

# THE FIRST 15

Thursday, September 26, 2024

By: Jan Davis

Today is Thursday, September 26 and we are studying what the Bible says about worry.

## OPENING PRAYER

*Holy and loving God, I worship You in the stillness of this day with a thankful heart. Help me hear the message You have for me. Speak to me through the power of Your Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord. In a world full of uncertainty and anxiety, You promise hope, peace, joy and gratitude. Teach me the secret of living in Your presence and abiding with You in all circumstances. Amen.*

## SCRIPTURE

***Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:4-7***

## REFLECTION

In Philippians chapter four, Paul gives us the secret formula for dealing with the human condition of worry and anxiety. When we follow Paul's formula over time we will notice a transformation. Our "worry list" becomes a "prayer list" and our "prayer list" becomes a "gratitude list". That is Paul's secret formula! When we practice it, we will receive the promised result which is "peace."

Paul says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." The peace of God which transcends all understanding is a peace that we can know. It is a sense that all is well. The peace of God is unaffected by the external events of life. This peace does not have its source in the world - but in God. Peace is a gift God wants to give. Isaiah 26:3 says, "You will keep in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts You."

God bestows His peace upon the faithful. He downloads tranquility in the midst of life's storms. Believers report inexplicable calm in the face of trials. We should be worried, but we are not. We should be upset, but we feel comforted. We should be anxious, but we have peace. The night before Jesus went to the cross to suffer and die for our salvation, He promised us peace. He said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14:27)

Paul says the peace of God *guards* our hearts and minds. The word used for guard in Greek is like a sentry who stands watch all night protecting the keep of the castle. In this same way, God stands watch over our hearts.

When I was a child and I was ill with a cold or a fever, my mother would tuck me in bed. She would pull up a big rocking chair next to the bedside. She would gently rock in the rocking chair until I fell asleep. It was a great comfort to me to know she was there. I am not sure how long she stayed, but as a child I assumed she kept her sentry watch all night long. From her rocking chair post, she watched over me, caring for me, protecting me, guarding me. That is the kind of God we have, who watches over us. The God of the universe stands watch over our hearts and minds and protects us from whatever the world can throw at us. Like a mother in a rocking chair, "The Lord is near." God is with us. He is very close. We can live a life of faith that is anxiety-free and worry-free because of the peace of God that watches over us.

**Ask:** How might the image of God watching over my circumstances like a loving mother relieve some of my worry or fear? How can I best receive the peace of God that surpasses understanding?

**Pause and Pray**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Holy and loving God, I rejoice in You. I am thankful that You are near to me in all the comings and goings of my daily life. I search my spirit to discern what causes me worry, fear or anxiety today. Help me to not be anxious about anything. Following Paul's formula I turn my worries into prayers and my prayers into gratitude. I pray for Your peace to pour into my life and circumstances. May Your good peace guard my heart and mind in Christ Jesus, my Lord. Amen.*