

SLOW FOOD BIBLE STUDIES – PHILIPPIANS (35 studies)

For information about Slow Food studies see elsewhere in the Resources section of the TISCA website.

Paul founded the church at Philippi in about AD 50, during his second missionary journey (see Acts 16:12-40, our first study). Philippi was a Roman colony in northern Greece, on an important inland trading route. Paul's letter is of uncertain date: if his imprisonment was at Rome, it was written cAD 60-62; if at Ephesus or somewhere else, it could have been c54. Paul is grateful not only for the progress of the church under suffering and false teaching, but also for their timely and practical gift sent to him via Epaphroditus. His main theme is joyful Christian living. Teachers who need an antidote to the general atmosphere of ceaseless pressure can find much to lighten their mood in this letter!

Recommended commentaries include Alec Motyer *The Message of Philippians* (BST 1984); Gordon Fee *Philippians* (IVP 1999); Tom Wright *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters* (SPCK 2004).

Acts 16:12-40 Given the probable founding members of the church at Philippi, what qualities is it likely to have had from the start?

Phil 1:1-2 What is every Christian's relationship to Jesus Christ?

Jn 15:4; Rom 6:15-18; Gal 2:20.

1:3-6 What two 'days' are referred to, and what is going to be happening (for us as well as the early church) between those two days? *Acts 17:31; 1 Th 1:6-8; 1 Jn 3:2.*

1:7-8 Do I find my fellow-Christians difficult to love? *Matt 9:36; Col 3:12; 1 Jn 3:17.*

1:9-11 How might God answer Paul's prayer for discernment in my life? *The Message* has a particularly striking rendering of these verses. *1 Ki 3:9; Heb 5:14; 2 Pet 1:8 (3-11).*

1:12-14 If I am experiencing limitations in my work for Christ, is that necessarily a victory for the enemy? *Exodus 23:22; Acts 28:30-31; Rev 2:10.*

1:15-18a Does it matter if I, or other Christian colleagues, do the right thing from the wrong motive? *Ps 139:23-24; Mk 9:38-41; Acts 8:18-23; 1 Pet 4:11.*

1:18b-20 What should we pray for those who are in difficult circumstances because of their witness for Christ? In v19 Paul is quoting Job's prayer in Job 13:15-16, which is not for deliverance from death, but that he may stand unashamed before the court of heaven. *Luke 21:13-19; Heb 13:18-19; Rev 12:11.*

1:21-26 What is Paul's attitude to life and death? Can it be mine? *2 Cor 1:10; 4:14-15; 5:2 (1-11).*

1:27-30 Am I fighting the same spiritual battles as Paul and the Philippians were? *Exod 17:8-13; 2 Kings 6:16; 1 Pet 4:16.*

2:1-2 Does mutual Christian love lead to a colourless uniformity?

Prov 27:17; Rom 5:5; Eph 4:2-3.

2:3-4 Do I want to be somebody? *Mark 9:33-35; Gal 6:2-3; 1 Pet 5:5.*

2:5-8 What do I worship Christ for? *Isa 53:2, 12; Matt 11:29; 2 Cor 8:9.*

2:9-11 Do I have a global vision of Christ's greatness?

Ps 110:1-3; Col 3:24b; Rev 5:12-13.

2:12-13 How much of me should there be in my Christian life, and how much of the Lord?
John 3:30; Rom 6:6-7; 7:18.

2:14-16a How proactive should I be as a witness to Christ?
Matt 5:14-16; 2 Cor (6:14-) 7:1; 1 Pet 3:15.

2:16b-18 Am I more concerned with Christ's verdict on my life than with the verdict of a human court? *1 Cor 4:3-5; Gal 1:10; 2 Tim 4:6-7.*

2:19-24 To what extent do I pursue my own agenda, even in the Lord's work?
1 Cor 10:24; 13:5; 2 Cor 5:15.

2:25-30 Considering the relationships in this section, to what lengths should we go to support and serve other Christians? *Eccl 4:9-10; 1 Cor 15:58; Col 4:7-9.*

3:1-4a In the faith I live by and teach, do I add anything to Christ?
John 14:6; 1 Cor 1:29-31; 2 Cor 11:3.

3:4b-6 Few of the items in Paul's list probably apply to me – but what might I be tempted to produce as my spiritual C.V. before God? *Mark 10:20; Luke 18:9-14; 1 Tim. 1:14.*

3:7-9 Is the Lord Jesus Christ absolutely central to my life – or just a means of gaining divine approval? *John 10:4, 27; 2 Cor 5:16-17; Eph 3:19.*

3:10-11 What am I looking forward to today? *Prov 4:18; Eph 2:7, 10; Jas 4:13-15.*

3:12-14 Should Paul's attitude be mine – or is he going way over the top here?
Ps 16:8; Mt 6:33; Heb 12:1-2.

3:15-16 Have I settled for 'something less than total commitment' (THE MESSAGE)?
Rom 12:2, 11; Jas 4:8.

3:17-19 If someone were to follow me for the next 24 hours, would they end up closer to Christ? *Rom 16:18; 1 Cor 11:1; 2 Tim 1:13.*

3:20-21 If I am a 'citizen of heaven', why do I often feel so powerless?
2 Cor 4:7; Heb 2:8; Rev 3:8.

4:1-3 If I have a problem with a fellow-Christian, what should I do about it? We don't know who the 'yokefellow' was, but the Philippians probably did. *Ps 133:1; Luke 10:20; Rom 15:5-7.*

4:4-5 If 'the Master could show up any minute' (v5b, THE MESSAGE), how in-your-face should my witness be? *2 Cor 10:1; 1 Thess 5:15-16; Jas 5:8.*

4:6-7 Am I? Do I? Does it? *Luke 11:9-13; Col 3:15; 1 Pet 5:7.*

4:8-9 To what extent are my mental images a matter of deliberate choice?
Job 31:1; Prov 4:23; Ezek 12:(7-)12; 1 Thess 5:23.

4:10-13 Have I learned Paul's secret? *Luke 12:15; Eph 3:16-17a; Heb 13:5.*

4:14-18 If Christians are not really 'in need' (v11), why should we help one another?
Matt 25:40; 2 Cor 11:8-9; Jas 2:15-16.

4:19-23 'God is no-one's debtor' – can I say 'Amen' to that? *Ps 23:1; Ps 84:11; 2 Cor 9:8.*

Review Run through the letter once again, applying it to your present situation, and asking: 'Am I finding my joy in Christ, or looking for it in other directions?'