

Romans 6:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

Analysis

But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin—charis de tō theō hoti ēte douloi tēs hamartias (χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ ὅτι ἦτε δοῦλοι τῆς ἀμαρτίας). The imperfect ēte (ἦτε, ye were) indicates past continuous state, now changed. Paul gives thanks not for their slavery to sin itself but for their deliverance from it—the clause is ironic or elliptical, completed by the next phrase. Charis tō theō (χάρις τῷ θεῷ, thanks be to God) is doxological: God deserves credit for their transformation.

But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you—hypēkousate de ek kardias eis hon paredothēte typon didachēs (ὑπηκούσατε δὲ ἐκ καρδίας εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδαχῆς). Ek kardias (ἐκ καρδίας, from the heart) indicates genuine, internal transformation—not mere external conformity. **That form of doctrine** (typon didachēs, τύπον διδαχῆς)—typon (pattern, standard, mold) suggests apostolic teaching as the fixed standard into which believers are formed. Paredothēte (παρεδόθητε, ye were delivered/handed over) is passive—God committed them to this teaching pattern, entrusting them to the gospel's transforming truth. Salvation involves intellectual content (doctrine) embraced volitionally (obey) and affectively (from the heart).

Historical Context

Early Christian catechesis involved teaching converts core doctrines (kerygma: death-burial-resurrection; ethical teaching: didache). The phrase 'form of doctrine' suggests a standardized body of apostolic teaching, possibly including baptismal confession and ethical instruction. In Roman culture, students were 'handed over' to teachers/tutors; Paul uses this language of believers being entrusted to gospel truth. Heart-obedience contrasts with Pharisaic externalism Jesus condemned—genuine transformation, not mere rule-keeping. The aorist *hypēkousate* (obeyed) points to conversion as decisive moment of submission to gospel truth.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What evidence shows that your obedience to God comes 'from the heart' rather than mere external conformity?
2. How has the 'form of doctrine' (core Christian teaching) shaped and transformed your thinking and living?
3. Where might you be obeying God outwardly without genuine heart engagement and affection?

Interlinear Text

χάρις	δὲ	τῷ	θεῷ	ὅτι	ἵτε	δοῦλοι	τῆς	ἀμαρτίας
be thanked	But	G3588	God	that	ye were	the servants	G3588	of sin
G5485	G1161		G2316	G3754	G2258	G1401		G266
ὑπηκούσατε	δὲ	ἐκ	καρδίας	εἰς	δν	παρεδόθητε		
ye have obeyed	But	from	the heart	which	G3739	was delivered you		
G5219	G1161	G1537	G2588	G1519		G3860		
τύπον	διδαχῆς							
that form	of doctrine							
G5179	G1322							

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 2:9 (Parallel theme): But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Romans 16:26 (References God): But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

Romans 1:8 (References God): First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

2 Corinthians 2:14 (References God): Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

2 Timothy 1:13 (Parallel theme): Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Acts 11:18 (References God): When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

Romans 15:18 (Parallel theme): For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

3 John 1:3 (Parallel theme): For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

Hebrews 5:9 (Parallel theme): And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

Philemon 1:4 (References God): I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,

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