

RELATED SCRIPTURES

Philippians 2:12 | 1 Corinthians 11:1 | John 11:25

STUDY FOR SERMON FROM 11.3.24

SUMMARY

As Paul's letter to the church at Philippi nears its end, he encourages the church to pursue their sanctification. Though Jesus has justified every believer through his work and his work alone, they are charged with pursuing holiness, or growing in holiness, as Paul instructed the church to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). To do this, it requires a reorienting of one's life—making Jesus your highest priority and pursuit. This is a process that believers will spend their whole lives working on, as even the apostle Paul acknowledges is not something he has obtained (v. 12). The imagery Paul invokes is that of an athlete straining towards obtaining the prize, undistracted by what has transpired in the past, and continuing to press on towards the goal (vs. 12–14). As Christians, we must continually direct our minds to pursue holiness. For those who think holiness is obtained absent of this intentional pursuit, Paul reminds them that God has a way of awakening believers from their passivity into a renewed spiritual fire (v. 15). Next, Paul asks the church to remember that the Christian journey is one never intended to be a solo expedition. We must have brothers and sisters in Christ who model the faith and are worthy of emulation; however, we should only do so to the extent that those whom we emulate are following Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). On the other hand, just as Christians should find good examples to emulate in Christ, they must also realize there are bad examples to avoid as Paul details the false teachers in their midst who are "enemies of the cross of Christ" (v. 18). This relentless pursuit of holiness will lead the believer to a final and glorious end, when Jesus will "transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body" (v. 21). Jesus is "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25) who has already delivered our souls from danger; he will also keep our bodies from decay when our pursuit of sanctification ends in our final state of glorification with him.

GROUP QUESTIONS

Share something that surprises, encourages, or troubles you from the sermon or your direct reading of Philippians 3:12–4:1.

How would you categorize your pursuit of holiness? Would you describe it as a runner chasing the prize? What is it that keeps you from a relentless pursuit?

Who are the people in your life you might consider to be your mentor? Who has been a model for your pursuit of Christ? Is it OK to emulate a person instead of Jesus himself? Why or why not?

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.