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STUDY FOR SERMON FROM 10.27.24

SUMMARY

When Paul begins his next thought to the church at Philippi, he starts with “Finally.” This word might leave the reader to believe he’s about to start listing off salutations, but instead, he leaves the church with a warning. In the life of the early church, many of the initial believers were Jews who were taught that observance of the Mosaic Law was a crucial component of the covenant that Israel had with God, the sign of which was circumcision. So, a segment of the new believers began insisting that observance of the law was still an essential part of salvation—that one must be circumcised before coming to Christ. This belief, however, is antithetical to the gospel as Christ *perfectly* observed the totality of the law on our behalf; he credits his obedience to those who trust in him. We, therefore, cannot improve upon what Christ did on our behalf. And this sentiment is at the root of Paul’s warning to the church. To teach that we must aide Jesus in his atoning work is, as he told the Galatians, “a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you,” which is a “different gospel—not that there is another one” (Galatians 1:6–7). Paul warns the church at Philippi to beware of those who teach this false gospel as he likens them to “dogs,” “evildoers,” and “those who mutilate the flesh” (v. 2). Paul reminds the church that he was once a faithful follower of the law and that few could “compete” with his record as a Jew. However, Paul notes that whatever gain he received through the law, he counts as loss (even “rubbish”) for the sake of Christ (v. 7). He notes it is infinitely better to know Christ and know that Christ’s righteousness has been applied to him than to try and hold up his own righteousness as a supplement to the already perfect work of Jesus. All Christians share in the sufferings of Christ when we die to self and face the difficulty and hardship that comes with being a believer, but it is through those trials that Christ’s salvation goes out to the people of all nations—Jews and the Gentiles.

GROUP QUESTIONS

Share something that surprises, encourages, or troubles you from the sermon or your direct reading of Philippians 3:1–11.

Paul’s warning to the church centered around the idea of certain “believers” who tried to improve upon Christ’s salvation. Are there subtle ways that we still do this as believers? How so, and how do we keep from doing this?

What does it mean to share in the sufferings of Christ? How do we do this?

If there’s one thing Jesus would want you to walk away believing and receiving as a result of this portion of Scripture, what is that thing?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

As you pray, be sure to include today’s themes in what you bring before God.