

The Ten Disciplines of Victorious Christians **A Study of the Book of Philippians**

Introduction

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus ...” Phi 2:5

The key word of Philippians is “*mind*,” and the key verse is found in Phi 2:5. This book reveals the mind of Christ in all its various expressions. Although the words “joy/rejoice” occur more times, it is the fruit—not the root—of the mind of Christ.

What is seldom pointed out is that the whole background of the book is that of suffering and affliction. Paul is in prison (Phi 1:12–14). The believers to whom he writes are greatly afflicted (Phi 1:29–30), and their ministers have paid a great price (Phi 2:25–30). The joy of which Paul speaks has nothing to do with circumstance, but everything to do with attitude.

This attitude might be defined as “*the mind of Christ*” (1Co 2:16), which is illustrated by the victorious faith of the author and the recipients, as they share together the blessings of that faith. They have chosen, though living in the world, to overcome the world by their faith. In the ancient world, the word “*rejoice*” was used of a victory celebration. The battle that leads to that victory is in the mind.

Therefore, the progression of thought in the epistle is this: attitude → action → result. “*Let this mind be in you*”—the attitude of boundless love. “*Let your conduct be worthy of the gospel*” (Phi 1:27)—that is, in humble and obedient service. “*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice*” (Phi 4:4)—the celebration of the victory of Christ in your life!

Like any earthly battle, there comes a point of crisis which will determine either victory or defeat. In the life of the believer, this may be defined as a crisis of conscience. It is the point where the essential issue of the Christian life is decided, whether “*He must increase, but I must decrease*” (Joh 3:30), whether my life will be “not I, but Christ” (Gal 2:20), or whether the driving motive of my life will be “*selfish ambition [and] conceit*” (Phi 2:3). Although the decision is made in a moment of time, the outworking of it is the work of a lifetime—even for one as gifted as Paul (Phi 3:13–14).

By the resolute decision to receive the mind of Christ, which is revealed in His Word (1Co 2:16), and the daily pursuit of practical righteousness, these believers have gained inner peace; and in the face of adversity and trial they have learned to rejoice to the glory of God. It is my prayer that this study will produce disciples like the Philippian believers, who learned and practiced the disciplines of victorious faith, by daily receiving and practicing the mind of Christ Jesus.

The Ten Disciplines

Following are ten characteristics of the believers in Philippi (including the examples of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus) that we would do well to emulate:

1. They were actively engaged in our missions' mandate, Phi 1:1–11.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations ...” Mat 28:19

- a. They valued the grace and peace they had found in Christ, Phi 1:1–2.
- b. They realized that fellowship demanded growth and action, Phi 1:3–8.
- c. They were living in light of the return of Jesus Christ, Phi 1:9–11.

This was a victory over apathy, which dominates far too many Christians and weakens the Church. (Heb 6:9–12).

2. They lived boldly, trusting in the providence of God, Phi 1:12–21.

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” Rom 8:28

- a. Looking to Providence rather than circumstance, Phi 1:12–14
- b. Watching God work through human frailty and error, Phi 1:15–18
- c. Anticipating the victory of Christ-centered living, Phi 1:19–21

This was a victory over circumstances—the ability to gain mastery over the details of life through faith (2Co 4:17–18).

3. They are prepared and willing to suffer for Christ, Phi 1:22–30.

“But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” 1Pe 4:13

- a. The “by-faith” perspective of life and death, Phi 1:22–26
- b. Living as citizens of Heaven in the devil’s world, Phi 1:27–30

This was victory over fear—the devil’s chief weapon (2Ti 1:7; Heb 2:14–15).

4. They are actively pursuing conformity to Jesus Christ, Phi 2:1–11.

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2Co 3:18

- a. The call to humility, Phi 2:1–4
- b. The example of Christ and the key to power, Phi 2:5–8
- c. The exaltation of submission, Phi 2:9–11

This is victory over double-mindedness (Mat 5:8; Jam 1:6–8).

5. They are living sacrifices in service to God, Phi 2:12–30.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” Rom 12:1

- a. They are working out what God is working in them, Phi 2:12–18.
- b. The example of Timothy, Phi 2:19–24
- c. The example of Epaphroditus, Phi 2:25–30

This is victory over distraction and complacency (Luk 10:38–42; Eph 5:14–16).

6. They joyfully discern between the priceless and the worthless, Phi 3:1–11.

“But solid food [advanced doctrines] belongs to those who are of full age [mature], that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” Heb.5:12

- a. The choice is always the spiritual over the carnal, Phi 3:1–6.
- b. Paul as the great example of spiritual priorities, Phi 3:7–11

This is the victory of discerning what is of lasting value (Jer 15:19; Eze 22:26).

7. They are consistently growing in the light of eternity, Phi 3:12–21.

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” 2Pe 3:18

- a. Pressing on for the prize, Phi 3:12–16
- b. Living as citizens of Heaven, Phi 3:17–21

This is victory over idleness, spiritual sluggishness (Mat 25:26; Rom 12:11).

8. They are discovering the power of love, joy, and peace, Phi 4:1–7.

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Eph 4:1–3

- a. Be an eagle not a turkey, Phi 3:1–3.
Eagles look to the horizon, turkeys peck in the dirt. Rise above it!
- b. The prayer of faith and the peace of God, Phi 3:4–7

This is the victory of love, joy, and peace over external conflicts (Rom 14:14–23).

9. They are learning contentment in the school of Christ, Phi 4:8–13.

“Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” 1Ti 6:6–8

- a. The power of the regenerate mind, Phi 4:8–9
- b. Three great steps to spiritual power, Phi 4:10–13:
 - 1) *“I have learned”*—experience through practice
 - 2) *“I know how”*—confidence from developed skill
 - 3) *“I can do”*—absolute boldness in faith-based living

This is victory over unrealistic expectations (Luk 24:19–21; Act 1:6).

10. They are laying up their treasures in Heaven, Phi 4:14–23.

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth ...
But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven ...
But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,
And all these things shall be added to you.”* Mat 6:19–20, Mat 6:33

- a. Making deposits in the heavenly account, Phi 4:14–17
- b. Receiving the blessings of God in return, Phi 4:18–23

This is victory over greed, and the lust for things (Luk 12:15; 1Ti 6:6–8).

Summary:

1. All Christian victory is the product of faith in the ultimate victory of Christ. *“The just shall live by faith”* (Hab 2:4; Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 11:38).
2. Spiritual victory is not the absence of failure, but the overcoming of it.
3. The disciplines of victorious Christian living are built on the foundation of simple daily disciplines, consistently maintained.
4. There is no room for boast or glory in personal victories, for *“he who glories, let him glory in the Lord.”* (Jer 9:23–24; 1Co 1:31; 2Co 10:17).