

*As the Flower of the Grass*  
*James 1:11*

**James 1:11** reads, “For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.”

**James 1:9-11** presents the second paragraph of the epistle. This paragraph gives counsel concerning the contrasting subjects of humble maturity and worldly materialism. In these three verses, only two sentences are delivered. The first sentence of this paragraph is a compound sentence, encompassing **verses 9-10**. The second sentence of the paragraph encompasses **verse 11**. In the closing line of **verse 10**, the warning of God’s Word is delivered unto the wealthy believer, saying, “Because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.” This warning provides the reason that the wealthy believer should obey the instruction of **verse 10** to glory “in that he is made low.” Then beginning with the explanatory conjunction “for,” **verse 11** expands and explains that warning through the form of an illustrative picture.

Even so, **James 1:11** provides an illustration of admonition against the spirit and ways of worldly materialism, saying, “For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.” In the illustrative picture of this verse, we encounter four significant elements. First, we encounter the scorching heat of the risen sun. Second, we encounter the withering up of the flowering grass. Third, we encounter the falling flower from the withered grass. Fourth, we encounter the perishing grace of the fallen flower. Then through the closing line of the verse, each of these four elements is applied with a direct correspondence to the materialistic believer in his materialistic ways. “So also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.” How then do the four elements of this illustration correspond to the materialistic believer in his materialistic ways?

I. The materialistic believer will experience *the Scorching Heat of our Lord’s Chastening*.

The opening line of **James 1:11** states, “For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat.” The shining light of the sun is healthy for the grass. However, the scorching heat of the sun is destructive for the grass. Herein we encounter, not the shining light, but the scorching heat of the sun. This scorching heat is presented as coming immediately with the rising of the sun. Even so, this scorching heat comes in an unrelenting, irresistible manner. So then, how does this picture correspond to the materialistic believer? This scorching heat of the sun represents the fiery wrath of our Lord’s chastening hand against the materialistic believer. Although circumstantial troubles may be included as a part of our Lord’s chastening work, the scorching heat does not represent these troubles in themselves. Rather, the scorching heat represents the fiery wrath of our Lord that sends forth these troubles. Yea, the scorching heat represents the fiery wrath of our Lord that is kindled against us for our sinful iniquity.

Yet is the spirit and way of worldly materialism a sinful iniquity that kindles our Lord’s fiery wrath and moves our Lord’s chastening hand against us? From the Biblical perspective, materialism can be defined as placing a greater affection and attention upon the

possession and pleasures of material wealth, than upon the fellowship and service of our Lord. This is revealed in **Matthew 6:19-21**. Therein our Lord Jesus Christ preached against the spirit and way of worldly materialism, saying, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Furthermore, in **Matthew 6:24** our Lord delivered the warning, saying, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [material wealth].” It is spiritually *impossible* for us to serve both the ways of materialism and the Lord our God at the same time. If we set our affection and priority on a life of materialism, then we will inevitably forget and forsake the Lord our God. If we love and hold to the one, we will inevitably hate and despise the other in the direction and behavior of our life.

Even so, in **Deuteronomy 8:7-14** Moses delivered the Lord’s warning to the children of Israel concerning the spirit and ways of worldly materialism. In **verses 7-9** he revealed the Lord’s promise to bless them with material things, saying, “For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.” Yes, this was the Lord’s own blessing in their lives. Yet in **verses 11-14** Moses also revealed the Lord’s admonition against the spirit of materialism that would accompany that blessing, saying, “Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.” Material blessing always brings the temptation to a materialistic spirit. If we yield to that temptation, we will be lifted up with pride in our material blessing and will forget and forsake the Lord our God in the direction of our life.

Yea, if we yield to a materialistic spirit, we will inevitably turn aside to a walk of disobedience against our Lord’s Word and will. In **1 Timothy 6:9** God’s Word warns us against the spirit and ways of worldly materialism, saying, “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” Setting the priority of our hearts and the pursuit of our lives after material things and material success, whether we obtain it or not, will cause us to fall into sinful temptation and a spiritual snare. Such a priority and pursuit of worldly materialism will inevitably lead us into many spiritually “foolish and hurtful lusts,” wherein we will be overwhelmed with sinful corruption. Furthermore, the warning of God’s Word continues in **verse 10**, saying, “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Yes, the spirit and ways of worldly materialism will inevitably seduce us away from the faith (that is – from a walk of faithful service to our Lord and faithful obedience to His Word) unto a life of sinful iniquity.

So then, is the spirit and ways of worldly materialism a sinful iniquity that kindles our Lord's fiery wrath and moves our Lord's chastening hand against us? Yes, it certainly is. The spirit and ways of worldly materialism will certainly put us in the place of enmity with the Lord our God (**James 4:4**). The spirit and ways of worldly materialism will certainly kindle our Lord's fiery wrath against us, "for our God is a consuming fire" (**Hebrew 12:29**; See also **Deuteronomy 4:12-13; 6:10-15**). The spirit and ways of worldly materialism will certainly bring down our Lord's heavy hand of chastening upon us. Indeed, the materialistic believer will experience the scorching heat of our Lord's chastening.

II. The materialistic believer will experience *the Spiritual Withering of a Materialistic Life*.

The second line of **James 1:11** states, "But it [the scorching heat of the sun] withereth the grass." Herein we see that the scorching heat of the sun withers the growing grass. How then does this picture correspond to the materialistic believer? In this illustrative picture, the grass represents the rich believer "in his ways." Yea, the grass represents the materialistic believer himself in his materialistic ways. Thus we understand that the scorching heat of our Lord's chastening hand will bring spiritual withering into the materialistic life of the materialistic believer. In **John 15:6** our Lord Jesus Christ gave the warning, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." As we already noted, the materialistic individual does not abide in the Lord, but will rather forget and forsake the Lord. Such a one will experience the spiritual withering of his life. Such a one will experience the burning fire of our Lord's chastening. Although such a one may claim to be "rich, and increased with goods," and to "have need of nothing," yet he will be found spiritually to be "miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (**Revelation 3:17**). Even so, **Proverbs 11:28** declares concerning the materialistic individual who sets his trust in material things, "He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch." Again the opening portion of **Proverbs 13:7** declares concerning the materialistic individual who sets his priority upon material things, "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing." Yet again the opening portion of **Proverbs 15:27** declares concerning the materialistic individual who sets his pursuit after material things, "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house." Indeed, the materialistic believer will pierce himself through with the many sorrows of a withered and wasted Christian life (**1 Timothy 6:10**).

III. The materialistic believer will experience *the Sure Loss of Material Possessions*.

The third line of **James 1:11** states, "And the flower thereof [of the withering grass] falleth." Herein we see that the beautiful flower of the grass falls off as the grass withers under the scorching heat of the sun. How then does this picture correspond to the materialistic believer? In this illustrative picture, the flower represents the material blessings that the materialistic believer possesses. Even so, just as the withering grass loses its beautiful flower, the material believer will lose his material blessings. The material things of this world are only in our possession for a little time, and then they fly away. In **Proverbs 23:4-5** the counsel is given, "Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." The material things of this life can certainly be defined as "uncertain riches" (**1 Timothy 6:17**). They are an uncertain foundation for life. We can never be certain how long they will last. Over time material things become corrupted and corroded, rusted and ruined, battered and broken. Such material things are

always susceptible to be lost or stolen. Finally, when one passes through the portal of death, every bit of one's material accumulation must be left behind. "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (**1 Timothy 6:7**). Even so, in **Ecclesiastes 5:13-16** Solomon spoke concerning the spirit and ways of worldly materialism, saying, "There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand. As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand. And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?" In the end all material possessions and accumulations will blow away as ashes upon the wind (**2 Peter 3:10-12**). Indeed, the materialistic believer will experience the sure loss of all his material possessions and accumulations.

IV. The materialistic believer will experience *the Soon Disappearance of Material Glory*.

The fourth line of **James 1:11** states, "And the grace of the fashion of it [of the fallen flower] perisheth." Herein we see that when the beautiful flower of the grass falls away, its grace and beauty perishes. How then does this picture correspond to the materialistic believer? In this illustrative picture, the grace and beauty of the flower represents the glory of material things and of a materialistic life. Initially there is much glory in material success. The opening half of **Proverbs 18:11** declares, "The rich man's wealth is his strong city." Again the opening half of **Proverbs 19:4** declares, "Wealth maketh many friends." Yet again **James 5:5** declares, "Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter." The glory of power, popularity, and pleasure all come with material success. Yet that glory will soon disappear under the fiery wrath and chastening hand of the Lord. Even so, material things cannot bring true satisfaction to the believer's heart. In **Ecclesiastes 5:10** the warning is given, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity." Material things cannot bring spiritual profit to the believer's walk. In **verse 11** the warning continues, "When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?" Material things cannot bring rest and peace to the believer's soul. Yet again in **verse 12** the warning continues, "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep." Finally, material things cannot deliver in the day of our Lord's wrath. In **Proverbs 11:4** the warning is given, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death." Thus **Psalms 49:17-20** speaks of the materialistic individual, saying, "For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish." In like manner, **James 5:1-4** pronounces judgment upon the materialistically minded, saying, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days." Indeed, the materialistic believer will experience the soon and final disappearance of his materialistic glory.