



## James 1:2-4

(2) Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, (3) because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. (4) Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

*New International Version*

**1. *Trials should produce growth*** . Just as we prune a shrub or tree to force it to grow into a more perfect form, so [God](#) does with us. William Barclay makes an excellent comment on this:

. . . these tests or trials are not meant to make us fall, they are meant to make us soar. They are not meant to defeat us; they are meant to be defeated. They are not meant to make us weaker; they are meant to make us stronger. Therefore we should not bemoan them; we should rejoice in them.

Notice that trials *should* produce growth, rather than that they *will* produce it. Sometimes, we just do not learn the lesson; we fail; we regress; we sink into self-pity. This leads me to another lesson learned.

**2. *The fruit we produce depends on our outlook*** . This does not imply that anger and depression are not normal human emotions. They are. With any trial, you wonder why. You evaluate your actions, your mistakes, your sins. You [repent](#), fast, and pray. You cry out to God with more emotion than you knew you possessed. If you are normal, you have moments of anger, perhaps even doubt.

Here is where we can produce fruit or destroy it. With God's help, we must forcibly evict these carnal thoughts from our minds. We cannot allow seeds of doubt to germinate, and if they do, they cannot be allowed to grow. We must look forward and deal with the situation.

Paul writes:

. . . we know for certain that He who raised the Lord [Jesus](#) from death shall also raise us with Jesus. We shall all stand together before Him. All this is indeed working out for your benefit, for as more grace is given to more and more people so will the thanksgiving to the glory of God be increased. This is the reason why we never lose heart. The outward man does indeed suffer wear and tear, but every day the inward man receives fresh strength. These little troubles (which are really so transitory) are winning for us a permanent, glorious and solid reward out of all proportion to our pain. ([II Corinthians 4:14-17](#), Phillips)

So it is good advice that we not resent our trials or bemoan our fate or the state in which we find ourselves. As James says, "Count it all [joy](#)," which brings us to the next lesson.

**3. Joy comes after, not before, the trial—and often not during it .** No sane person sits around, wishing he had a trial. That is absurd. No one is ecstatic to find himself encompassed in pain. Only when you have faced your troubles and started to fight can you begin to see even a glimmer of a positive result at its conclusion.

James' advice is to count or consider our trials joyfully. The Phillips' version continues, "Realise that they come to test your [faith](#) and to produce endurance" ([James 1:3](#)). These words reflect a passage of time. [Hebrews 12:2](#) says Jesus endured the cross "for the joy that was set before Him." He thought nothing of the pain and shame because of the joy He knew would *follow* His suffering. Joy came afterward.

Verse 11 says, "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." Here is convincing proof that joy is primarily post-trial.

Yet even this joy is not the ecstatic, "Hallelujah!" kind of joy. *Chara* means "cheerfulness" or "calm delight." God's Spirit does not produce in us a gloating, "I did it!" kind of emotion, but a cheerful [peace](#) of mind, an awareness that we survived and grew. We feel a kind of satisfaction that God has pruned us so that we might become more like Him. This process helps us to appreciate our lives more, and to be more thankful, understanding, and sympathetic to the plight of others.

A lady with a long-term illness once wrote to us about her trials. As she came slowly out of her personal struggle, she passed on to us several things that we found to be true. One line she wrote is very true: "I never realized how wonderful it is to be able to do ordinary things until I couldn't do them." She had "never realized." Yet now, because of her trial, she counted or considered her situation and found joy in a simple act.

By sharing this with us, she gave us [hope](#) and encouragement. We saw this new perspective as positive. This is fruit borne through testing. It is God's refining process at work. He is removing impurities.

As hard as it seemed, after giving them much prayer and thought, we found that each trial was specific to us. It was what we needed to make us more like God. We did not see this initially, but through perseverance and growth, it became clear.

This is why we are happy that God has chosen us to suffer whatever trials He may allow. As James goes on to write:

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" ([James 1:12](#)).

— Mike Ford

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