

PHILIPPIANS - A STUDY GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this story/book say to you about God?

This question can be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do/allow it?
- b. Why did He record it for our study?

“To be permitted to have a view of God is the highest privilege accorded to man. This privilege should be prized above all earthly distinction or honor.” ST, June 16, 1898

1. What does the book of Philippians tell us about God? Why do you suppose Paul wrote it? How much experience had Paul had with the church at Philippi? What led Paul to go to Philippi? What happened to him there? Where was Paul when he wrote this book? What other books were written about the same time? What was unique about the relationship between Paul and the Philippians? How was Philippi different from other places where Paul had worked? Was it a mistake for Paul to cast out the devil from the slave girl at Philippi? (See Acts 16:8-40; 20:1-6; Philippians 2:25,28; 1:13; 4:14-17)
2. Why did Paul write to the Philippians?
3. How do you suppose Paul, a prisoner, managed to convert some of Caesar’s workers? (Philippians 1:12-14; 4:22) How would you witness to your jailer?
4. What is the meaning of “some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry”? (Philippians 1:15)
5. What did Paul mean by Philippians 1:23,24, *NRSV*: “I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.” Did he plan to go directly to heaven when he died?
6. Why would the Sovereign God of the universe step down and “empty Himself”—even dying “the death of a common criminal” (Philippians 2:5-8, *Phillips*)—while Lucifer, a created being, was so determined to exalt himself above the throne of God? (Isaiah 14:12-14; Matthew 4:8,9) What does this imply to us about the nature of the great controversy between these two? Which of those attitudes seems to be more like ours? Does this have anything to do with the “mystery of godliness” (1 Timothy 3:16) and the “mystery of iniquity”? (2 Thessalonians 2:7) Where else in the Bible would you look for major statements about the nature of Christ?
7. There are four major passages in Scripture discussing the nature of Christ: John 1:1-18; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15-23; 2:9,10, and Hebrews 1:1-13. One is from John, and three are from Paul. What are the major points that they make?
8. After Christ completed His work here on this earth, did the Father give Him a name just below the Father’s name? (Philippians 2:9-11) Does that sound like Someone whose job is to constantly plead with the Father?
9. What does it mean to “work out your own salvation”? (See Philippians 2:12)
10. Why did God inspire Paul to write Philippians 2:25-30? Or, is this inspired? Would you need to be inspired to make such a statement? Doesn’t this show a lovely spirit and attitude? What is theology about if it is not about a nice spirit? Would God take time out of His busy schedule to be concerned about the illness of a friend?

11. What moved Paul to use such strong language as he did in Philippians 3:2-10? What issues had previously led Paul to use such strong language? (Galatians 1:8,9)
12. What would you think if your pastor said, "Keep on imitating me, my brothers and sisters." (Philippians 3:17, *GNB*, compare Philippians 4:9; 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:9)
13. What would it mean to say, "Their god is the belly"? (Philippians 3:19, *NRSV*) How could you be sure that this is not your case? Would such a person have to be a glutton? Or, could he be someone who is extremely concerned about what he eats? But it says, "They glory in their shame." Are these the kind of people who got circumcised?
14. What is the meaning of "our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven"? (Philippians 3:20)
15. Who was Paul's coworker, Clement?
16. Do you think Paul, while in prison, was able to follow his own advice in Philippians 4:8,9? Would this be a safe guide for all of life? What was Paul actually saying?
17. What is implied by Philippians 4:10-13? What was Paul talking about when he said he could do "all things through Christ"?
18. This letter to the Philippians was a letter of thanks from Paul written while he was in prison. He was hoping soon to be released. He was so thankful for the financial support that the Philippians had, from time to time, sent him. But, he could not write a letter to any of his churches without adding some notes of encouragement and instruction.
19. In Philippians 2:10-11, he said something very important about the great controversy. Was he thinking about Isaiah 45:23? He had already said something similar in Romans 14:11. What role did God play in this whole story? Did He inspire the Philippians to send money to Paul? Did Paul's deep appreciation come from God?
20. Did God reveal to Paul what would happen at the end of the third coming of Christ when "every knee would bow"? Did God have anything to do with the illness of Epaphroditus? Why do you think this letter was included in the New Testament Canon? Or, was all of this just happenstance?

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Last Modified: September 7, 2014

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