

The Joy Produced In Trials

James 1:1-4

June 18, 2023

1955 was the year Minimum Wage was raised to \$1 per hour and gas was only 23 cents a gallon. In this year, Bill Haley and His Comets sang their song “Rock around the Clock”, which would go on to be the famous theme song of the TV show Happy Days. The beautiful 55 Chevy Bel Air made its debut. Shows such as “The Micky Mouse Club” and “Gunsmoke” appeared on television. The first McDonalds Restaurant as well as Disneyland opened up to the public. Historically, Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus, the Warsaw pact was signed, and the United States began their involvement in Vietnam.

This same year, 1955, was also the year that four young fathers and one father to be, came together alongside their precious wives with the decision to reach the most unreachable tribe in the heart of the jungles of Ecuador. The names of these missionaries were Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Rodger Youdarian, Ed McCully, and Pete Flemming.

These missionaries were studs; they were college educated, some were high school and collegiate athletes, two had served their country in WWII. And with their wives they had left everything they loved behind, their friends, their family, all their treasured hometown culture, they left the American Dream for the godly dream.

Originally, they were ministering to different tribes in Ecuador, but they soon heard about this tribe of Auca, a word meaning “Naked Savage”. Or as the tribe knows themselves, the “Waadani” or very simply, the “Wao”.¹ At this time, the Wao were considered the most violent tribe on the planet. We know now that 6 out of 10 Waodani for the past five generations were speared to death. They lived in this vicious cycle of violence where if you wrong me, I spear you. At this time, Nate Saint’s sister, Rachel Saint, was also serving as a missionary in Ecuador. In 1955, she took in a young Waodani girl named, Dayuma. Dayuma had fled from being speared by her people when she was 13 years old. However, by the time Rachel had taken her in at the age of 24, her Waodani vocabulary was very broken. However, she was the only Waodani speaker the missionary team had alongside of them.

Between 1955-1956 the five missionaries sought to make friendly contact with the Waodani people. Yet, before this, they had to find the Waodani homes. The Waodani lived 50+ miles out from the closest city. They were surrounded by the densest of jungle for miles and miles in every direction.²

By sheer miracle, after many surveyed trips over the jungle, the missionaries discover the Auca huts in about a half an hour plane ride away from their home base in the city of Shell.³

¹ Also, “Waoorani” or “Huaorani.”

² It would take the Wao 4 days by foot to travel from their community to the missionary headquarters in the city of Shell. It would take an in-shape guy a good 10-12 days by foot, if they could survive.

³ According to T.E. McCully, August 29, 1955 was the date that Nate, Jim, and Ed found the Waodani community.

But, how to make friendly contact?⁴ Nate Saint, the pilot, came up with this ingenious idea, that if he flew his airplane in tight enough circles with a rope and bucket attached to it, the bucket would stay stationary at the bottom. So, for over three months they begin dropping off gift after gift.⁵ After a few drops, the Wao responded by giving gifts back in the bucket.⁶ Soon the missionaries saw the Waodani standing on a 20-foot platform they had made and wearing the clothes the missionaries had given to them during their drops.⁷ Things looked amazing!⁸ After three months of dropping off gifts, the missionaries officially agreed they were going to reach the Waodani on the ground.⁹ But, it was also agreed upon, that even though they had firearms, that they were ready for heaven, the Waodani were not, and they would not kill the Waodani if attacked.¹⁰

On January 6, while the guys were on the beach, three Waodani came out of the jungle. This included an older woman, and a younger man and a younger woman. The missionaries did the best they could to laugh, smile, and communicate in Waodani. They shared hamburgers and soda pop with the Waodani.¹¹ Everyone was friendly. Nate even took the young Waodani man up in his plane on two trips and flew him over his hut where he was able to wave down to other Waodani. Eventually, the older woman went back into the jungle first. And later, the younger man and woman returned separately without the older Waodani woman.¹² The missionaries flew home to their wives having successfully made friendly contact!

Following, the missionaries returned on Sunday January 8.¹³ But, little did they know the turmoil that was going on in the tribe. It was tribal law that the younger man and woman had to always have a chaperone with them. However, the young man and woman returned to the tribe without their chaperone. One of the tribal warriors noted he would kill the young Waodani. He responded by lying, stating the foreigners were trying to kill them.

⁴ T.E. McCully stated 13 drops. Six Auca huts they found in what they named "Terminal City". The missionaries started dropping off gifts with WWII parachute bags but found the gifts were often getting caught up in trees and could not consistently be retrieved by the Waodani.

⁵ On their fourth flight, they used a loudspeaker to speak friendly words in Wao.

⁶ The Waodani gave woven headbands, carved wooden combs, cooked fish, smoked monkey tail, and even live pet parrots.

⁷ On one trip in they found the Wao cut down a great part of the jungle surrounding their huts and later they built a 20-foot-high platform.

⁸ But as things looked great with their relationship with the Waodani, they saw tensions rising between the Oil company workers at the city of Shell and the Waodani tribe. The clash led to people losing their lives, and the fellas believed that if this tribe didn't come to know Jesus soon, then the Ecuadorian army might come in and take out the tribe, or other lives on both sides might continue to be lost.

⁹ In December of 1955.

¹⁰ On January 3, 1956, after a total of 13 drops had been made since their initial drop. Nate the pilot landed his airplane on the banks of the Curray River near the Waodani huts that they nick named "Palm Beach". Following that day, Nate took Jim, Rodger, and I believe Ed. Then Nate made six more flights that day and brought in 600 pounds of lumber to build a tree house, where they stayed the night. The next day Nate flew in Pete Flemming and other supplies. They then called out using the 26 Waodani phrases they had learned from Dayuma. Such as "We like you", "We are your friends", and "We want to help you". To my understanding, they continued to stay the night in their tree house until Friday January 6.

¹¹ They also showed them pictures of their magazines from the US.

¹² The three Wao stayed and interacted with the fellas until evening.

¹³ The returned to the beach the next day, Saturday, Overjoyed to try to make contact again. But no Waodani came to meet them that day.

So on that Sunday when the fellas had returned again joyously awaiting the Waodani,¹⁴ 7 tribal warriors ambushed the missionaries on the beach and speared them to death.¹⁵ They could have fought back, but they graciously laid down their lives for the sake of the gospel. Because they were ready for heaven and these pagan murderers were not.

Following, the Ecuadorian army and the missionary's friend, John Keenan, went in to identify and retrieve the bodies.¹⁶ After this, the news was shared with the wives of the horrific act that had befallen their husbands.¹⁷ What happens next?¹⁸ For two years, Elizabeth Elliot and Rachel Saint (Nate's sister) started concentrating on learning the Waodani language with the Waodani girl, Dayuma.¹⁹

Then, eventually, by God's grace, two young Waodani women come out of the jungle to try to find Dayuma where the missionaries were staying. When the Waodani women saw Dayuma, they thought she was a spirit. She responded by stating she was not a spirit and the foreigners were not hostile. She responded by stating that the missionaries were trying to teach them how to know "God's markings" (the Bible) and "walk God's trail". By God's grace, she was able to convince the tribe to allow these women and the children to live with them and make a promise they would not spear them.

After this, Rachel, Elizabeth and the children minister to this tribe, share the good news of Christ, and every single one of those killers came to faith in the Lord Jesus. They loved the very murderers of their husbands, their fathers, their brothers, and offer them divine forgiveness and the matchless love of Christ. Jesus performed the work that only Jesus could do: Redemption with God.

How did the family members of these missionaries interpret these events? There was certainly deep-rooted pain, hurt, and sorrow that continued to last. However, there was also a response of rejoicing amidst trial by so many members of the missionary families. Ed McCauley's father said these words shortly after these events took place.

It hasn't been easy. God doesn't promise it easy to those who dedicate their lives to him. In fact, the price that you have to pay in the eyes of the world is oftentimes terrible tragedy. We are thankful that God can turn what the world calls tragedy into triumph that the things that are disappointments in this life are in reality often times his appointments. Through it all, the Lord has been able to give us a real song in our hearts." – T.E. McCully

¹⁴ Sometime between 12:00-3:00pm.

¹⁵ Spears were around 9 feet long.

¹⁶ Shortly afterward this information spreads throughout newspapers across America. "Five missionaries believed slain".

¹⁷ This makes national news. The front page of Life Magazine January 30 1956, "Missionaries' Jungle Martydrom".

¹⁸ Olive Flemming who was pregnant had to return home. Barbara Youdarian and Marge Saint stayed in Ecuador to do other missionary work. Barbara continued to serve in Ecuador at a Student and Missionary Guest house for Gospel Missionary Union. Marge served in Quito to also run a missionary guest house.

¹⁹ Dayuma was now around 24 years old. The missionary Johnny Keenan also continued to drop off gifts by plane to the Waodani to show that the missionaries were not hostile.

This morning we will be diving into a familiar passage, James 1 verses 1-4. As we dive in, think on these questions: Can I rejoice amid trials? Can I rejoice amidst hardship, persecution, the loss of loved ones, or when experiencing the day-to-day hardships we all face? Is that possible? If I am a Christian, must I rejoice? And if so, why?

Today you will see your command to consider it pure joy when you face trials of many kinds. This doesn't mean you won't hurt, you won't mourn, you won't experience pain and turmoil. But, you can and you must rejoice when you look to the reality of Christ and His Word because you have a living hope in Him!

James 1:1-4

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. **Count** it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness **have** its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Who is the author and what is going on here? There are a few James' mentioned in the Bible. This is not the two apostles known as James the Son of Zebedee or James the son of Alphaeus. Rather this is James, the younger half-brother of Jesus. His father was Joseph and his mother, Mary, but he, of course, was not conceived by the Holy Spirit like Jesus. We see him mentioned in Mark 6:3. He was a man who witnessed the life of Christ since his birth. He grew up in the same household under the same roof as Jesus.

Can you imagine how difficult that would have been. "Mom, Jesus is lying"... "no He is not". Or, "Dad, Jesus is hit me"... "No, he didn't". Or how about, "James! Can't you be more like your older brother Jesus?"

Concerning James' initial faith in his brother Jesus, in John 7:5 we see James rejected Jesus as the Messiah. It says, "For not even his brothers believed in him" (speaking of Jesus). So was that it? Was God done with this unworthy sinner? This doubter, this rejector of Christ. No. We see divine grace. James was privileged to be amongst the first to see the risen savior in 1 Corinthians 15.²⁰ And what is profound is James was appointed to be one of the first Christian pastors. The pastor of the Jerusalem Church! And what a pastor he became.²¹ What grace!

Outside of Scripture, we know he would go on to be known as known as James the Just and James the Righteous. Various Church Fathers and historians record that the risen Jesus had appointed James to be the leader of the apostles.²² 3rd century church historian Eusebius notes Hegesippus, an earlier Christian witness, that James was noted for his piety and constant prayers in the temple. He was called "camel-knees" because he was constantly on his knees in prayer.²³

²⁰ 1 Cor. 15:3-7; cf. Acts 1:14.

²¹ In Galatians 2:9 he is noted as a Pillar of the Christian Church alongside of Peter and John. Acts 15, 21:8 and Galatians 1-2. In Acts 15 we see he would go on to serve as moderator and leader during the great Jerusalem council.

²² Clement of Alexandria, Jerome, Hegesippus, Eusebius, and Josephus (1st Century Jewish Historian).

²³ Eus. Hist. Eccl. 2.23.3-18.

Around 62 AD. During the transition of Roman governors in Judaea from that of Porcius Festus to Albinus. The Jewish High priest was able to exercise more authority without the imperial oversight of his Roman superior. “When the cat is away, the mice will play.” He saw the transition as an opportunity to try to stomp out the leader of the church in Jerusalem. It is recorded that the high priest, Ananus, had James convicted of breaking the law of Moses, found him guilty, and then had him stoned to death. James was martyred for his faith in Christ.²⁴

Why do I share this? I find it encouraging knowing that James was a man who continually suffered for the sake of Christ and was faithful to the end. He was a protector of true doctrine, a caretaker of souls, and a faithful shepherd who loved God’s people. He himself held tight to Christ and His Word amidst suffering. He was a man who knew Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection ... and would not die for a lie. And his death sealed his testimony by his own blood.

In this letter we’re reading, we see the heart of a compassionate and sympathetic shepherd who pours out his heart and soul to a group of hurting and wounded believers who were facing all different types of deep-rooted hardship and trial.²⁵ James is teaching Christians how to put their faith in action, and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he addresses that Christians can and must rejoice amidst trial. We will see his plea to believers, but let us first look to James 1:1.

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, Greetings.

In all humility, he does not address himself as some great super Christian or superior leader, but rather as a bondservant/slave of Jesus. His address is to a Jewish audience, believers in Christ that have been dispersed throughout the Mediterranean world away from Jerusalem and Israel.²⁶ The term “twelve tribes” is referring to Jewish people as a whole, who have come from the line of the 12 tribes of Israel.²⁷ James addresses them throughout his epistle as “brothers”. These are all fellow believers just like you and me who know the Lord.

Looking at verse 2, James writes,
Count/Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.

The Greek in verse 2 brings out an imperative command... “you all must” consider or count it all joy, my brothers, whenever you encounter various tests, trials, hardships.

The idea of count or consider is a mental evaluation. He is not saying to count something with numbers. James is basically commanding... think on this, take heed, regard this, look this way in your thoughts. It is like when Jesus was teaching His disciples to trust in God for

²⁴ Jos. *Ant.* 20.9.1. Hegesippus also recorded that he was thrown off the edge of the temple, then stoned, then beaten to death by an angry Mob.

²⁵ Some of these Christians likely suffered under the persecutions of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12), Saul of Tarsus (Acts 7-9; 22:4-5; 26:9-11), or others. Many of whom I have no doubts had been beaten, scourged, dragged out of their houses, imprisoned, or witnessed the loss of their loved ones.

²⁶ The word dispersion is used two other times in the Bible. We see it in John 7:35 and 1 Peter 1:1.

²⁷ This identity was not lost as we see with Paul who was from the tribe of Benjamin in Phil. 3:4-9 or Anna of the tribe of Asher in Luke 2. Cf. Matt. 19:28; Acts 26:7.

provision. Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither labor nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.²⁸

Think back to when you first started to drive a car and you asked your parent, “Am I ready to drive?” Your parent may have responded, “Count your seat belt” or “Consider your seatbelt”. Is your parent saying count how many seatbelts you have? “Five seatbelts total in the car! Let’s drive!” Or, is your parent asking you to consider your seatbelt as an option? “I’ll consider that Dad! I’ll try that option tomorrow.” No! You must turn and think on your seatbelt every time you get in that vehicle. In our text, the Bible states you must count it all joy every time you encounter various trials.

It is good to know that there is of course many different types of joy one can have. Over the last month, I have personally experienced all different types of joys. I experienced joy watching students graduate and promote including my oldest daughter promoting into 7th grade. I experienced joy singing with our students and youth staff as we washed cars together for our camp fundraiser. I’ve experienced joy watching our students and staff grow in their faith as we walked through different things together. I experienced joy recently watching my wife at a wedding we attended know and sing the full lyrics to the song, “I’ll tell you what I want what I Really Really Want” by the Spice Girls. We were dancing, she broke out in song... and I was like, where did this come from?? I had no clue she knew that whole song. Our music we grew up on in Jr High hadn’t gone anywhere. And she rocked it!

A week ago, I experienced a very special kind of joy when I was able to jump out from behind a door and scare the living daylights out of one of our poor timid pastors... twice in one week. His look of sheer terror brought me so much joy. However, I must admit that he proceeded to scare me twice in one hour this last Tuesday and another time later that day.

You yourselves have experienced all different types of joy for so many occasions in your life. Perhaps you’ve experienced joy winning a game, finishing a difficult task, getting married, or the birth of a child. The joy James is speaking about in our text can absolutely involve jumping for joy, getting fired up, or experiencing a precious and sweet delight of the heart.

But, what separates the joy I am speaking of is its unique source. It is the deep-rooted joy one can have when they remember the Lord, when they remember who Jesus is and what He has done, His promises, His character, the reward He offers, His victory, and the reality that He is right there with you.

James goes on to write in chapter 1, verse 12, “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.”

The joy spoken of in our passage comes from your confidence in Christ and knowing that divine results are coming. Think of the joy that comes when you remember John 3:16. Think of the joy you have when you know He took your place on the cross... When you remember you did not earn your way to heaven... that you were saved by grace through faith!

²⁸ Luke 12:27.

If you have never repented and turned to Christ, please do so, it will be the greatest and most joyous decision you will ever make. It will also enable you to rejoice amidst trials because you are now in the hands of the King of Kings and have a true living hope. The Gospel brings joy continuously. This is why I want to hear the gospel every chance I get.

This is why I love singing worship songs at church and throughout the week. This is why I love taking communion... we remember the cross and the promise of Jesus' return. This is why I love always thanking the Lord for the Gospel as much as we can in prayer. This is why I love sitting under the Word of God and being saturated in it throughout the week. This is why I love sharing my testimony... I'm reminded of when God ripped a wretched rebellious, punk kid out of darkness and into light. We all must consider it pure joy when we face trials of many kinds. And we can do this with Christ.

Hear this too, the trials referenced in our text doesn't just speak of persecution or loss of loved ones,²⁹ but rather trials of many kinds. Many kinds refer to great diversity. This includes the day-to-day hardships and the trials we will face for our faithfulness in Christ. At the end of the day, life is not easy. You've surrendered living for your way and have turned to living for God His way. There is a cost in taking up your cross and follow Christ.

Throughout your life, you will face all different types of trials. You may experience unexpected accidents that will put a wrench in your day. You may experience arguments, disagreements, something breaks, things don't go according to plan, all your work on something valuable is lost. People may mistreat you, reject you, hurt you, or take advantage of you.

This of course doesn't mean you consider it pure joy and laugh all weird with a fake joy. It absolutely doesn't mean it won't hurt or be painful. It hurts to be rejected and wronged. It can feel like the worst when things take a difficult turn. But, when you consider the Lord... what a joy to remember Romans 8:28, "that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." He is with you, He calls you to Himself, He promises reward. Let Him continue to be all satisfying and give you joy.

Our text again continues,

for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have *its* full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Faith is the idea of absolute trust and total confidence. We see this in Hebrews 11:1-3,

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

Even though you can't physically see God, you have absolute trust and total conviction that He is who He says He is. You believe Jesus created the earth in six days and rested on the seventh even though you did not physically see that event take place.

²⁹ See **Acts 14:22**; 2 Timothy 3:12; Philippians 1:29.

Think of those donuts you might have eaten earlier. I'm going to go out on a limb here, but I highly doubt that anyone physically tested to see if those donuts were poisoned or not. Question: Any Dad's love to poison test desserts for the sake of the children? Now saying that no Dad's valiantly poison tested today... It is safe to say that you who ate those donuts acted in faith, with absolute assurance, and believed those donuts were good... even though you didn't scientifically examine them before eating them. Perhaps the first time you were here at Grace you had your suspicions, but you continued to grow in your faith of our donuts.

The testing of faith in God results in "steadfastness". The idea of steadfastness is like a rock in a raging river. It is firm and is not going anywhere despite the immense power of the waves or current. In football, the offensive line must be steadfast when the other team tries to push through, otherwise the opposing team will take out your quarterback.

Think of soldiers, athletes, or musicians who all train and face many tests and trials. Through each trial and hardship, they become more mature. As seasoned veterans in their craft, they are not fazed by previous difficulties and similar setbacks they have seen before. Soldiers or athletes who have weathered difficult seasons are often able to help and guide their teammates who may be facing similar trials and obstacles they themselves have already experienced. Trials and developed maturity can grant wisdom on how to face the obstacles that lie ahead.

Verse 4 of our text states, "And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." The idea of "perfect" refers to much of what we just spoke of. It has the idea of reaching the highest maturity in Christ. Colossians 4:12 states, "...that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God." The concept of "lacking in nothing" is much like in James 2:15 that references you won't lack in daily food. The idea is that the intended outcome of trials will result in maturity in the Lord where you grow in your relationship with God and see Him as all sufficient for your need in everything and for every trial.

One thing I remember, it seems when I'm facing any kind of trial, from something devastating to twisting my ankle... I find myself praying more. I continue to see my absolute and utter need for Christ in a unique and sobering way. James 1:17 notes that every good and perfect gift comes from the Lord. Trials are in many ways a gift from God. They sanctify us and draw us near to Christ.

Think about times you may have dealt with the most difficult people at work, if you've lost your job, been evicted from your home, lost huge investments. Think on when people you love hurt you..., think on just how much you saw your absolute need for Christ, and were drawn to prayer. I think on the trials and tears I've had over loved ones continually rejecting the Lord, but I also think about how much more I've been drawn to Christ in prayer for them! Who knows what the Lord is doing and what He plans to accomplish? I think you and I both know that His timing is much better than ours is. Who knows if that person will turn to Christ in the last moments of their life? Or if God will use your prayers as a means of accomplishing His will? Your seeking the Lord in prayer is time well spent. You will certainly never regret resting in Jesus and trusting His ways. All that He does is for His glory and for your good. It is also good to think on what God asked Job after Job received trials, "Where were you when I laid the

foundation of the earth?” Regardless of your circumstances, you must trust the Lord and remain faithful.

Please know I of course have not experienced your personal trials. No one has. I personally cannot 100 % relate to all you have gone through or what you are currently going through. Sure, I’ve been betrayed, abandoned, crushed, experienced deep-rooted heartache, and the loss of loved ones, I’ve had my own experiences where the world around me feels like it is crashing down in all directions. I can’t personally relate to losing a spouse, a parent, or a child. I can’t imagine the pain, agony, and the daily heartache that you may be dealing with.

I can’t imagine looking at their side of the bed and not seeing them there. I can’t imagine not hearing their laughter, their voice, being able to see their smile. I can’t imagine seeing their clothes, their things, with them not physically there. I can’t imagine experiencing something exciting and not being able to share and talk to them. I can’t. But, you know who can? Our Father who willingly surrendered His Son for sinners like you and me. And you might say... yes Jared but He got His Son back... Exactly! And that is good news!

Because Jesus conquered death and freed us from our sin... we won’t best case scenario experience those loved ones for a lifetime, but rather experience them, if they have been redeemed, for an eternity... by the power of Jesus. Still, we must remember that being united with loved ones is not the goal. Christ is the goal.

And of course, nothing can fill the void of a loved one dying. There is no remedy; there is no getting over those loved ones. I don’t believe that is Jesus wants us to do at all. Again, going through any trial will hurt and there will be tears and heartache. Jesus wept!

And even though I said that I can’t fully relate to all that you are going through... this doesn’t disqualify a brother or sister from coming alongside of you to encourage you in the gospel. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 states,

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

We can all offer each other the living hope of Christ and His Word. We are called to bare one another’s burdens and encourage one another in the Lord. Praise the Lord we can point each other to Christ! Hebrews 4:15-16 states,

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Things to remember: When God is doing one thing, He is doing a million things. We have no clue what He is accomplishing with our trials, and we have no clue what He will accomplish in

the future.³⁰ We are not guaranteed results that are favorable in our eyes, but we can rejoice in our savior knowing He is true and His promises are true. We must trust in God despite our circumstances. None of them are a surprise for God. He is the goal and the prize!

Jordan said recently in a sermon, “Our perception of God’s sovereignty dictates our trust.” Do you believe God is sovereign? Do you believe God is good and abounding in steadfast love? Do you believe He works all things out for your good? If yes... we will cry, we will hurt, and we will mourn... but we can look to our loving Savior who is all sufficient and our continual source of joy.

When Christ-centered joy overflows in your life amidst the heartache and trials, it can exemplify the work of Jesus to the world. How can you have joy amidst trial? ... Because my Savior is not still in the grave... He rose and conquered victoriously. Run to truth, run to prayer, run to fellowship, run to worship, run to your gracious Father who knows and loves you and has arms wide open.

Why must you consider joy amidst trials? Because you have the Gospel and you will continue to grow in steadfastness for Christ through trials and hardship, and you will continue to have victory and reward through the triumphs of the Savior. Paul stated to the church of Philippi in Philippians 1:23-24, “I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.” The reality is that we all have gospel work to do. Finish the race, be about your Father’s business, and keep your eyes on Jesus.

A few things to end our time. A question I asked myself when looking to the story of the five missionaries and their families was, Can you rejoice after the tragedy in the jungles of Ecuador? Listen to the words of Elizabeth Elliot, wife of Jim Elliot:

“Christ is sufficient. We do not need "support groups" for each and every separate tribulation. The most widely divergent sorrows may all be taken to the foot of the same old rugged cross and find there cleansing, peace, and joy.” – Elizabeth Elliot

Pete Flemming, one of the five missionaries, left these words to his fellow students in his High School Year book, “I don’t know what the future holds but I know who holds the future.” Whatever trials come your way, hardship, heartache... Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Not one of His Words will pass away. He is with you, He loves you, He is sufficient, and He is the prize.

Josh Starkey gave a wonderful exposition of Psalm 16 to our High School students this last Wednesday. Psalm 16:8-11 states, “I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” May we have joy in Jesus now and forever more.

³⁰ Look to the amazing examples of Joseph and Job!