

THE FIRST 15

Wednesday, January 8, 2025

By: Jan Davis

Today is Wednesday, January 8. This week we prayerfully explore what God has next for us in the upcoming new year.

OPENING PRAYER

As I enter a time of prayer, I pause and become still. I calm my thoughts and silence my mind. I breathe deeply and slowly, and center myself upon the presence of God. Come Holy Lord, reveal whatever You have next for me in this new year. I surrender myself to Your pleasing and perfect will, trusting in the knowledge that You work all things together for good. Guide and equip me to fulfill Your desires, purposes and plans. Order my steps, instruct my ways, inspire my intentions and direct my motivations. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1:3-6, 9-11

REFLECTION

Discernment is an essential tool of the Christian. God promises to give us the ability to discern right and wrong, good from evil, the best path vs. the worst path, what is of God and what is not of God. As part of sanctifying grace, my ability to discern grows, I gain a holy understanding and can make wiser decisions about the future.

In his letter to the church in Philippi, Paul expresses his thankfulness and joy for these believers and assures them that God is not finished with them yet, but will continue to work for good in them and increase their holiness. Paul is thankful for these Christian converts in ancient Philippi and joyfully prays for them. I imagine Paul's words to the Philippians addressed to me.

God is the one who initiated my relationship with Him. God found me, claimed me and called me to His side. God began a good work in me and as Paul reminds me, I can be confident that God will continue that work until I am complete and mature.

My spiritual journey may sometimes seem like I am taking two steps forward and one step back, but I make progress because ultimately it is not up to me. God is the one working for good in me. Thank God! Because of grace I continue to grow in love, knowledge, insight, wisdom and discernment. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, I am in the process of being purified, kept blameless and filled with the fruit of righteousness.

I consider how God might want to guide my journey in this new year. What might God have next for me in 2025? Am I confident God is continuing to work for good in me? Perhaps I am skeptical that God has the power to change me or my circumstances. Maybe I have begun to realize I am struggling on my own to make progress and working in my own power instead of God's power. Perhaps God wants to renew my confidence in His power of sanctifying grace and His ability to produce abundant fruit through me in this next year.

Ask: How am I cooperating (and not cooperating) with God's work of sanctifying grace in me? What changes can I make in the new year to be more open to the work God wants to carry out?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy and loving God, thank you for the good work you began in me years ago. I am grateful that you have not left me to rely on my own devices but remind me that you are not finished with me yet. Although I have made progress in the spiritual life, I am profoundly aware that I still have far to go. I commit myself to your guidance and yield to your leadership in this upcoming year. I recognize that I am helpless to make progress on my own and turn to You in poverty of spirit asking for Your merciful grace. Come and reveal the obstacles preventing my maturity and the resistance impeding the work of sanctification. I surrender myself - body, mind and soul to Your lordship and submit myself to Your perfect will. Amen.