

Obedience From the Heart

by J.C. Philpot

The sermon emphasizes the importance of obeying the form of doctrine delivered to us from the heart, which leads to a change of heart and a transformation from being the servants of sin to becoming the servants of God.

Scripture: Romans 5:20, Romans 6:1, Romans 6:17, Romans 7:18, Romans 7:24, Romans 8:1, Romans 14:17, 1 Corinthians 2:4, 1 Timothy 4:16

Topics: "Heart Obedience", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the transformation from being servants of sin to obeying the form of doctrine delivered by God. He emphasizes the danger of misusing the doctrines of grace to justify sin and the need for a genuine heart transformation. Philpot explains that true obedience flows from the heart when believers are molded by the divine teachings of their utter ruin, the spirituality of God's law, justification through Christ's righteousness, and the kingdom of God set up in the heart. He challenges listeners to examine their conscience, seek deliverance from sin, and live a life that reflects obedience from the heart.

Transcript

Preached at Zoar Chapel, London, on Thursday

Evening, July 18, 1844, by J. C. Philpot

"But God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin--but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Romans 6:17

The Holy Spirit foresaw the abuse which the depraved heart of man would make of the doctrines of grace. He foresaw that nature would argue, that because the elect are saved by grace without the works of the law, there was no obligation for them to perform good works at all; and that because they are accepted freely in the Beloved, "without money and without price," therefore they are discharged from all obedience to the revealed will and word of God. And not only did the Holy Spirit foresee the consequences that depraved nature would draw from the pure gospel of Jesus; but there were also characters in the apostolic days who were base enough to carry out these principles into practice. The apostle alludes to these when he says, "Shall we do evil that good may come? God forbid!" There were some then who said, we might do evil that good might come; but he adds of them, "whose damnation is just!"

If we look at the book of Jude, we shall find these base characters most accurately described as "wandering stars," "trees twice dead," "clouds without water," "spots in their feasts of charity;" in a word, 'practical Antinomians', living in sin under a mask of godliness; professing the truth, and disgracing it by their lives. The Holy Spirit, then, foreseeing the consequences that corrupt nature would draw from the doctrines of grace inspired the apostle to write Romans 6, which is almost entirely aimed at these perversions. He as it were, bursts out, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" He had said in the preceding chapter, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The carnal heart might thence naturally argue, "If this be the case that grace superabounds, just in proportion as sin abounds, then the more we sin, the more will the grace of God abound; and, therefore, the more sin we commit, the more will the grace of God be glorified." Such would be the reasonings of depraved nature, the arguments of man's perverse heart.

The apostle, therefore, meets these horrid consequences with "God forbid!" that any who fear the Lord should draw such a conclusion. "How shall we," he adds, "who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" If "we have been buried with Christ in baptism," it is that, according to the power of his resurrection, we should "walk in newness of life." If we are delivered from the law, and brought under grace, it is that sin should not reign in our mortal body, or that we should obey it in the lust thereof. And then in a most beautiful, experimental, and convincing way, which I cannot now enter into, he goes through the whole argument, and shows that, so far from being discharged by grace from all obligations to obedience, or so far from grace setting us free to do the works of the flesh, it only binds us the more closely to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, and to live in conformity to his holy image who died for us.

The main bent of what the apostle sets forth on this point seems to be summed up in the verse before us, from which I hope, with God's blessing and help, to speak this evening. "But God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin--but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you."

The apostle commences by ascribing a solemn thanksgiving to God. "But God be thanked," he says. Now what was the object of this apostolic thanksgiving? What drew forth this expression of gratitude from his bosom? Not I believe, that they had been servants of sin. I do not think we can, for a moment, admit that the Apostle thanked God because the believers to whom he was writing had been the "servants of sin." I am sure my own experience could never bear that out to be the mind of the Holy Spirit. Nor do I believe that your experience, if God the Spirit has touched your conscience with his finger, would bear you out in such an interpretation, that Paul could thank God because they had been the "servants of sin." Did you ever on your knees bless God that you had gone to great lengths of wickedness before you were called by grace? Did you ever thank him because you once lived in uncleanness, drunkenness, or other open and base sins? You may have thanked God for having kept you from open sin in the days of unregeneracy, or for having mercifully pardoned and delivered you.

But I defy a living soul on his knees to thank God, because he had formerly been a servant of sin. So that we must understand the Apostle to mean here--"But God be thanked, that though you were the servants of sin," yet now the case is altered; you are so no longer; a mighty change has taken place; a blessed revolution has been effected in your hearts, lips, and lives. "God be thanked though you were the servants of sin," yet "now, through the grace of God, it is so no longer;" "you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you."

In looking, then, at these words, I shall, with God's blessing, endeavor to show,

I. What it is, in our fallen and unregenerate state, to be "the servants of sin."

II. What is the "form of doctrine" delivered to us.

III. How by "obeying it from the heart," we are no longer the servants of sin, but become the servants of God.

I. What it is, in our fallen and unregenerate state, to be "the servants of sin." Let us look, then, at the words, "You were the servants of sin." What a picture does this draw of our sad state, while walking in the darkness and death of unregeneracy! The Holy Spirit here sets forth Sin as a hard master, exercising tyrannical dominion over his slaves; for the word "servants" means literally "slaves;" there being few domestic servants in ancient times, nearly all being slaves, and compelled implicitly to obey their masters' will. How this sets forth our state and condition in a state of unregeneracy--slaves to sin! Just as a master commands his slave to go here and there, imposes on him a certain task, and has entire and despotic authority over him; so sin had a complete mastery over us, used us at its arbitrary will and pleasure, and drove us here and there on its commands.

But in this point we differed from physical slaves--that we did not murmur under our yoke, but gladly and cheerfully obeyed all sin's commands, and were never tired of doing the most servile drudgery!

Now it is a most certain truth, that all men whose hearts have not been touched by God the Spirit, are the "servants of sin." Sin, the lord, may be a more refined master; and man, the servant, may wear a more fashionable clothing in some cases, than others. But still, however refined the master may be, or however well-dressed the servant, the master is still the master, and the servant is still the servant.

Thus some have had sin as a very vulgar and tyrannical master, who drove them into open acts of drunkenness, uncleanness, and profligacy; yes, everything base, vile, and evil. Others have been preserved through education, through the watchfulness and example of parents, or other moral restraints, from going into such open lengths of iniquity, and outward breakings forth of evil; but still sin secretly reigned in their hearts. Pride, worldliness, love of the things of time and sense, hatred to God and aversion to his holy will, selfishness and stubbornness, in all their various forms, had a complete mastery over them; and though sin ruled over them more as a gentleman, he kept them in a more refined, though not less real or absolute slavery! Whatever sin bade them do, that they did, as implicitly as the most abject slave ever obeyed a tyrannical master's command. What a picture does the Holy Spirit here draw of what a man is! Nothing but a slave! and sin, as his master, first driving him upon God's sword, and then giving him eternal death as his wages!

II. But the Apostle shows how the soul is brought out of this servitude--how it is delivered from this hard bondage, and brought to serve a better master, and that from better motives--"But God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." It was by obeying "from the heart the form of doctrine which was delivered them," that they were rescued from the miserable servitude and hard bondage under which they lived in sin, and made to walk in newness of life.

Let us look, then, at the expression here used--"that form of doctrine which was delivered you." It is in the margin--and that is more agreeable to the original--that form of doctrine "whereto," or "into which, you were delivered." By the word "form," is meant 'mold;' and by "doctrine" is meant, not what we understand by the term as the article of a creed, but 'teaching'. This is a frequent meaning of the word "doctrine," in

the New Testament. Thus Paul tells Timothy (1 Tim. 4:13) to give himself unto "doctrine"--that is to 'teaching'. And Titus 2:7, "in doctrine"--that is, teaching, "showing integrity." Thus we may consider the meaning of the text to be this--"God be thanked, that though you were the servants of sin, you have obeyed from the heart that mold of teaching into which you were cast, or delivered."

The figure is this--the impression which a coin takes from a die; or the effect produced upon melted metal run into a mold; the doctrine being the die, and the heart the coin; the teaching being the mold and the soul the cast. Thus, the "form of doctrine" signifies not so much a creed of sound doctrine, which the Apostle in a formal, systematic manner laid before his hearers--as the mold of heavenly teaching into which the Holy Spirit delivered their souls.

It is thus evident, that the Holy Spirit has a certain mold of teaching, into which he casts and delivers the soul, from which it comes out as a "coin from the mint", bearing the impression of the die upon it in every form and feature; or, which is perhaps the more exact interpretation of the figure, as a cast from a mold, bearing a perfect likeness to the original model. This "form" then, "of doctrine," or mold of teaching, into which they were delivered, was that which the Apostle, through divine instrumentality, had set before them.

Let us see, then, with God's blessing, WHAT was this "form of doctrine," or mold of divine teaching, into which, through grace, their souls had been cast--for it was by being delivered into this mold that they were delivered from being the "servants of sin," to be made "vessels of honor fit for the Master's use," as well as conformed to the Master's image.

WHAT this "form of doctrine" was, we may gather from what the Holy Spirit, by the Apostle Paul, has left on record.

1. He insisted, I believe, first, on the utter ruin and fall of man. He began from the beginning, and like a "wise master builder," raised up the structure by first digging a deep foundation. He knew as every rightly-taught man and minister knows, that unless a foundation be made by digging deep, the house will not be built upon the rock; that if a knowledge of our utter ruin by nature be not brought into the heart by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, all our religion will be like a house founded upon the sand. This therefore we find to run through all his Epistles. Thus, he tells the Ephesians, (2:1) But "you has he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." How he insists there on man's death in sin! Again, Rom. 5:6, he shows our helplessness, "When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." And more especially in Rom. 7 does the Apostle exhibit at large what we are by nature and practice, and describe from his own experience the desperate wickedness of the human heart. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing." "I am carnal, sold under sin." He there sets forth, from his own experience, the complete fall of man, the entire ruin of the creature, the thorough wickedness of "the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be."

This being a part of his ministry, and of the inspired Scriptures, into this mold of teaching does God the Spirit deliver the soul. And just in the same way as upon the piece of money you may read the exact lineaments of the original die, so when the heart is rightly taught by the Holy Spirit, and we are delivered into this "form of doctrine," it comes out of the mold bearing the exact impression. It is thus we are made to feel every line of what the Apostle says of our ruined, undone state, and to know by painful experience, that "in us, that is in our flesh, dwells no good thing;" that "when we would do good, evil is present with us;" that "the law in our members wars against the law of our mind."

And under these feelings, we sigh and groan, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It is thus that Paul's experience becomes ours; and we find every line of Romans 7 engraved upon our hearts, and feel every expression to be as much ours as if it were drawn from the workings of our own mind. No coin bears a greater resemblance to the die, no cast is more the counterpart of the mold, than our experience corresponds to that of the Apostle, as the Holy Spirit delivers us into this mold of divine teaching.

2. But we find, that another part of the Apostle's ministry was to set forth the holy law of God in all its strictness and spirituality. He says (Rom. 7:14), "the law is spiritual;" "by the law is the knowledge of sin;" "what things soever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God." And describing his own experience, he says, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." And therefore he adds, "the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good."

He thus sets forth the law in all its purity, strictness, and spirituality, and shows how when it comes home with power to the conscience, it kills us to all hopes of justification by it. Into this "form of doctrine," or mold of heavenly teaching, is the soul delivered; and the law being brought into the conscience, as the 'die at the mint' is brought down upon a piece of gold to produce a coin, its spirituality is then and there revealed, stamped with all its lineaments and features, and thus a deep and lasting impression is made upon the heart to which it is supplied.

3. But the Apostle Paul, that workman who never needed to be ashamed of the tools or of his work, not merely sets forth man's utter ruin, and the spirituality of God's law, as slaughtering the sinner, and cutting up all his righteousness, root and branch; but his darling subject, his grand theme, was the mode by which God justifies the ungodly. What reason have we to bless God that he so instructed his Apostle to set forth how a sinner is justified! For how could we have attained to the knowledge of this mystery without divine revelation? How could we know in what way God could be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly? How could we see all the perfections of God harmonizing in the Person and work of Jesus? His law maintained in all its rigid purity and strictest justice--and yet mercy, grace, and love to have full play in a sinner's salvation? But the Spirit of God led Paul deeply into this blessed subject; and especially in the Epistle to the Romans does he trace out this grand foundation truth with such clearness, weight, and power, that the church of God can never be sufficiently thankful for this portion of divine revelation.

His grand object is, to show how God justifies the ungodly by the blood and obedience of his dear Son; so that "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." He declares that "the righteousness of God is unto and upon all those who believe;" and that "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," he pardons the sinner, justifies the ungodly, and views him as righteous in the Son of his love.

In opening up this subject, the Apostle (Rom. 5) traces up this justification to the union of the church with her covenant head; shows us her standing in Christ as well as in Adam; and that all the miseries which she derives from her standing in the latter are overbalanced by the mercies that flow from her standing in the former--winding up with that heart-reviving truth, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign unto eternal life."

This then is a "form of doctrine," or mold of teaching, into which the soul is delivered when it is brought into a heart-felt reception of, and a feeling acquaintance with it; and by being led more or less into the experimental enjoyment of it, is favored with a solemn acquiescence in, and a filial submission to it, as all its salvation and all its desire. And as the mold impresses its image upon the moist plaster or melted metal poured into it--so the heart, softened and melted by the blessed Spirit's teaching, receives the impress of this glorious truth with filial confidence, feels its sweetness and power, and is filled with a holy admiration of it as the only way in which God can justify an ungodly wretch, not only without sacrificing any one attribute of his holy character, but rather magnifying thereby the purity of his nature, and the demands of his unbending justice.

4. But again. The Apostle not merely sets forth the way in which the sinner is justified, and becomes manifestly righteous, but he also strongly insists upon the kingdom of God being set up with power in the heart. He says (1 Cor. 2:4, 5), "My speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom"--these he discarded--"but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." He was afraid their faith might stand in human wisdom, and not in divine power. His anxious desire was that it might be a faith wrought in their hearts by the Spirit of God; that it might not be learned from man, nor stand in the wisdom of man, but stand wholly and solely "in the power of God."

And again, when he holds a rod over the rebellious church at Corinth, he says (1 Cor. 4:9) he was determined "to know not the speech of those who were puffed up"--those gossips and chatterers who could prate loudly about the doctrines, but knew nothing of them as experimentally revealed in the conscience; against such pretenders he would "come with a rod, and use sharpness." He would bring to bear upon their profession some of those "weapons of warfare, which were mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;" and says, "if he came to Corinth, he would not spare." He was therefore determined to search them out, and find their real standing; "to know not their speech, but their power; for the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."

Thus in setting forth the truth before them he powerfully contended that there must be a vital experience of divine realities in the heart; that truth could only be known by a spiritual revelation (1 Cor. 2:10-13); that "faith was the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8); that we are "to turn away from those that have the form of godliness but deny the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:5); that "bodily exercise profits little" (1 Tim. 4:8); and that "the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 14:17.) Into this mold of divine teaching is the soul, born of God, cast--and thus learns and enters into the nature and blessedness of the internal kingdom of God.

5. But connected with this, he sets forth also the way in which believers should walk. This he specially insists upon in this chapter; and doubtless there was much reason for it then, as there is much reason for it now--for how lamentable are the cases of inconsistency which we sometimes hear of, even ministers professing truth falling under the power of open besetting sins! The Apostle, therefore, as every rightly taught servant of God must do, insisted upon a life and walk agreeable to the doctrine which is according to godliness. He would give them no warrant for a loose, careless, inconsistent walk--but insisted that grace bound the soul with the cords of love to the blessed precepts which God has set forth, to follow the footsteps of Jesus, and look to him as a pattern and example.

In this chapter, therefore, he insists strongly upon a godly life; he says, "When you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness. What fruit had you then in those days whereof you are now

ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness and the end, everlasting life." How strongly he here insists upon their "having their fruit unto holiness!" He shows that if we are dead with Christ, we shall also live with him; and being by grace delivered from the law, we are under greater obligations to walk as becomes the gospel; adding, as knowing our weakness and helplessness--that promise, "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law, but under grace."

So that "the form of doctrine" into which they were delivered was a conformity to Christ, and an obedience to his will; a holy desire to please God; a hatred to evil, and a cleaving to that which is good; a longing after more intimate communion with Jesus; and a more earnest wish that his holy example might be made manifest in their lives. For the more we are brought into communion with him, the more manifestly shall we walk as he walked, and abstain from those things which he hated.

III. How by "obeying it from the heart," we are no longer the servants of sin, but become the servants of God. The Apostle says, "you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." A "form of doctrine" was delivered them, or rather they were delivered into it; a mold of divine teaching was set up, into which their souls had been cast and they had come out of this mold new creatures, so that "old things were passed away, and all things had become new." The effect was, that they "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine." There was an obedience wrought into their conscience, which flowed not from legal principles, not from self-righteous motives, not from the precepts of men, but "from the heart"--the root of this obedience, as flowing from the heart, was being delivered into this form of doctrine. Their hearts had been so molded by divine operation, and their conscience so effectually wrought upon by their being delivered and cast into the mold of teaching which the Holy Spirit had inwardly set up, that they "obeyed from the heart," because the impression had been made there.

Let us see then, with God's blessing, HOW a man "obeys from the heart" the "form of doctrine" delivered unto him. This will comprehend the whole of the Spirit's work upon the conscience--every lineament and feature of that heavenly mold, so far as the soul has been delivered into it. We will therefore revert to the distinguishing features I have already pointed out.

1. I mentioned first, the utter fall and ruin of man, and the complete helplessness of the creature, as a branch of divine teaching. A man obeys this form of doctrine when he is completely convinced in his conscience what a poor, helpless creature he is; and in obedience to it, desists from all self-righteous attempts to please God. He obeys it from his heart when really convinced of his own helplessness and ruin, he falls down before God, and beseeches he would work in him that which is well-pleasing in his sight. And as he is cast into this mold of teaching, he becomes day by day more and more spiritually convinced of his own helplessness and complete ruin, and will daily cry to the Lord to work in him to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Now, will a knowledge of his sinfulness, a conviction of his helplessness, an acquaintance with his own ruin, lead a man into sin? I say boldly, No! On the contrary, it will lead him from sin. He will no longer run recklessly and heedlessly forward; but he will go softly and tenderly, continually begging the Lord to keep him.

There are two professors, say, in this congregation--one, ignorant of his own sinfulness, unacquainted with his own helplessness; the other day by day, deeply and spiritually convinced of the one, and groaning under a sense of the other. Take these two men into the world; place them in the market; send them to

traffic in the busy marts of commerce. In whom will you find most consistency of conduct, most tenderness of conscience, most abhorrence of evil? In the man ignorant of his own depravity and helplessness? Or in the man who carries about with him the deepest sense of his own sinfulness and wretchedness; and who feeling his helplessness, is perpetually crying to the Lord, "Keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me?"

As we pass through the streets of this metropolis, we are continually exposed to temptation; but who is the man most likely to fall into the snares spread for his feet? Not he who feels that he has a roving eye, and a wandering heart, and is crying to the Lord, "Hold me up--let me not fall," as fearing he shall fall every moment; but he who goes recklessly on, confident he can keep himself. So that to be spiritually cast into this "form of doctrine," so as to be deeply convinced of our sinfulness and helplessness, so far from leading to sin, leads us from it--so far from encouraging the vile depravity of our nature, makes the conscience tender in God's fear, and leads us to hate that which God abhors. There is no greater libel than to confound a knowledge of our sinfulness with "a gloating," as they call it, "over corruption." We are taught our sinfulness that we may hate it--and our helplessness that we may flee to him on whom God has laid help.

2. So again. A knowledge of the purity and spirituality of God's law, is another feature of divine teaching--another branch of the mold into which the soul is cast. A man who has never been made to see the purity of God's law, never felt its spirituality, never known its condemnation, never groaned under its bondage, will have very dim and indistinct views of sin. "Blessed is the man," we read, "whom you chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of your law." In that glass the strict justice of God, and all its holy unbending demands are clearly seen.

3. A spiritual reception of, and what the Apostle calls a submission to, the righteousness of God, (Rom. 10:3) is another branch of that form of doctrine which produces obedience from the heart. Let a man know what justification is through the imputed righteousness of Christ, and feel what it cost the Son of God to work out a meritorious obedience to the law for his guilty soul--it will not make him think lightly of sin. When delivered by the Spirit's operation into this mold of teaching, and thus brought into a spiritual acquaintance with it, it will make his conscience tender. He will then obey, not from natural convictions or hypocritical motives, but from the heart, as penetrated with a sense of mercy, and will desire to be brought into a spiritual acquaintance with it, that he may walk before God in all blamelessness.

But if a man, however sound in the doctrine of justification as a creed, has never been cast into the mold of it, so as to receive the impression upon his conscience, and feel it with power in his heart, he will probably be one of those who disgrace it by their lives; because, through lack of divine teaching, his conscience is unaffected by the power of the truth he professes.

Why is it that men, and, to their shame be it spoken, ministers who profess the doctrines of grace, often walk so inconsistently and unbecomingly? In doctrine none can be sounder than these men; but had they received by divine teaching the glorious truth of justification through the righteousness of the Son of God--and had their hearts been impressed by it, and their souls been cast into this mold, they would have adorned the doctrine by their life and conversation. But not being delivered into this heavenly mold, and the Spirit never having brought this truth down upon their conscience and stamped its features upon their heart, as the die is brought down upon the coin, they can "continue in sin, that grace may abound."

It is only, therefore, as we are delivered into the mold of this blessed doctrine of justification by Christ's glorious righteousness, that we obey it from the heart. In proportion as we feel our soul to acquiesce in it

and enjoy it--so far from leading us into sin, it will lead its away from it, and enable us to walk in those things which suit the gospel.

4. So when, by divine teaching, the soul is delivered into another branch of "the form of doctrine," or mold of divine teaching, that is, that the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power, gospel obedience will flow from the heart. Just in proportion as this divine truth is stamped upon the conscience, do we find and feel that true religion does not consist in a few notions, doctrines, or names--but in the power of the Holy Spirit setting Christ up in the soul.

A kingdom in the heart implies that a king reigns there; and if so, the obedience paid to that king will be in and from the heart. This is true gospel obedience; and in proportion as the soul is cast into this mold, it will become a servant unto God. This so far from leading us to obey sin, will make us obey God; and so far from causing us "to yield our members servants to uncleanness unto iniquity, will rather make us yield them servants to righteousness unto holiness."

If we know anything, if we feel anything of the kingdom of God set up with power in the conscience, that knowledge, that feeling, so far as each is spiritual and experimental, will produce an effect. Vital godliness will be divinely worked into our conscience, and will leave, more or less, a deep and abiding impression upon our heart. Our religion will not consist in merely embracing a sound creed, in talking about ministers and books, attending a certain chapel, hearing certain ministers, or going through certain ordinances. If we have been delivered into this mold of divine teaching, that "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power," there will be something higher and deeper, something more lasting and abiding, something more spiritual and supernatural than creeds and external performances.

It is the glory and beauty of vital godliness, that the soul possessed of it obeys from the heart; that the spring of its obedience is spiritual and internal; that a Christian does what he does from noble principles; that as far as he is rightly taught and guided, what he does, he does from his heart; what he says, he says from his heart; what he prays, he prays from the heart; and if he be a preacher, what he preaches, he preaches from the heart. His very soul is in the matter; and as his conscience lives under the dew and unction of the Spirit, what he does he does unto God, and not unto men. As the form of doctrine is more deeply impressed upon him, he day by day more obeys it from the heart--and is led more clearly into this truth, that what God looks to, and what he works in us, is an obedience that springs from the heart. So that, the more the soul is delivered into this mold of heavenly teaching, to believe with the heart unto righteousness, confession is more made with the mouth unto salvation.

Now, until a man is thus spiritually taught and wrought upon, he will be the servant of sin. He may indeed have a very shining profession; but it may only be a mask for the deepest and blackest hypocrisy. He may contend much for spirituality of mind; and yet hide under that profession the basest sins. He may plead much for the doctrines of grace; and yet use them as a cloak for the vilest licentiousness in practice. A man must, in one form or other, be "the servant of sin," until he "obeys from the heart the form of doctrine"--the mold of divine teaching, into which the soul is spiritually delivered.

But when the Holy Spirit takes him in hand, and casts him into the mold of divine teaching, so as to bring into his soul the word of God with power, he fixes the truth upon his conscience, and impresses it upon his heart; so that he comes forth with the truth of God stamped upon him, as the cast comes out of the mold, and the coin from the die. Then, and only then, is he delivered from the service of sin. Sin might indeed not have worn an outward or gross form. The life might have been circumspect, and sin worn in him a very

subtle shape. But there is no real deliverance from bearing the yoke of sin until the mold of heavenly teaching is obeyed "from the heart." This is the fulfillment of that new covenant promise--"I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their heart." Thus inward, spiritual, and vital obedience can alone be produced; and one truth written by the Spirit in the heart, will bring forth more fruit in the life, than a hundred doctrines floating in the head.

It is, then, in this way that "the form of doctrine" which we have received in the Spirit, is made to produce an impression upon our hearts and lives. And the more that "the form of doctrine" is brought into our heart, and the more we are molded by it, the more shall we obey it; and, as the Apostle says, "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." We grow in grace by growing in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; and we only grow in the knowledge of him as we grow in the knowledge of ourselves. Thus to grow in grace is to grow in the knowledge of our own weakness and of Christ's strength; of our own sinfulness, and of Christ's atoning blood; of our own ignorance, and of Christ's teaching in that ignorance. A sense of daily depravity, and yet seeing God's grace superabounding over it all; a constant fear we shall fall every day and hour unless God keeps us, and yet mercifully feeling his fear springing up in our hearts, as "a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death"--to be cast into this mold of heavenly teaching will deliver us from being "the servants of sin."

Let us with God's blessing, by way of SUMMING up the whole, look a little into our own conscience. There is, then, a "form of doctrine," a mold of divine teaching. What evidence have we that we have been delivered into it? What have we felt, what have we known, of our own ruin by nature? Have we groaned and sighed because we have been and are so vile? Did sin ever lie as a heavy burden upon our conscience, and did we ever see what wretches we are by nature and practice? Have we ever desired deliverance from the bondage of servitude and sin? Have we become tired of our old master, of his ways, and of his wages? and have we longed for a better master and better wages? That is the beginning of the breaking off of the chain of servitude. The first link of the servile yoke is snapped, when we begin to be discontented with our slavery, and cry and sigh for a better master and a better service.

Again. What do we know, or what have we known of the spirituality of God's law? Now this we must know, in order to feel more keenly our servitude. Not that we can break off the chains of sin through the law, because "by the law is the knowledge of sin," and therefore the law never can deliver us from the power, guilt, and service of sin. But the heavier the yoke, as with the children of Israel in Egypt, the nearer is deliverance from it.

And what know we of being cast into the mold of the grand gospel truth of justification by Christ's imputed righteousness? Have our souls ever received this glorious truth with a measure of divine power? This is the first evidence of a deliverance from sin, the first striking off of its fetters and chains; this is the first raising up of liberty in the conscience, and of experiencing a measure of the sweetness and power of the way of salvation.

And have we felt the kingdom of God set up in the heart? Have we felt a cleaving to the teaching of the Holy Spirit? and been convinced in our consciences that the kingdom of God stands only in power? To come to this is to obey and cleave to the form of doctrine delivered unto us.

And then may I not justly ask, what effect this has on our lives? What deadness to the world does it produce in our soul? What cleaving to the things of God? What desiring in our conscience to be conformed to the image of Jesus? I am sure, that the more the blessed Spirit lets down into our

conscience the power of truth, in all its branches; and leads us into an heartfelt reception of, and acquiescence in it, the more shall we get delivered from serving sin, and the more be led to obey from the heart the form of doctrine delivered unto us; the more we shall walk in the footsteps of the Lord of life and glory, and have the truth stamped with power on our conscience.

And then, feeling our own ruin, weakness, and helplessness, we shall learn to give glory to whom glory is due; and to ascribe salvation first and salvation last to the God of all grace and glory; and cast the crown before the throne of God and the Lamb, who, with the Holy Spirit, is alone worthy of praise and blessing, now and forever!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jc-philpot/obedience-from-the-heart/>

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