

1 Thessalonians 5:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Rejoice evermore.

Analysis

Rejoice evermore—pantote chairete (πάντοτε χαίρετε, 'always rejoice'). This is the Bible's shortest verse in Greek (two words), yet contains profound command. Pantote (πάντοτε, 'always') removes circumstantial limitations—rejoice in prosperity and adversity, health and sickness, freedom and persecution. Chairō (χαίρω, 'to rejoice') isn't mere happiness (circumstance-dependent) but supernatural joy (Spirit-produced). Paul writes from persecution (3:7) to persecuted believers (2:14; 3:3); yet commands constant joy.

How can suffering believers 'rejoice evermore'? Not by denying pain (Paul acknowledges affliction) but by transcending circumstances through gospel hope. Joy's sources include:

1. salvation secured (v. 9)
2. Christ's imminent return (4:16-17)
3. eternal life guaranteed (4:17)
4. present trials temporary (Rom 8:18)
5. God's sovereignty assured (Rom 8:28).

This isn't forced cheerfulness or emotional denial but deep-seated gladness rooted in gospel realities. Joy coexists with sorrow (2 Cor 6:10)—Christians grieve but not hopelessly (4:13), suffer but not joylessly. Rejoicing 'evermore' is command, not suggestion—obedience produces joy beyond circumstances.

Historical Context

Paul's command to 'rejoice evermore' resonates with his letter to Philippians (written from prison): 'Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice' (Phil 4:4). Early Christians demonstrated this paradoxical joy—singing in prison (Acts 16:25), counting persecution privilege (Acts 5:41), facing martyrdom gladly (Stephen, Acts 7:55-60). Roman authorities couldn't comprehend Christians' joy amid suffering, which attracted observers to the faith. Contemporary prosperity gospel teaching promising circumstantial happiness betrays Paul's theology of joy-in-suffering. True Christian joy transcends circumstances because it's rooted in unchanging gospel truth, not changing conditions.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What evidence demonstrates that your joy is 'evermore' (constant) rather than circumstance-dependent?
2. How do you distinguish between superficial happiness and deep gospel joy that coexists with genuine sorrow?
3. What specific gospel truths produce joy 'evermore' when circumstances would naturally produce despair?

Interlinear Text

Πάντοτε χαίρετε

evermore

G3842

Rejoice

G5463

Additional Cross-References

Romans 12:12 (Parallel theme): Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Philippians 4:4 (Parallel theme): Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

Matthew 5:12 (Parallel theme): Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

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.

Luke 10:20 (Parallel theme): Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

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