The Peace of God **November 23, 2025**

Philippians 4:4-9
4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Thanksgiving is a time to reflect upon the things we are thankful for. I am thankful for too many blessings to mention. This letter was written around 50 AD, twenty years after the death of Christ and twenty years before the Gospels were written. Paul, Silas, and Timothy had left Asia Minor for Europe and traveled to Philippi, establishing Paul's first church in Europe. Paul met with women at a Jewish prayer meeting on a riverbank outside the city. One woman, Lydia, a merchant of luxurious purple-dyed cloth, converted to Christianity and offered her house as the church. The Apostle Paul wrote these words of rejoicing and thanksgiving while in prison—not depressed, but happy and thankful. He encourages us to think about the good things: whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. When we do, the peace of God will be with us.

These words sound simple: just don't worry about anything, and all our problems are solved. But it's easier said than done. Someone is giving you a hard time. Financial stress weighs on you. There's trouble at home, sickness, or a terminally ill loved one. When my mother had a stroke and the nurse said, "It will be all right." She had a stroke—it is not going to be all right! When someone tells you not to worry, it feels like a shallow response. It's different when you are the one that is going through trouble.

The Bible teaches us that you don't cut worry out of your life by ignoring things. What you do is exchange it. Trade in your worry for the peace of God through prayer—specifically, a supplication prayer which is a plea for help. Instead of worrying, pray to God with thanksgiving. You may find it difficult to be thankful when worried, but have no fear. You are making your requests known to God, so trust in God and let God have your worry. However, this doesn't mean dumping your problems and forgetting about them. "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" means God is not to perform for you or relieve you of your responsibility. Do not assume God will bail you out while you behave recklessly. The Apostle Paul says "in everything." This means everything you do should involve praying to God. Don't just go to God when you're in trouble. Let all of your requests be made known to God with thanksgiving. Prayer must be sincere—deep meditation from the heart. It's a matter of attitude: always thankful, always trusting.

When you turn to God and turn your worries over, your setbacks, frustrations, challenges, and anxiety get replaced with the peace of God. You might say, "Preacher, I don't always feel that peace. How can that help me with all I'm going through?" The peace of God transcends all understanding. No matter what you're going through, even the worst of the worst, you can still have the peace of God beyond our ability to

understand it. The condition is that you must pray sincerely to God with thanksgiving. The Apostle Paul is a good biblical example. He escaped persecution in Damascus, faced confrontation in Antioch, was brought before the Roman Governor in Corinth, endured beatings, riots, labors, sleepless nights, and hunger, and was arrested in Jerusalem. In all that he faced, he prayed earnestly with thanksgiving to God. Jesus is always the best example in the Bible and in life. Through arrest, trial, beatings, agony, and crucifixion—the most terrible ordeal—He had the peace of God. Jesus sets the standard and is our example to follow.

In ministry, I come face to face with the emergencies of life. There are no easy answers to "Why?" when a child dies, a house burns, or cancer strikes. Sometimes we face trauma, accidents, violence, and loss of life. Sometimes people give answers that make them feel better: "Don't worry—it'll be okay," even when they know it's not. Sometimes I can say, "I know how you feel—I've been there." I know loss and the emotions of worrying over a sick child. But some situations extend beyond my emotional experiences. I cannot say to someone who has lost a child, "I know how you feel," because I don't, and I hope I never will. I don't know the severity of that pain and suffering. Life doesn't give us clean fairness. Sometimes it feels like there's no solution for unfairness, especially when you've watched people get hurt by things they didn't cause and can't control. But "no solution" is too final. While you can't make the world fair, you do have influence over how much unfairness impacts you. We can make the world fairer by being characters of honesty and integrity. We can be smarter and stronger. The Holy Spirit is with you. The Bible is your guide. Prayer is your relationship with God. Worship is the experience. Your presence as Christ's representative is the best gift you have to offer.

The peace of God transcends all understanding. The peace of God is beyond what we can comprehend. Our peace, comfort, and thanksgiving come from knowing that God suffered. Jesus suffered on the cross for us, for our salvation. This means when you suffer, you can appeal to a suffering Savior.