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STUDY FOR SERMON FROM 11.10.24

SUMMARY

The apostle Paul issues what could be the most difficult command in the Bible when he tells the church at Philippi, “Do not be anxious about anything” (Philippians 4:6a). Is it indeed possible to not have any anxiety about anything? On its face, yes, it would appear impossible for anyone to follow this instruction—which is why we must consider it in light of everything Paul says leading up to and after it. Paul has just finished reminding the church that our righteousness—our good deeds—are not a means of earning God’s favor (Philippians 3:9). Christ—through his work—has obtained our favor with God, which we now share with him (v. 10–11). He rids us of the anxiety of having to earn God’s favor! Though we have God’s favor, Paul reminds the church that with God’s favor, he brings to life the desire to pursue holiness, and that pursuit is *hard work*, which he likens to an athlete straining toward the prize that lies ahead (v. 12–14). Though we run the race and strain for the goal, Jesus rids us of the anxiety of winning the race—he already won it on our behalf. But embedded in this hard work is the command to live at peace with one another; this is a vital part of a Christian’s pursuit of holiness. Paul mentions, by name, two women in the church who were at odds with each other—two women whom he considers to be fellow laborers in the gospel (4:2–3). His instruction to find common ground finds its roots in the truth that both are inhabited and empowered by the same Holy Spirit who has written their names in “the book of life” (v. 3). The knowledge of what they possess in Christ overshadows whatever their dispute encompasses. Christ has rid us of the anxiety of not living at peace with each other—in Christ, we are united by his Spirit. Paul continues as he implores the church to pray and make their requests known to God (v. 6). As Christ intercedes on our behalf, he rids us of the anxiety of not having access to Father—he obtained it for us (Hebrews 7:25). Our ability to live without anxiety is entirely rooted in the understanding of what Christ has done for us, and the joy that awaits us. Our peace increases when we remember and practice these things (v. 9).

GROUP QUESTIONS

Share something that surprises, encourages, or troubles you from the sermon or your direct reading of Philippians 4:2–9.

What are your most significant sources of anxiety? How can you rely on the work of Christ to overcome those anxieties?

Who comes to mind when you read Paul’s instruction to “agree in the Lord”? What next step might you take to move closer to peace in the Lord?

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.