

# Divine Enlargement and Spiritual Obedience

by J.C. Philpot

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of having an enlarged heart, which is a heart that has been expanded and opened up to receive divine things, and explores the ways in which the Lord can enlarge the heart.*

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 2:1, Psalm 18:36, Psalm 147:18, Proverbs 16:23, Isaiah 1:18, Jeremiah 17:9, Luke 24:45, John 13:34, 2 Thessalonians 1:3, 1 John 3:23

**Topics:** "Spiritual Obedience", "Heart Enlargement"

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## Description

Joseph Philpot preaches on the connection between God's precepts and promises, emphasizing the need for divine assistance to fulfill God's commands. He explains the significance of an enlarged heart in spiritually fulfilling God's precepts, contrasting it with a contracted heart that hinders obedience. Philpot delves into the various factors that can contract the heart, such as guilt, unbelief, darkness of mind, and deadness of feeling towards God. He highlights that only through the special work of God the Spirit can the heart be enlarged, leading to an expansion of understanding, conscience, affections, and every grace and fruit of the Spirit.

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## Transcript

Preached at Zoar Chapel, London, on

August 10, 1845, by Joseph Philpot

"I will run the way of Your commandments, when

You shall enlarge my heart." (Psalm 119:32)

I was endeavoring to show on Thursday evening a connection between the precept and the promise; and I observed that, whenever the precept and the promise are linked together, if we are enabled to perform the precept, God is sure to fulfill the promise. But there is a connection of another kind between them--that namely between the precept itself, and the power to perform it. The word of God is full of precepts, but we are totally unable to perform them in our own strength. We can no more, without divine assistance, perform the precept, (that is, with a single eye to the glory of God, from heavenly motives, and in a way acceptable to the Lord), than we can, without special power from on high, believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God. We need an extraordinary power to be put forth in our hearts, a special work of God the Spirit upon the conscience, in order to spiritually fulfill in the slightest degree the least of God's

precepts. The way in which we perform the precept, when we do perform it at all, is set forth in the words of the text, "I will run the way of your commandments, when you shall enlarge my heart."

In taking up the subject this morning, I shall endeavor to unfold it according to the two clauses of the text; but in so doing I shall invert their order; and, with God's blessing, I shall endeavor, first, to trace out the mind and meaning of the Spirit in the words, "When you shall enlarge your heart;" and, secondly, "I will run the way of your commandments."

Before we come to examine the subject closely, it will be desirable to give a little explanation of two points- What is intended by the Holy Spirit by the expression "heart;" and, as things are best seen by their contrast, to explain what it is to have a 'contracted heart', in order that by the contrast we may understand the better what it is to have an 'enlarged heart'.

By the word "HEART" in the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit means more than one thing. Sometimes, for instance, He means by it that corrupt, depraved principle, which we derive from Adam. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." (Jer 17:9) God saw "that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil, continually." (Ge 6:5) "A heart," Solomon says, "that devises wicked imaginations." (Pr 6:18) In all these passages, the expression, "heart," means that corrupt nature which we derive from a fallen progenitor.

There is another signification which the Holy Spirit has attached to the word, which I may define in one short sentence, "the feelings of the soul Godwards." It is, therefore, sometimes taken for the understanding. Thus we read, that God gave Solomon "largeness of heart, as the sand upon the sea shore." Here it means wisdom and understanding. Sometimes it means affections, the tender affections of the soul, as in numerous passages where David speaks of his heart "inditing a good matter," "panting after the Lord; rejoicing in his salvation," or else sorrowing, mourning, or cast down. And sometimes, it signifies conscience, as where God said of Josiah, "Because your heart was tender." 2Ki 22:19

This heart, then, or new nature, is susceptible sometimes of contraction, and sometimes, as divinely wrought upon, of expansion. The heart of a child of God, viewed spiritually, is a tender exotic; it is not a hard, rough, native plant, that stands every storm, which no frost nips and no drought burns. It is a foreign exotic plant; for it comes down from heaven, the abode of eternal purity, and dwells in a man's bosom, with all the tenderness of a plant from a warm country. Now these tender feelings Godwards are susceptible of contraction. They resemble a hot-house plant. Open the windows, expose it to the chilling blasts of this cold, inclement, northern climate, it shrinks, the tender buds refuse to expand, and the whole plant droops and dies. But let the windows be closed; let the bright sun pour his warm rays through the glass roof upon it, and the same plant, which so contracted, shriveled, and withered away under the blast, opens its tender bosom and sends forth its sweet fragrance. So with the new-born soul. There is that which shuts it up, and that which opens it; that which makes it shrink sensitively into so small a compass as scarcely to be seen, and that which draws it forth and causes it to send abroad its heavenly odors.

We will look then, with God's blessing, at some of those things that contract, sicken, and shut up the heart, before we look at the causes and nature of what expands and enlarges it. The new heart of grace is exceedingly tender. And therefore there are many things that will cause this tender heart to shut up and contract itself.

1. One is GUILT. Whenever guilt lies upon a man's conscience, it shuts him up altogether in his feelings Godwards; it narrows, it contracts his heart. There is no room in his soul for divine enjoyments; there are

no divine consolations shed abroad, no in-shinings of divine light, no incomings of heavenly love.

2. Another is UNBELIEF. O what a narrowing, contracting, and shutting-up power is there when unbelief works powerfully in a man's carnal mind! How the tender plant of faith shrinks into a small compass before its chilling blasts! How unable then are we to receive the truth in the love of it--unable to act upon the perfections of the Lord of life and glory--unable to come forth into the light of His countenance--unable to enjoy any one testimony of His manifested favor--unable to realize a single mark, or testimony of the grace of God being in the heart!

3. DARKNESS OF MIND is another thing that contracts and shuts up a man's heart Godwards. Many flowers, when night comes on, hide themselves as it were from it; their petals gather up and close over the bosom which, during the day, expanded itself to the warm rays of the sun, defending it from the cold dews and chilling breaths of the night. So spiritually. How darkness of soul (and all the Lord's people are brought to mourn and sigh under felt darkness) contracts the heart! How it closes up every gracious feeling! How it checks every going forth of the soul in the actings of faith, hope, and love! What a veil it spreads over the hidden man of the heart! So that there is nothing good or gracious apparently in exercise.

4. DEADNESS, COLDNESS, TORPIDITY OF FEELING GODWARDS, that wretched state in which many of God's people are so continually-- how this shuts up, contracts, and narrows the heart Godwards! How unable a man is in this dead, cold, torpid state, to enlarge his own soul! Does he attempt to pray? He has no power to pour forth a single desire. Does he attempt to read? He can scarcely get through half-a-dozen verses without wandering. Does he come to hear a Gospel message? There is scarcely anything that even his outward ear receives. He is unable to fix his thoughts and affections, unable to realize the presence, love, and power of God in his soul. Does he attempt to converse on spiritual things? He has scarcely a word to say, shut up in his feelings toward the family of God, shut up in his feelings toward the Lord Himself.

We must know by painful experience what it is to have these narrow, contracted, shut-up hearts, that we may by the contrast know what it is to have an enlarged, expanded heart. We cannot know the one except by knowing the other. It is this miserable feeling of contraction, which makes us know the difference between these painful sensations, and of an enlarged, expanded heart.

This leads me to enter more fully into what it is to have an enlarged heart. What is the meaning of the word 'enlarged'? The idea is this--the making of an opening, so as to give a wide space. Thus, the Lord promised to the children of Israel that He would "enlarge their border;" that is--He would give them more ample room; that they should not be confined to a narrow space in which their population should exceed its limits; but that He would so extend their boundary as to give them ample width for their increasing numbers! Thus the word conveys the idea of an expansion, a removal of all that is narrowed up and contracted, by giving a wider coast--a more expansive border.

Now none but the Lord Himself can enlarge the heart of His people, can give them spiritually what Jabez prayed for "O that you would enlarge my coast!" 1Ch 4:10 None but the Lord can expand their hearts Godwards, and remove that narrowedness and contractedness in divine things which is the plague and burden of a God-fearing soul.

Having seen what is meant by an enlarged heart, let us look at the ways whereby God is pleased to enlarge it.

1. It is BY THE SPECIAL OPERATION OF GOD THE SPIRIT UPON THE SOUL that there is ever felt any enlargement of heart Godwards. For instance; when he applies any portion of His word with power, that enlarges the heart; "the entrance of your word gives light." The very nature of divine light is to expand the heart into which it comes. As darkness shuts up, so light opens; as darkness freezes, so the word of God sealed with power melts. "He sends out his word, and melts them." Ps 147:18 Truth revealed to the soul has a liberating power. "You shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free."

2. A SENSIBLE REALIZATION OF THE LORD'S PRESENCE enlarges the heart. When the Lord is absent, when He hides His lovely face, when He does not draw near to visit and bless, the heart contracts. There is no going out to Him, no coming down of sweet communications from Him--the heart is shut up in itself, contracted in its own narrow compass. But when the Lord is pleased to favor the soul with His own gracious presence, and bring Himself near to the heart, His felt presence opens, enlarges, and expands the soul, so as to receive Him in all His love and grace.

To use a figure I have before alluded to, the heart is often like a flower beaten down by the rain, prostrated by the wind, over-filled with moisture, overpowered by the dews of the night, unable to lift itself up, dropping downwards, with all its petals contracted. But let the sky clear up, let the beams and rays of the glorious orb of day shine forth, the flower, whose petals before were closed, expand themselves to receive the warmth of the mid-day sun.

So it is with the God-fearing soul. When the dew of night rests upon it, when darkness covers, when the cold blast beats, when the rain drifts upon it, there is no unfolding, no enlarging. But when the Sun of Righteousness breaks forth, the drooping heart then expands all its bosom to the warm rays, and lifts its bending head, which before had been sunk down by the cold mists.

3. THE UNCTION, SAVOR, AND POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, whenever felt in the soul, produce an enlargement of heart. The absence of the dew of the Holy Spirit leaves the heart shut up in its own darkness. But when dew, savor, and power rest upon the soul, they immediately by their secret, penetrating, unctuous influences expand and enlarge the heart; they soften its rigidity; they melt down its harshness. Whereas before it was narrowed and contracted, so as not to open itself to any one divine feeling; no sooner does the softening dew and melting unction of the Holy Spirit touch a man's heart than it enlarges, opens, melts and expands itself before the Lord.

I have hinted that the word "heart" in Scripture has more than one signification. Sometimes it means understanding, sometimes conscience, and sometimes the affections. Now whenever the heart is enlarged by the internal operations of God the Spirit, it is enlarged in these senses.

1. THE UNDERSTANDING IS ENLIGHTENED; we read, "Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures." Lu 24:45 And we find David pleading earnestly, "Give me understanding and I shall live." Ps 119:144 It is a great blessing to have an understanding heart; not to be tossed to and fro with every wind of error; not to be caught with every delusion of Satan; but to have a sound mind, established in the truth as it is in Jesus. But when the Lord is pleased to enlarge the heart, He opens the understanding; He gives an insight into the Scriptures of truth; He shows us the mind of Christ; He brings a sweet light into our soul, whereby we read the Scriptures with the same light and in the same spirit by which they were inspired. Thus we enter into the meaning of passages we never knew before; we understand mysteries, which before we were unacquainted with; we feel our minds to open, expand, and receive the truth as it is in Jesus in greater simplicity and godly sincerity.

2. But there is also AN ENLARGING OF THE CONSCIENCE. If our heart is contracted, our conscience is not sensitive nor tender. Have you not observed, that when your mind was contracted, your affections toward God cold and dead, that your conscience was not sensitive, that sin was not that burden to you as at other times--that you could play with it, walk upon the borders of it, venture upon forbidden ground, dally with evil, did not feel this and that thing to be inconsistent with the will and word of God, which you felt to be so at other times?

Now when your heart has been enlarged, when your soul has felt the power and operations of the Spirit, your conscience becomes more sensitive--as it is said in Isaiah of the human nature of Christ--"of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." Sin is more seen to be sin; evil is comprehended in things where we did not see it before; the "exceeding sinfulness of sin" is more deeply felt; the worldliness and carnality of others that did not much affect us when we were cold and dead, now that we are under the in-shinings of God the Spirit, become irksome and burdensome. Thus, as the understanding is enlightened to see, the conscience is made more sensitive--as we get a deeper insight into the Person, work, and blood of Jesus, the conscience takes a wider range, and is made more alive and more tender than it was before.

3. Besides this, there is AN ENLARGEMENT OF THE AFFECTIONS. Our affections will waver in the same way as our understanding and our conscience. When our understanding is dark, and our conscience is hard, then our affections are cold; but when the Lord is pleased by the entrance of His word to give light in our understanding, and to make the conscience more tender and sensitive, then there is an enlargement also of the affections.

Have you not felt at times as though you had not a single grain of love towards the Lord of life and glory? Has not your heart often been as an adamant, which neither judgment nor mercy, threatening nor love could move? And have you not been, when in that state, unable to love God's truth or His people--yes, rather felt your heart filled with the most fearful hardness, and enmity towards them? But when the Lord is pleased to enlarge the heart, these affections, which before had been shut up, expand, breathe themselves forth, and flow out and flow into the Lord of life and glory. There is a clasping Him in the arms of tender affection, and a desire to live and die in His embrace.

4. When God enlarges the heart He ENLARGES EVERY GRACE AND FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

For instance. There is FAITH. Faith in the soul sometimes sinks down to the very lowest ebb; there seems at times to be scarcely one grain of it left. We have not a single spark of faith in living exercise. The hand which should take hold of Christ's strength is as if paralyzed; there is no putting it forth to receive strength out of His gracious fullness. But when God the Spirit, by His secret power and unction enlarges the heart, He enlarges faith--as the Apostle says. "We are bound to thank God always for you. brethren, as it is fit, because your faith grows exceedingly." 2Th 1:3

This is an enlargement of faith; and just in proportion to the enlargement of faith, do we take in the object of faith. When our faith is very weak, it is like the hand of a little child. Its tiny fingers can only grasp little objects, and can scarcely hold them when grasped. So when faith is small it is unable to take hold of great things; and if it takes them, it is unable to hold them. But when the hand of the child is increased to the brawny fingers of a man, then the same hand, which before was unable to grasp little substances is now enabled to lay hold of great burdens.

So with faith in the heart; it is in some as the hand of the child, it is in others as the hand of the grown man. The hand in the one case is weak, in the other strong. But the hand of the child differs only in size and

strength from the hand of the man. When then the Lord enlarges the heart, He enlarges the fingers of the hand; as we read of Joseph, "His bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Ge 49:24 So when the Lord enlarges the heart, He enlarges the sinews and muscles of living faith, and presenting Christ before it, enables it firmly to embrace His Person and work, His atoning blood, His justifying righteousness, all that He is and has for God's poor needy family.

So also, when God enlarges the heart, He enlarges HOPE. Anchors, you know, are made different sizes. You may walk in the Queen's dockyard, and there you may see anchors for a small row-boat, and anchors for a three-deck ship. Yet all anchors are made in the same way, and are designed for the same purpose; and the little anchor that holds the boat is as useful and as much an anchor as that which holds the three-decker.

So spiritually. There is hope in the heart of the babe. But the hope in the heart of a babe is but as the anchor of a small row-boat; yet it holds that babe as firmly as the anchor holds the boat to which it is moored. But as the Lord increases hope, He increases the size of the anchor; and as the vessel and its anchor always bear a proportion to each other, so when He enlarges the size of the anchor He increases the size of the ship. No more, as He increases the size of the ship, He increases its cargo--for these two are proportionate. He increases a man's trials, perplexities, difficulties, and sorrows. And thus, ship, anchor, and cargo are all enlarged together.

Thus, when He enlarges the heart He enlarges a man's hope--it takes a more vigorous hold within the veil; it enters more deeply into the presence of God; it takes a firmer grasp of covenant engagements, electing love, the immutability of God's purposes, and the unchangeable nature of the great eternal I AM. Have you not felt at times your hope sweetly enlarged, so that it almost attained to the "full assurance of hope?" Scarcely a cloud remained between you and God; and you believed you would ride triumphantly into the haven of bliss and peace? and having these blessed sensations in your heart, you could part with life itself at that moment to fall into the embrace of your God. Now this was a sweet enlargement of your hope.

In the same way when the Lord enlarges the heart, He enlarges its LOVE towards Himself and His people. How cold are our hearts too often toward the Lord! and, as a sure and necessary consequence, how cold towards the brethren! Sometimes we seem even to dislike their company; and if we see them coming down one street, we would gladly take another turning in order to avoid them.

How averse also, from the Lord's ways! How cold in prayer, cold in reading, cold in hearing, and cold in doing anything to the glory of God! How backward, how opposed to everything holy, heavenly, and spiritual! But when God in mercy enlarges the heart, He also enlarges the affections to love the Lord, to love His word, to love His people, to love all that savors of the precious name of Jesus.

There is also an enlargement of the MOUTH. "My mouth is enlarged over my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation." 1Sa 2:1 It is out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. "The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips." Pr 16:23 When your heart is contracted, when your soul is shut up, when your affections are chilled, there is no enlargement of the mouth, especially if you have any tenderness of conscience. Hypocrites and dead professors can talk about 'mere religion' at all times. "But a prating fool shall fall" whereas the Lord's people are often shut up, and have not a word to say upon divine things. If there be no sweet enlargement of the heart, there is no enlargement of the mouth; and when there is no life nor feeling in the soul enabling it to speak of the things of God, to speak of them at all

is but a burden to them. But when the Lord enlarges the heart, then there is an enlargement of the mouth. The lips speak freely, simply, with savor, dew, and unction, of the things that God has done and is doing in the soul.

There is also an enlargement of the STEPS, as David says. "You have enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip." Ps 18:36 This is a strengthening of the feet, so that they are enabled to take longer steps. Sometimes from weariness we stumble, or can scarcely drag one limb before another, or get so faint and tired that we seem unable to move one step further in the ways of God. But when the Lord enlarges and strengthens a man's feet and steps, He enables him to move more actively forward, and to run more eagerly in the way of His commandments.

This leads me to the second part of the text, the connection of the PRECEPT with the POWER given to perform it. "I will run the way of your commandments when you shall enlarge my heart." David was no legalist--he was no Arminian perfectionist; he was not drawing upon the strength and wisdom of the 'creature', but he was looking up to the Lord to work a certain work upon his soul. When that certain work was wrought upon him, then, and not until then, would he, or could he perform the precept.

How often have you seen the precept handled in the way of which the Lord speaks as done by the scribes and Pharisees of old! "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." Mt 23:4 Nothing is more easy than to take a bundle of precepts into the pulpit, and tie them round the necks of the Lord's people like an iron collar. But how many of them does the minister himself perform?

Every child and servant of God, taught by the Spirit, knows that he cannot perform one precept except as the Lord enlarges his heart. This deep sense of our helplessness does not foster sloth, nor lead to licentiousness; for guilt and condemnation are felt from the non-performance of the precepts; and our desires and prayers, when we are in our right mind, are, that the Lord would enlarge our heart, for we love to run the way of His commandments.

WHAT are these commandments? And HOW do we run in the way of them? I will endeavor to show you.

The Lord in His word has given several commandments; and these commandments we perform when the Lord enlarges our heart. For instance.

1. The Lord commands us to BELIEVE in the name of His dear Son, as the Apostle John writes, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." 1Jo 3:23 But we cannot believe in the name of Jesus, any more than we can make a world, until God enables. Believe in Jesus! receive Him by precious faith into my heart! feel the efficacy of His atoning blood in my conscience! bathe my blissful soul in the sweet enjoyment of His dying love! I do this? Before I can, of myself, do this, I must be able to say, "Let there be light, and there shall be light."

But when the Lord by His grace and Spirit enlarges the heart; when He drops His dew, unction, and savor into the soul; when He draws near to it, and makes it draw near to Him; when this blessed Sun of Righteousness shines forth through the dark cloud, and warms the cold dark soul, then it can no more not believe in Him, than before it could believe in Him. We can no more refuse to believe when faith comes into the heart, than we can believe before faith does come. When God enlarges the heart, and draws forth the affections, then we run in the way of this commandment. We do not believe as a duty; we do not believe as a precept; nor do we believe even as a privilege. But we believe as a blessing. We believe as

we see an object with our eyes. We open our eyes, and we cannot but see. So when faith opens its eyes, it sees Jesus; no, it cannot but see Him.

2. Another commandment is, to REPENT. "God commands all men everywhere to repent." What! repent! Have the heart broken with contrition! feel godly sorrow! experience the flowings forth of grief towards a crucified Lord! Can I do this? It is utterly beyond my reach. I may shed crocodile tears. I may work myself up into fleshly excitement. I may fall upon my knees, lacerate my back, refuse to eat my food, and lie upon the ground. But to feel a broken heart, melted down into compunction and godly sorrow--the man that feels what an adamant stone he carries in his bosom knows well that it is the pure grace of God alone that can give him repentance.

I believe the Lord brings all his people to that spot of which Mr. Deer speaks--when the question was not whether he would repent, but whether God would give him repentance; no longer whether I will do this for the Lord, but whether the Lord in mercy and grace will do this for me. The great I sinks then into absolute insignificance; and the creature is brought down to its true spot--abasement and helplessness.

But when the Lord enlarges the heart, with this enlargement is there not the grace of penitence? Is there not the tearful eye, the convulsive sob, the inward grief of soul? Is there not real gospel repentance and sorrow felt in a broken and tender heart? I am sure there is this.

3. God commands us "to LOVE one another." "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another." Can I of myself feel this love? I may pretend to do so; I may do as one of old did, who came to his brother with a very brotherly salutation, "Are you in health, my brother?" and then smote him under the fifth rib with a sword! I may say, 'Brother this,' and 'Sister that'--'how I love you!'--'what affection I feel for you!' I might, if God did not keep me honest, play this part of a 'varnished hypocrite'.

But I cannot feel, nor create this true love, without a special work of the Spirit on my soul. But when He enlarges the heart, and melts the soul at his footstool, He gives love to Himself--and with that love, He gives love to His people, pure affection--not a pretending--but a real desire for their spiritual welfare; not a few canting phrases, but a true feeling of brotherhood; not a mere expression of 'brother' on the lip, but brotherly affection in the heart.

When He enlarges the heart, we do not need to go among our brethren to say, 'Brother,' or 'Sister;'--we feel them in our very soul; when we are alone with God there is a tender affection flowing forth out to them of our heart, an embracing of them in our soul.

No more, we can forgive our enemies when the Lord enlarges our heart. If we can see them in the right light, where we would desire to see them, we can forgive them, though they have been most unkind to us, and cruelly treated us. I have felt, that when the Lord is pleased to enlarge the heart, anger, enmity, prejudice, bitterness, malevolence--those unclean birds all take flight--and simplicity, tenderness, humility and love all live in the soul.

4. The Lord commands us to DENY OURSELVES, take up the cross, put off the old man, and walk as becomes the gospel. Can we do this? We cannot. We may affect a popish austerity; we may put on a hypocritical visage; we may appear all sanctity and holiness; we may cleanse the outside of the cup and platter, and put an extra coat of whitewash on the sepulcher. But as to that inward crucifixion, that inward deadness to the world, that inward putting off of the old man and putting on of the new, which the Word of truth speaks of, we cannot attain to--except God the Spirit works in us both the will and the power. But

when God enlarges the heart, then there is no burden in God's ways; His precepts are not grievous; it is a pleasure to walk in them; and there is a sweet gratification in obeying them.

"I will RUN the way of your commandments." Not lag, nor loiter, not turn aside, not faint, not falter. "I will run" eagerly, actively, as a lover runs to his beloved bride--"I will run" cheerfully the way of your commandments, when you have enlarged my heart.

5. So with the ORDINANCES, the ordinances of the Lord's house- baptism and the Lord's supper. These are not grievous; they are not burdensome, when the Lord enlarges the heart. When we are narrowed up, shut up, contracted, these ordinances of the Lord's house are burdensome to us. We hate the very sight of the table spread with the emblems; we have the most horrible feelings of rebellion against the ordinance of baptism; yes, we feel every infernal sensation that Satan can stir up in our minds. But when the Lord enlarges our heart, there is no burden then; whatever be the precept, whatever be the ordinances, we can run in that way with cheerfulness, freedom and liberty.

6. So with respect to EVERY PRECEPT of the gospel. Whatever it be, we can run in the way of God's commandments when He enlarges our heart. There is no running in any other way. All other service is mere legalism; all other obedience is but the froth and spawn of free-will, nothing but the 'mere natural obedience' of the creature, not the 'spiritual obedience' of the child of God. But let us look at this.

Is it our happiness, is it our pleasure when we cannot run the way of God's commands? Do we lay the inability upon God, or put the responsibility upon the 'old sinful nature'? and say, It does not matter, I cannot obey them--but when God gives me the power, I shall. This is the very essence of antinomianism, the very spawn of licentiousness, the worst abuse of gospel grace.

The Christian is in one of these two spots for the most part.

1. Sometimes he is shut up, contracted, cold, dead, torpid. But this is his grief and misery. In this state of feeling, he cannot run the way of God's commandments. But is he pleased with being a loiterer? No--it is his grief and trouble that he cannot run in the way of God's commandments. This evidences the work of God the Spirit upon him--he desires do it, but he cannot--"the good that he would do, he does not." But it is the will being on the side of God which proves the reality of grace; it is the heart and conscience being enlisted on the side of the Lord that proves God is at work on his soul.

2. On the other hand, the children of God are sometimes in this state--their hearts are enlarged, their souls strengthened, and their feet are enabled to run the race that is set before them. This is their joy, their happiness, and their delight.

Now can you trace out BOTH of these things in your conscience? What is the use of my standing here to speak these things? Is it merely to amuse you? Is there not something deeper needed than that? You have a soul to be saved or damned; you are a child of God or not; the grace of God is in your heart, or it is not; you are on the broad road to hell, or on the narrow road to heaven. Have you no concern about it? What! stand upon the brink of eternity, and have no anxiety respecting it! If you are a child of God, you will have this deep concern at times in your bosom.

Can you trace out in your soul the distinct existence of the two things I have endeavored to handle? Do you know what it is to be shut up, cold, dead, and stupid? Is this your grief and burden? You say, it is. It is a good thing if you can say so with an honest heart.

Look at the converse. Did you ever know what it was to have an enlarged heart? Did mercy, grace, peace, blood, and salvation ever cast out these grievous enemies of your soul? If so, it enlarged your coasts, it strengthened your borders. Did you ever experience what is said of the church, that she shall "fear" (rather flutter, or palpitate) "and be enlarged?"

Did your soul ever experience the unutterable sensations of divine enlargement? When this came into your heart, did it produce sensible expansion Godwards, enlargement of understanding, conscience, and affections; so that you walked at liberty, and had sweet testimonies that God was your God?

And how do you feel as to the precepts of God's word? Are they sometimes burdensome? Are they sometimes pleasant and delightful? They will be burdensome when we are shut up; and they will be delightful when we are enlarged. When shut up, nothing is so difficult; when enlarged, nothing is so easy. When shut up, nothing so painful; when enlarged, nothing so pleasing. When shut up, afraid to look at them; when enlarged, able to enter into their length, breadth, and meaning. When shut up, seeing no beauty in them, and only viewing them as a task-master; when enlarged, contemplating them as the will and word of a kind parent, and desiring to obey them, because God has so graciously and plainly revealed them.

Thus, by these distinct ebbings and flowings, these distinct sensations in your conscience--by tracing out the work of the Spirit therein, we may at times come to some decision whether God the Spirit has begun and is carrying on the work of grace in our conscience, or whether we are dead in an empty profession.

The Lord clear up the difficulty (where it is felt to be a difficulty) in the hearts of His trembling ones. The Lord decide the doubtful case; and show them, that their mark is the mark of God's children--that they are walking in the footsteps of the flock--that their God is with them, and will be with them, to lead them in a right way, and to bring them to "a city of habitation."

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jc-philpot/divine-enlargement-and-spiritual-obedience/>

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