone, not from works or because of any human attractiveness.
13. All things from God, beginning with salvation, are received from God as a free gift totally apart from human merit or human works:

**John 1:12** But to all who have received Him [ non-meritorious grace ]—those who believe [ πιστεύω (pisteúō): transitive whose object is Christ ] in His name—He has given the right to become God's children [ members of God's royal family ]

**John 1:13** —children not born by human parents [ heredity through procreation ] or by human desire [ human works are not involved ] or a husband's decision [ the determination to procreate ], but by God [ efficacious grace ].  
(NET)

14. The Church Age is the dispensation that characterizes the divine administration of the royal family of God. It is based on the principle of antecedent grace or prevenient \prī-vēn'-yent\ grace which is the preemptive work of God in eternity past.

#### **Antecedent Grace:**

1. The word “antecedent” refers to a preceding event, condition, or cause. A synonym of antecedent is the adjective, “prevenient.” The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides important details:
2. First we note the verb form, “prēvēne”: “to come before, precede, anticipate. To take action before or in anticipation of.”
3. Prevenient is derived from the Latin and defined as “coming before, preceding, previous, antecedent”:

*Prevenient grace in Theology, the grace of God which precedes repentance and conversion, predisposing the heart to seek God.<sup>6</sup>*

4. Antecedent or prevenient grace refers to that which precedes human history and continues throughout time. This grace applies to post-salvation grace as much as to pre-salvation grace.
5. Antecedent or prevenient grace is the divine initiative in the exercise of God's grace policy to establish a relationship with mankind totally apart from human merit, human works, or human resources.
6. Antecedent or prevenient grace is also the divine initiative in providing grace blessings from God to mankind, dating back to eternity past as illustrated by the believer's escrow blessings for time and eternity.

**(End JAS1-57. See JAS1-58 for continuation of study at p. 571.)**

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<sup>6</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "prevenient."

7. Divine omniscience was able to perceive each individual's moment of salvation by grace through faith. Knowing this, God provided an escrow account for each person in eternity past. (Ephesians 1:3–4)
8. And it is through the divine decree that God expressed His prevenient grace to the human race. This grace occurred before the universe was created, ex nihilo, and before mankind was formed “of dust from the ground” (Genesis 2:7).
9. Precedence for the Church Age believer is based on the grace policy associated with the Incarnation of Christ, His person, His work, and His resurrection.
10. Antecedent or Prevenient grace is based on the divine solutions for human sin accomplished by Jesus Christ in His true humanity.
11. This brings us back to our study of James 1:10 which is a continuation of verse 9. Here is our translation so far:

**James 1:9** But the poor believer must keep on celebrating [ IM #6: present active imperative of the verb *καυχάομαι* (*kaucháomai*) ] in the sphere of exaltation in his high status of royal family of God; (EXT)

**James 1:10** ... and the rich man *is to glory in his humiliation*, because like flowering grass he will pass away. (NASB)

1. We have already established that the poor man in verse 9 and the rich man in verse 10 are believers. Their mental attitudes regarding differences in their social and economic conditions are removed since each lives his spiritual life focused on prevenient or antecedent grace.
2. The subject changes in verse 10 as we are introduced to the rich man, the masculine singular of the noun *πλούσιος* (*plouísios*): “rich man.”
3. The verse begins with the adversative conjunction *δέ* (*dé*): “but.” It sets up a contrast between the poor believer and the rich one.

4. In verse 10 we have our seventh imperative mood which is not stated because of an ellipsis in the text but indicated by the insertion of the italicized phrase *is to glory*.
5. The explanation of why James's text contains this ellipsis is explained by this excerpt:

Grammatically, it appears that the verb ("he should glory") of this verse should be borrowed from the parallel previous verse, thus yielding that the wealthy person should glory in humiliation.

No interpretation is admissible which does not supply the imperative *καυχάσθω*. If James was thinking of the rich person as outside the community [of believers] he would have indicated that more clearly within this ambiguous phrase.<sup>1</sup>

6. When we expand the translation of this verse, we will indicate that the verse-10 ellipsis is Imperative Mood #7.
7. The command issued to the "poor" believer is that he "must keep on celebrating in the sphere of exaltation." In verse 10, the rich believer is to "keep on celebrating in the sphere of his humiliation," the noun, *ταπείνωσις (tapeínōsis)*.
8. The rich man's grace orientation is related to his understanding that his wealth is not able to *purchase* the same abundance in time that his salvation will provide him in eternity.
9. To illustrate the evanescent nature of earthly wealth, James refers to the lilting prose of the prophet Isaiah in:

**Isaiah 40:6b** All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness<sup>2</sup> is like the flower of the field.

**v. 7** The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass.

**Isaiah 40:8** The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of God stands forever. (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> Dan G. McCartney, *James* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 96.

<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew word here is the masculine noun *חֶסֶד* (*cheseth*). When referring to deity, it is best translated, "unfailing love." When referring to people or in illustrations, it is translated in various ways in English translations. The KJV has "goodliness," the NIV, "glory," the NET, "promises," and the NASB, "loveliness," all of which are abstruse.

10. The unfailing love of God speaks of the divine attribute of love which itself magnifies the integrity of God: His righteousness, justice, and omniscience in association with His grace policy to all mankind.
11. With regard to the words used by Isaiah in verse 6, we find mankind typified as grass along with its floral accouterments. The message they present is described in this excerpt:

The appointed theme is the perishable nature of all flesh, and, on the other hand, the imperishable nature of the word of God. Men living in the flesh are universally impotent, perishing, limited; God, on the contrary, is the omnipotent, eternal, all-determining; and like Himself, so is His word, which, regarded as the vehicle and utterance of His willing and thinking, is not something separate from Himself, and therefore is the same as He. *Chasdō* [חֶסֶד] (masculine singular of *cheseth*) is the charm or gracefulness of the outward appearance.<sup>3</sup>

12. The NIV translation of Hebrew noun **חֶסֶד** (*cheseth*) in Isaiah 40:6 is “glory.” The NASB translation of the Greek noun **καυχάομαι** (*kaucháomai*) in James 1:10 is also “glory,” an ellipsis based on its use in verse 9.
13. The application in Isaiah emphasizes the beauty and splendor possessed by the flowers in context. The application in James makes reference to the prosperity enjoyed by the “rich man.”
14. Both the flower of the grass and the prosperity of the wealthy are described by the imagery initially found in Isaiah and used by James to make his similar illustration. Let’s note Isaiah first.
15. As already noted, the grass represents mankind which is fallen. Isaiah introduces the illustration by a metaphor: “All flesh is grass.”
16. The grass has temporal possessions depicted as a flower. In its prime, it is glorious, but its beauty is brief. The bloom quickly withers, fades away, and falls to the turf.
17. This process is even hastened “when the breath of the Lord blows upon it” as observed by Isaiah 40:7. This imagery illustrates the divine management of a fallen environment caused by human sin.

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<sup>3</sup> Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 3d ed., trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), 2:143.

18. All earthly life is temporal be it of man, animal, fish, bird, tree, plant, and the flower that adorns grass. Humans and their temporal possessions are destined to pass away.
19. The rich man in our verse is commanded to celebrate “his humiliation,” the Koine Greek noun **ταπείνωσις** (*tapeínōsis*).
20. The meaning of this word in Attic Greek is “humiliation, abasement, low estate, low condition, lowness of style.”<sup>4</sup>
21. This is the interpretation some expositors apply to the word. However, its meaning in the Koine Greek of the New Testament is different. Verse 10 begins with the phrase, “but the rich man in his humiliation.”
22. The word is correctly translated, but it does not capture the impact of the word in its context. The rich believer understands the fragility of his prosperity and also knows his salvation comes with a guarantee of eternal life.
23. Humility is the basic definition of *tapeínōsis*, however its meaning here has to do with the rich believer’s understanding of how he has been graced out by the justice of God.
24. He celebrates over the prevenient grace of God through Christ. This allows him to have grace orientation toward his earthly riches in light of his heavenly advantages.
25. Whereas Isaiah introduced his example with a metaphor, James opts for a simile, “an explicit comparison between two different things, actions, or feelings, using the words ‘as’ or ‘like.’”<sup>5</sup>
26. The simile of grass and flower expresses the fleeting nature of human life and the accouterments one might acquire in the process.
27. This horticultural simile is introduced by James in the middle of verse 10 with the phrase, “like flowering grass he will pass away.”
28. The Greek word for “flower” is the noun **ἄνθος** (*ánthos*) and for “grass,” the noun **χόρτος** (*chórtos*). Literally, “flower of grass.” It is the flower that is being highlighted here.

<sup>4</sup> Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. and aug. Henry Stuart Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 1757 (s.v. ταπειν-ωσις).

<sup>5</sup> Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 206.



29. There are hundreds of varieties of flowering grasses, many of them quite striking. However, James correctly points out that the lifespan of grass is fleeting and their death certain.
30. The adorning flowers provide the perfect illustration of material possessions a believer might acquire during his lifespan. In other words, the details of life.
31. Things that define prosperity, regardless of assumed permanence, include health, income, savings, retirement, investments, insurance, housing, food, clothing, relatives, friends, church, social life and a variety of materialistic possessions, i.e., certain valuables, vehicles, and keepsakes.
32. Like flowers, they are apt to fade, die, fall off, and decompose. The details of life come and go. At times you have them, at times you won't. The word describing this in verse 10 is the singular, future middle indicative of the verb **παρέρχομαι** (*parérchomai*).
33. In context, the predictive future means that the grass's flower at some point in the near future will begin to fade from the peak of its splendor.
34. Since the simile is comparing the rich man with the flower of grass, he will ultimately fade physically while his possessions, like the flower will "pass away."
35. The middle voice is deponent indicating that the rich man, like the flower, will produce the action of "fading away" while the indicative mood certifies it as a fact.
36. Of all of life's various attractions, it is the accumulation of the Word of God in the soul that is the major export a believer takes with him into the eternal future.
37. Now we are ready to observe our expanded translation of the sentence that began in verse 9 and concluded in verse 10:

**James 1:9** But the poor believer must keep on celebrating [ **IM #6: present active imperative of the verb** **καυχάομαι** (*kaucháomai*) ] in the sphere of exaltation in his high status of royal family of God;