

# Rejoice Evermore

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] now this fifth chapter of first thessalonians has particularly in the latter part of it a whole lot of what we might call nowadays bullet points or sound bites of good uh christian knowledge all these little nuggets uh of gold rejoice evermore pray without ceasing quench not the spirit defy despise not prophesying and so on abstain from all appearance of evil these little short verses um which if one were to grasp and hold fast then indeed you could you could build an awful lot with them and from them i'd like us to look this evening at one of these verses and that is verse 16 rejoice evermore now this has the distinction of being the shortest verse in the new testament and no doubt in the whole bible as a result given that was probably not an old testament verse that is longer though i don't know that for a fact so if you find one let me know now i realize of course that it's a lot less well known than one of the other main contenders for that position of shortest verse in the new testament you ask most people that they'll say oh yes that's the verse jesus wept john 11 verse 35 now but it is a point of interest we can we can argue about which one's shorter which one's longer and we'll come to that in just a wee minute um but well it is i think a point worthy of interest that the two shortest let's say the two shortest verses in the entire new testament are found at the opposite ends the two ends of the emotional spectrum both weeping and rejoicing you've got jesus wept in john 11 35 and you've got this here in first thessalonians 5 16 rejoice evermore both in english they're both two words and if we were to say well okay how do we decide which is which is the shorter which is the longer uh of them well if you've got a gallic bible of course then you will know i'm sure that jesus wept in gallic is likewise two words whereas rejoice evermore in gallic in the gallic bible is four words but of course the bible isn't originally written in english or in gallic it's written in greek and in greek the term jesus wept has three words two words and a definite article making three all together whereas rejoice evermore is only two greek words which makes it technically the shortest verse in the bible but of course just to confuse things the very next verse pray without ceasing which is three words in english and uh which is again four words in gaelic is again just two words in greek so you could say we've got the two shortest verses here think why is he getting such a big deal who cares you know what is that what is the shortest and what is the longest and all the rest of it why does it really matter well i would suggest to you that what is short and pithy like that is most memorable most easily remembered i think rejoice several wars have been passed over because everybody has it in the mind that the shortest verse is jesus wept and when we remember jesus wept we think of the context we think of john 11 we think of the raising of lazarus whereas the context here in first thessalonians 5 is a whole lot of bullet points a whole lot of sound bites and it's easier to forget let's let's go to the context in john 11 now with jesus wept john 11 uh verse 35 there why is jesus weeping there well we could say it's sorrow for the misery that sin had brought into the world and which it does of course it brings with it death that's what james tells us chapter 1 verses 14 and 15 every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed then when lusts have conceived that bringeth forth sin and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death and it's almost portrayed as

as you can see then james almost in terms of of a biological conception and birth as though you've got this kind of perverted form in which sin the lust brings forth sin it conceives it and then there's this gestation period when it's a growing inside and then it brings forth not alive but not a child but brings forth death and that is what sin does it brings forth death and that's of course what the lord said to adam and eve at the outset the day you eat of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil you'll surely die death will come in sin will bring forth death and that's of course exactly what happened it's not what god intended ideally he didn't intend sin to be in the world he made a good world and he made adam and eve in his own image he made them good to reflect his image but mathematically we can we can know human nature being what it is even when it's created sin sinless somewhere along the way if it hadn't been adam and it hadn't been eve it would have been someone it would have been cain or it would have been seth or it would have been someone further down the generations was going to do what was forbidden we could say that god's original plan is for generation upon generation as humanity multiplies to rejoice and be with him for all eternity in glory in life everlasting without sin without death that's his plan his plan but of course he knows as well what sin will enter it so he has a plan ready for salvation somewhere along the line someone was going to take that fruit someone was going to eat it that's human nature if you put a button anywhere probably say do not press this button under any circumstances whatever just don't press this button people can look at it well we won't be somewhere someone eventually press it and then just see what happens just for the sake of seeing what happens because that's our human nature somewhere along the line someone was going to miss it somewhere along the line sin was going to enter in and bring forth death and jesus of course thousands of hundreds anywhere of generations later is seeing the fruit of this with the death of lazarus he is seeing the misery the death brings that sin brings and also if we can we can i think say it in all reverence he is sorrowing and grieving that his beloved friends martha and mary whatever they're saying outwardly surely believed that he had let them down they had sent for him they said lord he who my love is the sick and he didn't come and he didn't come and he didn't come and he knew why he wasn't coming and he knew what he planned to do but he saw the misery and he saw the heartbreak and he saw also the broken hearts of those who had believed him and trusted in him and who thought not knowing the end from the beginning who thought that he had let them down and would have felt and also i can attract phrase people say why feel your pain when of course they don't but jesus really would have felt the pain and the sorrow of feeling let down that they had sent for him they had asked him and he had become but now he came when lazarus had been four days in the grave and then he knew what he was going to do then he raised him back to life and even though the triumph of raising lazarus from the grave was just about to happen still jesus wept when he saw the misery the heartbreak the sorrow that sin brings with it there is weeping in this world god of his divine nature i would suggest to you cannot weep but in and of himself as a man being both holy human and holy divine he is enabled to weep he is

enabled to be tired he is enabled to be hungry he is enabled to suffer he is unable to bleed he is unable to die all these things the godhead is able to enter into simply because he has become man and which in all reverence we might say he could not enter into until he had become man although he would know everything about it but he couldn't experience it for himself in this context jesus wept and this being a very famous verse is erroneously often thought to be the shortest in the bible but as i said the actual shortest in the bible is in terms of english and greek combined it is this verse rejoice evermore here it is at the other opposite end of the spectrum and yet these two go hand in hand in scripture they're not they're not opposites in the sense of being against each other but they're rather all part of the same spectrum albeit opposite ends a rainbow is not torn apart just because there's red at one end and uh and uh and violet at the other end there's all the colors in between it's all one rainbow with these distinct colors in it so likewise there's joy at one end there's weeping at the other end but they're all part of the same human experience psalm 30 puts it remember at verse 5 weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning and if we look at this psalm 30 if you want to turn to it with me just for a moment you'll see that there is in it both the sorrow of all that david has been through with the lord and almost like the punishment or the chastisement of the lord but also the lord's deliverance i will extol thee oh lord thou has lifted me up and has not made my foes to rejoice over me but if he's being lifted up then he must previously have been cast down and surrounded by his foes whom the lord has not allowed to rejoice over him oh lord my god i cried unto thee he cried out in the midst of his meat and thou hast healed me if he's healed he must have been sick ill or wounded in some way the lord has healed him oh lord thou has brought up my soul from the grave he must have been ready to perish thou has kept me alive otherwise he would have died that i should not go down to the pit you see the contrast here that david is not saying hey everything's been fine and sweet and hunky-dory i haven't had a foot wrong i haven't had a problem in my life everything's just sunshine and light no he's been at the very mouth of the grave he's been almost overwhelmed by his enemies he has been wounded and now the lord has healed him he has been cast down and the lord has raised him up sing unto the lord who he said to us give thanks in the remembrance of his holiness for his anger endureth but for a moment in his favor is life weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning the fact that joy comes in the morning doesn't eliminate the fact that weeping will endure for a night it doesn't alter the fact that though his anger may last but a moment his anger will be a very present reality again soon in my prosperity i said i shall never be moved lord by thy favor thou hast made my mountain to stand strong thou didst hide thy face and i was troubled i cried to thee o lord and unto the lord i made supplication what profit is there in my blood when i go down to the pit shall the dust praise thee shall it declare thy truth hear o lord and have mercy upon me lord be thou my helper here he is in distress god has turned his face away he has withdrawn and david is panicking he is the very life force and is ebbing away without the lord here o lord have mercy upon me be thou my helper and then verse 11 thou hast turned

for me my mourning into dancing thou hast put off my sackcloth and burdened me with gladness to the end that my glory may soon praise to thee and not be silent o lord my god i will give thanks unto thee forever forever or we might say ever more which brings us back again the mix that we have here not so much the contrast but the combination of both joy and sorrow we've got the weeping that may endure for the night the joy that come up in the morning the weeping which is very real but which does not last indefinitely even when jesus wept you can just imagine the almost the laughter of joy as lazarus comes out from the grave and everybody's rejoicing around him he must have delighted to be able to bestow such unmitigated joy and laughter and delight on everybody around especially on martha and mary who had trusted in him and to see that trust restored and to see the joy that would have been in them no wonder they would have been devoted to him for the rest of their lives so the weeping is a reality the one end of the spectrum is real but it does not last whereas the rejoicing is as david says forever or as we have here rejoice evermore there is this both and and also of course pray without ceasing this accessing of the lord going as we said on the lord's day to the tap of the clean water keeping on going back with accessing the lord's grace pray without ceasing but how can we truly rejoice evermore all the time when there seems to be so much to weep about jesus may have wept only for a short time weeping may endure in some cases only for a night in other cases some people will weep for a long long time some problems in life do not go away some difficulties are not readily overcome this world is full of brokenness and of suffering and of brutality as well and all of it is the result of sin having entered into the world i was reading as some of you will no doubt have done from uh mr morrison's mission uh a newsletter about uh a newsletter about an encounter he had in galla shields about a young woman whose friend had supposedly had four abortions already and was again pregnant with another child and she was still only 15 years old now we can't get our heads around that level of darkness and the damage to that young body because of sin and indifference in the world because in many cases people don't know any better in many cases the darkness keeps them a slave to these things that will destroy them there is so much to weep about how can we rejoice evermore well paul gives us a clue in his letter to the philippians of course in chapter 3 in verse 1 finally my brethren rejoice in the lord to write the same things to you to me indeed is not grievous but for you it is sin chapter 4 verse 1 therefore my brethren dearly beloved and long for my joy and crying so stand fast in the lord my dearly beloved and at verse 4 rejoice in the lord always and again i say rejoice this gives us a clue as to our ability to rejoice it is not in ourselves it is in the lord who has done all things well despite the depths of darkness and sin that is in the world god didn't put that sin there

when god made animals he made them good he made them clean he made them pure when god brings grace and gifts he gives pure gifts he gives pure love god who has done all things well who hold us all things in a palm of his hand who makes no mistakes whose plans for us and thoughts toward us are always for our good this is his desire this is his desire for those who have been brutalized and and no doubt mumbled in their lives in their bodies and all that they have experienced the lord's desire is that they should have something better something pure and holier that everybody can be encouraged and invited to that new life that he desires to be well this is this is what we read of course if you remember in in romans uh in romans 8 uh in verse uh verse 28 i should have put the marker in but i forgot romans 8 uh in verse 28 and we read we know that all things work together for good to them that love god to them who are the called according to his purpose i say well i don't see all things working together for good but it's not all things work together for good for all and somebody and for everybody in the world it's all things work together for good to them that love god to them who are the called according to his purpose because if we love the lord we are enabled to see that he is out working all things for his glory and for our good and going on in these verses for whom he did for no he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son that he might be the firstborn among many brethren moreover whom he did predestinate then he also called on whom he called and whom he also justified and whom he justified then he also glorified what shall we then say to these things if god before us who can be against us if god is in such control and charge we have reason to rejoice despite all that we see in the world sometimes occasionally nothing like as often as i used to in my younger days i might watch say recorded highlights in sports scene or something and see whether or not it might be a one and if i know that they've won i can happily watch the recorded highlights even if i know say one three two or four three or whatever i can watch with equanimity and i can have a chuckle to myself when i see the opposition scoring and dancing about and all their fans going wild with with delight and i can get bigger because i know what the end result is going to be he that sit on the heavens shall laugh when he sees the devil's little triumphs against suffering humanity he sees what the devil does he sees the devil rejoicing over the destruction of souls and he that stood in the heavens shall laugh because we can rejoice ever more in the knowledge that all things work together for good to them that love god who are the called according to his purpose and if we love not the lord then we're not going to be in any any more worse condition because if we don't love the lord and we're against him and we don't believe in him then the the devil's not a problem to us either we do his will without his second thought we don't fight against it we don't argue against it there's no internal struggle going on because we just go with the flow but for those who love the lord they are conscious of this conflict conscious of this fact that there is a combination of both weeping and rejoicing and we are taught that we are to rejoice evermore constantly

[ 20 : 15 ] always because our souls as we saw there in psalm 30 you know our sorrows they are part and parcel not only of our experience in this world but of our experience with the lord sometimes the lord does turn his face away sometimes the lord does withdraw for a time so that even his own children may become more acutely aware of their dependence upon him most of you will be um acutely conscious that just before the communes i was uh full of the cold sneezing all over the place uh unable to go to the door to shake hands you don't want to spread the germs with anyone one thing about having to spend time in bed full of the cold or feeling miserable or choked up or unable to breathe properly is it makes you realize how most of the time the lord in his mercy gives you decent health most of the time you're not laid low but most of the time you're not suffering all these difficulties or the ailments of what whatever one of the things of being under the weather in these ways is that it reminds you how good god is the rest of the time it reminds you of how merciful god is most of the time and gives us such good gifts good health food drink shelter all that we have and most of the time we're not grateful for it because we take it for granted sometimes the lord withdraws some of his gifts for a little while sometimes the lord turns his face away for a little while just so that like david as we read here that when the lord withdrew himself when the lord turned his face away that thou wouldst hide thy face and i was troubled david began to feel his very life force ebbing away and so it is with the believer we cannot live without the lord we cannot survive without the lord we cannot breathe without the oxygen of the lord's grace and presence our sorrows yes god permits sometimes he may actively cause because he's in charge of all things he is the one who administers yes at times our chastisement and our discipline and yet we are to rejoice evermore we are to rejoice in that which the lord has given us rejoice in that which the lord does for us rejoice above all in the salvation he has purchased for us which means that whatever we suffer just now he says nothing compared to the glory that shall be revealed remember that's what's wrong let's in the romans again in chapter 8 i reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us rejoice evermore in the lord it's a rejoicing that doesn't just continue for now not just when things go well but a rejoicing that is able to have joy even when things are against us because god is still in charge even when we go down because god is still on the throne even when things may seem to overwhelm us because god is still the one that holds our life in the palm of his hand our salvation is not in doubt because it was never dependent upon our strength our glory and goodness is not in doubt because it's not dependent upon our own ability to abstain from sin our righteousness is enthroned at the right hand of god the father where christ is enthroned in glory there is our righteousness in him when we look at our sins we look to the cross and we see our sin put to death there upon the cross as christ became sin for us and died there having become man precisely so that he could die our salvation our forgiveness the death of our sin it is all bound up with christ

therefore we are to rejoice evermore it is the shortest pithiest you could say verse in the entire scripture that we are to have joy in the lord both now and not only in this life but forever forever and forever more as the lord may administer our souls for the time it is not because he hates us any more than if you had a personal fitness trainer and he yells at you at six o'clock in the morning and blows his whistle to get you out of bed and to pull on your gear and to start running or stretching or doing your exercise and it's still pitch dark and freezing cold and he's yelling at you the whole time he's getting you to run alongside his bike it's not because he hates you it's because he wants you to maximize the best that you can be and that's his job that's his job to be there and to bring out the best in you he is there to make sure that you go through all the motions which you wouldn't otherwise do you just turn over in your bed and go back to sleep but because he's there you can't do anything else and we would perhaps prefer just the easy old year long to have it under our own steam sort of thing god doesn't allow us to do that he doesn't intend us just to be a rotten piece of fruit at the bottom of the barrel he intends us to be ripe and glorious he intends us to glorify him which we will only do if we are the best that he can make us and therefore sometimes yes he'll be doing the equivalent of yelling at us at six o'clock in the morning to get us out of bed he'll be doing the equivalent of putting us through painful exercises and motions and experiences that we'd rather not have but just like the elupic athlete for all that goes beforehand for that brief burst of time that is their final race which will decide whether they get their gold medal or not all the years of training and suffering and hardship and discipline have all been leading up to this event and all the lifetime of training all the lifetime of having our rough edges chipped off and sanded down and made smooth by one difficult experience or one bit of spiritual training after another all of this is so that not only we are our witness during our witness during our lifetime but that as we pass from time into eternity it is like ascending the podium to receive a gold medal of glory because this is what the lord was training us up for and ripening us for that rejoicing here we might rejoice evermore he is not only the source of our difficulties or discipline or chastisement though he will sometimes be that there is weeping jesus wept all of us have wept at times but the weeping is not forever we read in revelation that there will be no more sorrow or crying no more tears except possibly as i say tears of joy perhaps but no more weeping or crying or crying or sorry for the former things are passed away once you've got new gold medal you don't have to go back to the running track anymore you don't have to go back to the slog you've done it you've achieved it rejoice evermore because the end result is guaranteed you have to put in this lifetime's labor and toil because the end result is guaranteed because christ has already purchased the glory for us that is the cause for rejoicing that is the reason why we know that all the training all the suffering all the obstacles down here are not in vain because of what he has already done go back to john 11 again

jesus wept martha met wept may wept all the jews who had come to sympathize with him wept they were all sorrowing but what was that all for why had jesus delayed so long so that they would all break their hearts so that he would all be weeping no but so that he would bring the triumph of life out of the midst of death and turn their mourning into dancing they're weeping into joy weeping they into the night the joy cometh in the morning and this joy as jesus says to his disciples elsewhere ye sorrow for now but your soul shall be turned into joy and that joy no man take it from you rejoice evermore it's not a long complicated difficult verse to remember it is the shortest in scripture and yet it is in one sense the most demanding it is that which doesn't come to us by nature but it is that which is planted within us by grace it is a supernatural work of the lord that we are enabled to rejoice in them to rejoice for now and to rejoice evermore