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MINISTRIES

“The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below.”

The Pauline Paradox Series: Part 5 – Corinthians

Welcome to Part 5 of the Pauline Paradox series, where we will be covering 1st and 2nd Corinthians. We expect that there may be two types of people interested in watching this teaching.

The first type might not understand or agree that those in the faith should be observing the Torah or God’s law. To those that fall in this group, we strongly recommend that you start at the beginning of the Pauline Paradox Series, as there is a lot of foundational material included in prior parts of this series that we will be using in this teaching on First and Second Corinthians.

The second type of person watching this teaching might be one who already understands that we are to be observing the Torah, but still wants to be able to better understand and explain the difficult words of Paul. To those in this group, we still recommend beginning at the start of the Pauline Paradox Series. However, we do not consider it to be absolutely necessary.

Lastly, before we get started, be aware there will be parts of 1st and 2nd Corinthians that you may have wished that we would have covered in more detail.

The goal of the Pauline Paradox series is to call the whole Body of the Messiah back to the whole Word of God. This is what we believe the ministry of Yeshua (Jesus) was all about, apart from his death and resurrection. He called God’s people to repentance and obedience.

To do this effectively, we feel that showing how Paul’s letters are consistent with the same message of the Messiah is very important.

The books of First and Second Corinthians contain several passages that we will need to examine in light of everything we’ve already established in this series. If believers in Messiah are to keep commandments from the Law of God (Sabbath, feast days, dietary instructions, etc.), then how do we understand some passages in these two letters that appear, on the surface, to contradict that idea? In this

teaching we'll go through each of those passages and demonstrate that they are consistent with Paul's teachings concerning the ongoing applicability of God's Law.

The first passage we'll look at is 1 Corinthians 7:19, in which Paul says, "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing." Paul cannot mean circumcision itself has no value. Why? Because in the very same verse, Paul also says that "keeping the commandments of God" is what matters. Paul cannot say that circumcision is nothing and, in the same breath, affirm the importance of keeping God's commandments, which include circumcision.

It helps to understand the first-century historical context when reading passages like this. In the first century, certain sects of Judaism taught that Gentiles could not be "saved" and made part of God's people unless they "became Jewish" through ritual conversion, which was a long process that included getting circumcised. Thus, "circumcision" referred not only to the surgical removal of the foreskin but also to having a "Jewish status" in the minds of many first-century Jews. Likewise, "uncircumcision" refers to having a "Gentile status." With that in mind, we can understand Paul's statement as such:

1 Corinthians 7:18-19

Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised [Jewish]? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision [become a Gentile]. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised [a Gentile]? Let him not seek circumcision [to become Jewish]. For neither circumcision [being Jewish] counts for anything nor uncircumcision [being a Gentile], but keeping the commandments of God.

Paul was not speaking against the actual act of circumcision but rather against Gentiles being pressured to convert to Judaism.

The false teachers taught that the Gentile believers must get circumcised in order to be saved and included among God's people. We see this false doctrine also expressed in Acts 15:

Acts 15:1

But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

Essentially, the false teachers believed that the only way Gentiles could be "saved" was to "become Jewish" through ritual conversion. As Messianic theologian Tim Hegg explains:

[T]he term "circumcision" is used as a shorthand way of describing proselytism—that rabbinic ceremony by which a Gentile person would be given the status of being a Jew and therefore qualify to have a place in the world to come [m.*Sanhedrin* 10.1]. Given this understanding, one is in a far better position to understand why Paul speaks so strongly against circumcision (Gal 5:2-3). He is not arguing against the biblical commandments, as is seen by the fact that he has Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:1f). In Galatians, Paul is using "circumcision" to mean "to become a proselyte," that is, to accept the idea that "becoming a Jew" would secure a place in the world to come.

-Tim Hegg, *Why We Keep Torah: Ten Persistent Questions* (Tacoma, WA: TorahResource, 2009), p. 129

This controversy sparked what has come to be called the Jerusalem Council, in which the apostles ruled that Gentiles and Jews are “saved” in the same way—by grace through faith in the Messiah (Acts 15:7-11).

False teachers had infiltrated the churches such as Galatia and Corinth and were teaching that one’s salvation and inclusion among God’s people depended on whether or not they had a Jewish status. And the only way for a Gentile to “become Jewish” was to submit to the false teachers’ formula for ritual conversion—a process that involved circumcision, among other things.

Furthermore, in order to maintain one’s status as a member of the covenant community, one must abide by certain “works of the law” as defined by the false teachers. The false teachers essentially taught that one gains their salvation and acceptance from God, not on the basis of faith in Messiah, but on the basis of one’s “Jewish status,” which is defined by men and obtained and maintained by human effort.

This teaching is a complete distortion and abuse of God’s law, which was never intended to justify anyone. It is also completely contrary to the gospel message, which declares that one is saved and accepted by God on the basis of grace through faith in Messiah. It’s the Messiah’s work on the cross, not our own work, which saves us.

This was the same issue that Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians 7:18-19.

In Paul’s mind, having a “Jewish status” (as defined by the first-century rabbis) didn’t matter. They weren’t to focus on that. Whether Jew or Gentile, keeping God’s commandments is what matters.

Some additional clues in the text demonstrate that this interpretation should be preferred. Just like in the letter to the Galatians, Paul is speaking against getting circumcised for the wrong reasons. The Circumcision Party would indoctrinate and compel others to follow unbiblical traditions and beliefs. They taught that God would accept Gentiles only if they were circumcised, converted to their sect, and then took on the full yoke of their manmade doctrine. In essence, Gentile believers who went through ritual conversion became slaves to men.

Paul goes on to show that the ritual conversion process of the Circumcision Party was indoctrination into bondage because of their false doctrine regarding salvation and inclusion into God’s covenant community:

1 Corinthians 7:23

“You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men”

Paul essentially said the same thing in Galatians when dealing with this exact issue:

Galatians 5:1

“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery”.

Paul’s point is that God accepts us all based on our faith in Messiah, not through ritual conversion or any other form of human effort. We don’t have to become a Jew or Gentile to please God. Keeping the commandments of God is what matters. That includes circumcision, but for the right reasons. It must not be done as a way of submitting to some manmade conversion formula, which is bondage. If you weren’t already circumcised on the eighth day of birth, God should call you to circumcision because you read it

in the Word and are compelled by the Holy Spirit, not because someone tells you that you are not saved unless you do it.

Let's move on to another passage that is often misunderstood to say that keeping the Law is not required of believers:

1 Corinthians 9: Paul the Man Pleaser, or Torah Teacher?

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

Here is a common interpretation of this set of verses:

- *Paul became as a Jew, which is interpreted to mean "following Torah," to win Jews, but rightly abandoned Torah when with the converted Gentiles.*
- *The Jews were "under the law" (interpreted as the Torah is authoritative to Jews) so once again, Paul acted as though he followed Torah when around Jews, but did not follow the Torah around converted Gentiles.*
- *Instead of following Torah, Paul follows the "Law of Christ" which is a new law for Christians.*

Do you see any issues with this interpretation?

In an effort to explain Paul's Torah observance throughout his life and ministry, many Christians might suggest that Paul kept God's Law merely to appeal to Jews, not because the Torah holds validity as our faith-based instructions. And they interpret this passage as a basis for that argument.

Let's ask a very important question.

Wouldn't it be deceitful and hypocritical of Paul to hold to and exemplify the validity of the Torah to Jews but teach the opposite to Gentiles?

It most certainly would. And if we're going to take Paul's teachings seriously, then the common interpretation of this passage is an unacceptable option.

Paul was often accused of not teaching the Torah to all in the book of Acts. Each and every time, Paul proved such accusations to be false.

Because we cover that point in such great depth in the teaching "[The Pauline Paradox: The Paul You Never Knew](#)" we would offer up that recommendation to anyone struggling with the idea that Paul taught the Torah to all, to both Jews and Gentiles.

Here is a brief alternative interpretation of this set of verses in 1 Corinthians 9:

1 Corinthians 9:19

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.

Paul serves others by placing himself in their shoes, so to speak. He employs Gospel-sharing tactics that takes into account where a person is in their faith.

Just as Yeshua spent his ministry fellowshipping with people of every social and religious status—common people, sinners, as well as Pharisees—Paul did the same. He became a “servant to all” in order to minister to everyone. His ministry was not only to Gentiles but also to regular Jews and Jews who might be stricter in their observance of various traditions. Perhaps a good example of Paul becoming “all things to all people” is in Acts 17:22-34, where he preaches the Gospel based on Greek poetry and concepts that were relevant to his Athenian audience. Paul did not cease being Jewish or Torah observant when he preached the Gospel to the Athenians in terms they understood.

1 Corinthians 9:20

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.

Being “as a Jew,” in this context, means that Paul understood Jewish culture and traditions and was able to leverage that knowledge in a presentation of the Gospel. The same is true of those “under the law” (which, as we covered earlier in this series, refers to those currently under the penalty of the Law—those who stand guilty before God for their sin). As we can see with the parenthetical statement in this verse, Paul wasn’t placing himself under the penalty of the Law but was meeting people on their level in order to minister to them, just like Yeshua did. Neither Paul nor Yeshua ever compromised their beliefs and convictions to reach people, but they did place themselves in the shoes of different people in different situations in order to effectively convey the truth.

To bring the concept of the Torah into Paul’s point in this verse, requires pre-loaded doctrinal assumptions.

The Torah is not mentioned in any capacity. In fact, the Pharisees were accused of making the Torah of no effect by following their traditions of the elders (Mark 7).

As one example, the Pharisees had a commandment of man that one had to wash their hands before eating.

This was an instruction for priests, yet the Pharisees made this tradition to be authoritative for all.

Mark 7:1-13

Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. **(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.)** And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of

you hypocrites, as it is written,

“This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;
in vain do they worship me,

teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’

You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”

And he said to them, **“You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!** For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban”’ (that is, given to God)— then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, **thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down.** And many such things you do.”

Paul understood these traditions, and likely practiced them as to not offend the Pharisees. But these traditions are found nowhere in the Bible outside of the priesthood. They are simply traditions. Nor did Paul afford any authority to these traditions.

Now, Paul used to teach these traditions as authoritative, but he does no longer, for the same reasons our Messiah outlined in Mark 7.

Galatians 1:13-14

For you have heard of **my former life in Judaism**, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous **was I for the traditions of my fathers.**

For more on this, consider watching our teaching “[*The Lawless Pharisees*](#)” and the rest of the *Pauline Paradox Series*.

1 Corinthians 9:20

to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law;

As we covered earlier in this series, being “under the law” simply means one who is currently under the penalty of the Law. These are those who are not in the faith.

As an example:

Romans 3:19

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are **under the law**, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

The verse prior, defines the unbelievers who are “under the law.”

Romans 3:17-18

...and the way of peace they have not known.” There is no fear of God before their eyes.

For more on this, we would refer to the Pauline Paradox Series, specifically “[*Which Law Paul?*](#)”

So did Paul literally act as an “unbeliever” as one who is “*under the penalty of the law?*”

Of course not...just as he was not literally acting like a Jew around Jews.

He was placing himself in the shoes of Jews to help assist in making points that would resonate with them. Paul could point to the Torah and the Prophets to the Jews to prove the validity of the Messiah.

Acts 17:2 (NKJV)

Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures...

Unbelievers, on the other hand, would require different tactics to show them the gospel and the Messiah. The Gentiles did not have the Torah as a foundation in which Paul could use to show them the validity of the Messiah.

This of course, leads Paul into his next point...

1 Corinthians 9:21-22

To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

Those “outside the law” refers to Gentiles who grew up never even hearing about Israel’s God or his Law. Again, a good example of how Paul would reach people in this situation can be found in Acts 17:22-34. Paul used philosophical arguments to teach about the Messiah, which were relevant to the Athenians who, unlike Jews, had no theological framework for the truths that he was sharing.

What does Paul mean when he says that he is “under the law of Christ”? The Law of Christ is the Law of God as Yeshua taught and practiced it. You’ll notice that he says he is not outside the Law of God but is under the Law of Christ. That is, he is in the Law of God and the Law of Christ at the same time. By Paul’s definition, the Law of Christ is not outside the Law of God. They are not two separate things, and this is more clear in the Greek, as scholar and theologian, J.K. McKee, explains:

This terminology is rendered by the YLT as “within law to Christ,” the TLV as “in Messiah’s Torah,” and with the CJB expressing a value judgment with, “within the framework of Torah as upheld by the Messiah.” The rendering “under the law of Christ” is not correct, otherwise the Greek source text would read something like *hupo nomon Christou*. But this is not what appears.

-J.K. McKee, *1 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic* (McKinney, TX: Messianic Apologetics, 2015), p. 197

Again, the “Law of Christ” is best understood as the Law of God rightly interpreted and practiced in light of the Messiah’s teachings. Yeshua didn’t bring an entirely new law to obey, separate from the Law of God. That would not make any sense as Yeshua’s teachings were based on the Law of God. Even in this very passage, Paul defines the “Law of Christ” as not outside the Law of God. The Law of Christ is the Torah, for it is the Torah that our Messiah lived and breathed.

Yeshua did not have his own law that he made up. Yeshua changed nothing. His doctrine came from the

Father.

John 7:16

So Jesus [Yeshua] answered them, “My teaching [doctrine] is not mine, but his who sent me.

The Father already gave us good doctrine:

Proverbs 4:2 (NKJV)

For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law (Torah).

The Law of Moses is the Torah, because that is what he taught and practiced. The law of John the Baptist was the Torah, because that is what he taught and practiced. The law of James is the Torah, because that is what he taught and practiced. The law of Paul is the Torah, because that is what he taught and practiced.

Our Messiah taught from and walked out the Torah in his ministry, yet some say that the law of the Messiah is somehow different than the law that he walked and taught?

Think about that for a moment.

Does that sound like something that makes sense? ...or more like someone trying to turn the “Law of Christ” into something that suits their doctrinal flavor?

For more on this, we would recommend the teaching “[*The Deuteronomy 13 Test.*](#)”

1 Corinthians 9:22-23

To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

This summarizes Paul’s point.

Paul did not literally act out all things, just as he did not literally act like a Jew, or literally act like someone under the law, meaning an unbeliever. He did not act like a murderer to share the gospel with a murderer. He did not act like an adulterer, to share the gospel with someone who was an adulterer. He did not act like an idolator, to share the gospel with an idolator. Paul did not sin and eat unclean (violate the Word of God) to try to share the same Word of God.

So then why would we say that he was just acting to follow Torah to be like a Jew, just to share the gospel to Jews?

We need to interpret Paul in such a way that makes sense, not simply to suit our preconceived doctrines. Paul practiced and taught Torah, not because he was a people pleaser, but because the Torah is our Creator’s instructions.

Paul did not follow Torah to seek or please man, or to gain their approval or trust.

Paul said he would never do any such thing!

Galatians 1:10

For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

But he did place himself in their shoes, to try to better relate to them, in an effort to share the gospel.

As mentioned earlier, Acts 17:22-31 is evidence of Paul putting this concept into practice.

Acts 17:22-31 (NKJV)

Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. **For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.** The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for "'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, "'For we are indeed his offspring.' Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead"

Did you see how Paul took the traditions and culture of the Greeks and turned it into a gospel message?

Here, Paul finds an object from Gentile culture, an altar to an unknown God, and uses it to proclaim to them a God they do not know—the true God, who made the world. He started with something they could understand and used it to preach the gospel. He became as one “without the law.”

Did Paul begin acting like Greeks just to make them happy?

No, of course not.

But we accuse Paul of obeying the Torah just to please the Jews?

Our choices are that either Paul promoted a Torah-observant lifestyle for all in the faith, or he is hypocritical and deceitful in his message.

Also consider this.

If Paul was teaching that he only pretended the Torah to be authoritative instructions in the faith, then why in the world would he cite the Law of Moses as an authority in the faith to Gentiles!?!

Paul cites the authority of the Law of Moses just a few verses up in the SAME chapter.

1 Corinthians 9:8-10

Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.

Paul says that he is not saying things on his authority, meaning as just a human, but appeals to the Law of Moses as the authority in regard to what he is saying. Paul is literally saying that the Law of Moses, as an instructional authority from God, is written for our sake.

How could something that supposedly no longer applies be of any authority for us in the faith?

Was Paul just “acting like a Jew” in front of the Corinthians too...Because perhaps he forgot who he was writing to?

Maybe he thought for a moment that he was writing to Jews?

Of course not...

Paul cites the Law of Moses in the present tense as a valid authority above and beyond the ideas of a “mere man.”

Similarly, Paul did not become a pagan to win pagans. He did not become an idolater to win idolaters, an adulterer or a participant in child sacrifice to win adulterers or those practicing heinous idolatrous sacrifices. He did not even eat meat sacrificed to idols to become like those who ate meat sacrificed to idols in the temples. He did not give up the Torah to win those who do not follow the Torah. Paul remained faithful to the Torah, but used Gentile cultural aspects to reveal the One True God.

In conclusion, nothing in this passage indicates that Paul rejected God’s Law or kept it only when Jews were around. To suggest that he did would mean that he was an unprincipled hypocrite who tried to convert people under pretenses. Obviously, we know that is not the case. Paul was explaining his evangelistic strategy to meet people where they were.

Let’s move on to another passage that is often misunderstood as teaching against God’s Law. This passage is found in the second letter to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 3:7-11 – Exactly What Came to an End, the Glory or God’s Law?

2 Corinthians 3:7-11

Now if the **ministry of death, carved in letters on stone**, came **with such glory** that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, **much more will what is permanent have glory.**

What does Paul mean that God’s law is a “*ministry of death*?”

What was fading, God's law ("*ministry of death*") or the glory of the law?

Is there not a difference between the glory of the law, and the law itself?

Some believe and teach that the phrase "*ministry of death*" as God's law is certain evidence that the law had to be abolished.

It is concluded, why wouldn't God remove or abolish something that Paul calls the "*ministry of death*?"

Consider this, if the law of God did not demand our death for us breaking it, then salvation at the cross was unnecessary.

More importantly, if the law did not demand our death because we broke the law (sin), then the law would not be holy, just, or good.

We require the Law of God to act as a "*ministry of death*" for a very important reason.

2 Corinthians 3 is not the only place Paul teaches this concept.

In Paul's letter to the Romans, Paul again helps us understand that the Law of God brings death.

Romans 7:10

The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.

Why does the Law of God bring death?

The answer?

Because we break the Law of God.

Paul understands that the Law of God is intended to bless us in obedience, but curse us (death) in disobedience. This is nothing new.

Deuteronomy 11:26-29 (NKJV)

"Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD (YHWH) your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD (YHWH) your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known.

Obviously, all have sinned (meaning broke the law of God – 1 John 3:4), or as Paul states, followed the "Law of Sin" (Romans 7:23). Thus, we are all cursed by the law and we all deserve death.

Paul brilliantly calls this the "Law of Sin and Death" (Romans 8:2). Until we realize that we are sinning against God, we are unable to realize that we deserve death.

However, once we read the Law of God and we realize that it as truth, then we realize that we have sinned against God. It is when we realize our sin that we should understand that we deserve death.

This is how the "Law of God" equates to the "*ministry of death*" according to Paul.

Before we enter into the faith, the law of God is designed to teach us that we deserve death.

It is by God's law, and our sin (Law of Sin) that is against God's law, that we understand that we need a savior from our sin that demands our death (Law of Sin and Death).

This is exactly what Paul continues to teach in Romans 7.

Romans 7:11 (NKJV)

For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.

Is the Law of God ("ministry of death") bad because it kills us?

No! God's law is "holy, just, and good" because it kills us. We want the law to kill us. Without realizing we deserve death in our sin, we cannot be "born again." The very "Word" that kills, is also what gives us life.

Deuteronomy 30:15

See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil,

The Word is "life" when we believe and do it. The "Word" is death when we do not believe in its truth.

Before our faith, we were against the Law of God and followed only the Law of Sin. We followed our ways instead of God's ways.

We want the law to be a "*ministry of death*." That is exactly what Paul teaches us in the very next verse.

Romans 7:12 (NKJV)

Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

It is not God's law that is bad, it is that we are bad because we broke the law of God (sin).

Our sin does not make the Law of God bad, but in fact it proves that the Law of God is good.

It is sin (or the breaking God's law) that deceived us. It is God's law that reveals to us that we were deceived in following the Law of Sin.

Law (or Torah) simply means "instruction" in Hebrew. There are only two sources of instruction. There is instruction from God (the Law of God) and there is instruction that is against God (the Law of Sin).

Continuing in Romans 7, Paul explains the ongoing battle of the instructions (laws) in all believers, the Law of God vs. the Law of Sin.

Romans 7:21-22 (Law of God)

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,

In verse 21, Paul teaches that the will to do good, the Law of God, exposes the evil within him. In verse 22, Paul states that his inward man delights in the Law of God. In the very next verse (23) Paul teaches that the Law of Sin is the instruction that is against the Law of God. It is the Law of Sin that is bondage.

Romans 7:23 (Law of Sin)

but I see in my members **another law** waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the **law of sin** that dwells in my members.

As we read earlier, sin (breaking God's law) leads to death (Romans 7:10-11). This brings us back to the defining phrase that Paul termed the "*ministry of death*."

The Law of God is the "*ministry of death*" because once we realize we broke the law of God we then understand that we are under the "Law of Sin and Death."

However, in Christ, we are no longer under the "Law of Sin and Death" but under grace.

Romans 8:2

For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus [**Messiah Yeshua**] from the **law of sin and death**.

Does this mean that we can break God's law (sin) or nullify the Law of God in our faith? Paul makes it clear that we cannot.

Romans 3:31

Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

Romans 6:1

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

Because we often mistakenly misunderstand the "ministry of death" as something that was bad and had to be abolished, we then mistakenly assume that Paul must have been referencing the Law of God as to what was being brought to an end in 2 Corinthians 3.

However, without God's law presenting itself as a "ministry of death" we would never realize that we are under the "Law of Sin and Death" and thus require a savior. If we never realize that we need a savior, then we would remain deceived in the Law of Sin without the Law of God.

Paul was clear that it was actually the glory, or esteem of the law, that was being brought to an end.

2 Corinthians 3:7

...because of **its glory, which was being brought to an end...**

What we then learn is that it was not the Law of God that was brought to an end, but the glory of the law was brought to an end because of Israel's disobedience. The law has glory when we do it. When we sin and break the law of God it profanes the Word of God, his law. It removes the glory of the law. So the problem is disobedience, which reduces the glory of God's law.

We also learn that the glory of the law is to be restored, and we are told that this time it will be both greater and lasting in the New Covenant. We are told that this is done through the "ministry of the Spirit."

This is why Paul references the Spirit in Romans 8 as contrary to the "Law of Sin and Death":

Romans 8:2

For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua] from the law of sin and death.

Paul details in Romans 8 that in our faith we have received the Spirit to want to do the Law of God, and it is those still under the law of sin and death that do not want to do the Law of God. This is how God begins to bring back the glory of the Law of God in the New Covenant.

We walk according to the Spirit (8:4). The carnal minded and the spirit minded are clearly opposite ways of living. We already know from reading the chapter earlier that the law is Spiritual (7:14).

Therefore, we should not be surprised when Paul states that those who are in the flesh are at enmity against God. Those who are at enmity with God do not do the Law of God.

Romans 8:7-8

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Those who live according to their flesh are not subject to the Law of God, but those who live according to the Spirit live according to God's law, which pleases him.

Therefore, those teaching against the Law of God are letting their flesh speak and revealing their enmity against God. Those who teach the Law of God are being led by the Spirit, and showing that they are not under the Law of Sin and Death.

After reviewing all of this, it should be rather clear that Paul was not teaching against the Law of God in 2 Corinthians 3:7-8.

So why was Paul teaching that the glory of the law faded away? What does this have to do with the tablets of stone and tablets of the heart?

What does this have to do with the New Covenant?

As with any teacher, even Paul, we should be able to test what is being taught to God's Word.

When we do this, we find that Paul is not teaching anything new, but only what the prophets have already established as true.

To understand this better, we should consider the surrounding text as additional context. We will cover 2 Corinthians 3 in detail.

2 Corinthians 3:3

And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

For those who understand the Biblical prophecy of the New Covenant, it might be quickly realized that Paul is offering an obvious reference to the change in the New Covenant. In error, many submit that the change is related to God's law. That is nowhere to be found in Scripture. A new covenant does not require a new law.

In reality, as Paul also teaches, the true change was and is in us and that God's law has remained the same, as promised.

New covenant, same law.

It is not God's law that changed, it is our relationship to God's law that changed.

The change, that is prophetically detailed for us in Jeremiah 31:31-33, is that the House of Judah and the House of Israel (the 2 houses of Israel) will now begin to obey God's law because of a change in the status of their heart.

Jeremiah 31:33

For this is **the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days**, declares the Lord [YHWH]: **I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**

Ezekiel also discusses this matter in the prophecy of the divorced House of Israel (Jeremiah 3:8-10) and House of Judah being reunited as one (Ezekiel 37).

Ezekiel 36:26-27

And I will give you a new heart, and a **new spirit** I will put within you. And I will remove the **heart of stone** from your flesh and give you a **heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.**

For more on the prophecies concerning the two houses of Israel and how it all connects to the Messiah's work, see our teachings [*The Lost Sheep*](#) and [*What is the Gospel?*](#)

Israel had God's law, but it was written on a stony heart (tablet) only. It was not written on the heart of flesh. Meaning, they had no true desire to keep God's law. They did not delight in it. It was not long before things slid into chaos as they also began incorporating ways of the nations (Gentiles) into their daily lives. It was because of this mentality that it is understood that the law of God lost its glory with the people.

This is what Paul writes about in 2 Corinthians 3.

Since a major point of God's commandments is to express our love to him (1 John 5:3), and the breaking of God's law is sin (1 John 3:4), then this was a very serious problem indeed.

It should be agreed, that problems require solutions. We should all agree that solutions should address the root cause of the problem, otherwise the problem is not fixed. This is exactly how God dealt with the problem of Israel's disobedience. The New Covenant is a solution to Israel's disobedience, and this is a means to give God's people the desire to keep God's law and bring them back into covenant with God's law, and even non-native Israelites or Gentiles, are also actively invited into covenant with God.

Think about it this way.

The solution to the House of Israel being disobedient to God's law was not for God to get rid of his law. The solution was to give the House of Israel a desire to follow the Law of God.

God is not interested in us doing what he asks just because he said so. He asks for circumcision of the heart first (Deuteronomy 10:16). He does not want us doing the ways of the world. He is interested in us having a desire to do what he asks. He wants us to do the ways of God. This is the problem at hand with Israel, and the New Covenant is the solution. It is in the New Covenant that we have a desire to obey the way of God, not reject it or abandon it. Throwing out God's Law would be the same mistake the House of Israel made in the first place.

The Law of God, on only stone, in of itself is worthless. The Law of God does not reflect its true glory unless it is ALSO written on our hearts, meaning we inwardly express the desire to do God's law. It is only then, when we do the law of God out of our love for God, that the glory of the Law of God is realized, amplified, and sustained.

2 Corinthians 3:3

And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the **Spirit of the living God**, not on **tablets of stone** but on **tablets of human hearts**.

Again, this is already established in prophecy:

Ezekiel 36:26-27

And I will give you a new heart, and a **new spirit** I will put within you. And I will remove the **heart of stone** from your flesh and give you a **heart of flesh**. **And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.**

So, the context established in 2 Corinthians 3:3 is outlining the long-established problem of a lack of faith and a lack of motivation for obedience (a stony heart/the tablets of stone) instead of heart of flesh and Spirit (which is a desire to do God's law).

2 Corinthians 3:4-5

Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God,

The letter of the law is not to be a matter of simple obedience by our works. Obedience is insufficient without faith. Faith is necessary, which gives us the Spirit. Then, and only then, we will want to do God's law for the right reason, which is to love God (1 John 5:3). Those without the Spirit will erroneously focus just on the written and their own works as being sufficient. They miss the deeper aspects of the Law of God that go beyond what is written, which is why Yeshua had to teach these things all over again in the first century (Matthew 5).

Paul, here, is attempting to explain how the New Covenant is to work according to Biblical prophecy and how it is beginning to come true. It should still be rather obvious that Paul is not teaching against the Law of God, but how our desire to keep the Law of God brings the glory back to it as intended.

Remember, a central point of the New Covenant is to write the Law of God, the Torah, on our hearts. That Biblical phrase is defined in Scripture as the desire to keep the Law of God.

Once we die to the flesh, the Spirit is to put all of God's law on our hearts, and then we will have a desire for his law by delighting in it. Once we die in the flesh, by our faith in the Word, we are born again in that same Word (which is the Seed).

1 Peter 1:23

since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, **through the living and abiding word of God;**

Doing his commandments with our whole heart (loving God with our whole heart) has been God's intent for us from the beginning. This is nothing new.

Psalm 119:9-11

How can a young man keep **his way pure?**
By guarding it **according to your word.**
With my **whole heart** I seek you;
let me not wander from your commandments!
I have stored up your **word in my heart,**
that I might **not sin** against you.

It was always God's intent for us to write his law on our heart:

Proverbs 7:2-3

keep my commandments and live;
keep my teaching as the apple of your eye;
bind them on your fingers;
write them on the tablet of your heart

Sound familiar?

Paul has established that the letter of the law is to expose our sin and kill us so that we die in Christ. This is the "ministry of death." The law exposes our sin and then we realize we are under the curse of death (law of sin and death)(Romans 8:2). We then realize that we require a Savior (verse 4) and trust in him (not our observance of God's law – verse 5) to save us.

Paul explains this in the next verse.

2 Corinthians 3:6

Who also has made us able **ministers of the new covenant;** not of **the letter,** but of **the spirit:** for **the letter kills,** but the **spirit gives life.** who has made us sufficient to **be ministers of a new covenant,** not of the **letter but of the Spirit.** For the **letter kills,** but the **Spirit gives life.**

It should be very clear here that Paul is teaching about the "new covenant." Paul actually refers to it by name in verse 6. We cannot ignore this, as it is rather important.

Now we have Paul not only directly referencing the new covenant but also using prophetic language that details the expected changes in the new covenant.

This can only mean that Paul is teaching how the law of God is written on our heart (Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 36:27), not how the law of God is abolished. What is written (all of it) on our heart simply cannot also be the same thing that is abolished.

The question remains, how does God give us the desire or spirit to want to observe the Law of God? How does he write it on our hearts?

This is the part that many miss because they do not understand the main point of the New Covenant.

The New Covenant is not a new law replacing an abolished law, but instead a new heart to follow the law of God to replace a stony heart that rejects the Law of God.

In order for the New Covenant to be successful, God must do something to give us the desire to observe God's law.

We need to determine what God did that changed everything.

The letter is designed to kill us by exposing our sin. The law must kill us or we cannot be born again.

Once we are found dead in Christ and we become the "new man" and we are "born again" in the faith, we then begin to love God.

Loving God is defined by keeping his commandments.

1 John 5:3

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not burdensome.

If the main purpose of the New Covenant is to give us the desire to keep the Law of God, what that really means is that the New Covenant is intended to give us the desire to love God.

How does God create that desire for us to love him back?

How does God fix the problem of his people not wanting to love him, not wanting to keep his commandments?

How did he remove the stony heart in his people? Why do we now want to love God?

Here is the answer:

1 John 4:19 (NKJV)

We love him [obedience], because he first loved [grace] us.

Loving him is obedience, his love for us is grace.

This is why Paul points to God in verse 5...

2 Corinthians 3:4-5

Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God,

...as it relates to the New Covenant (the Law being written on our heart).

2 Corinthians 3:6

who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

It is the manifestation and realization of God's grace (his love for us), Christ on the cross, that gives us the desire or spirit to love God back (to obey in obedience).

Is that not amazing? Because of his overwhelming love for us in sending his one and only son to the cross to die for us, we now have a desire now to love him back.

That is how God intends to install the desire for us to observe his law. He shows us how much he loves us and then, in return, we are to love him back in obedience.

This is all designed to remove our stony heart (meaning no desire for God's law) and replace it with a heart of flesh (meaning faith in the Word of God).

This is exactly what is to bring the glory back to the law of God.

How could any believer thumb their nose at God in disobedience after what he has done for us? Who could keep their stony heart? Who would not want to love God back?

Before the cross, God's love in this regard was not as obvious. They obeyed God because of his display of power, not because of His blatant display of his grace. Just coming out of Egypt and the event at Mt. Sinai, his power was clear. His grace was there, it was always there, but it was not at the forefront. Sadly, their obedience faded as their memory of his power faded. This is what Paul means when he says the "*glory of the law faded.*"

The glory of the law fades when sin increases.

Before Israel even received God's law from Sinai they said:

Exodus 24:3 (NKJV)

So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord [YHWH] and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the Lord [YHWH] has said we will do."

(The Hebrew actually literally states "We agree to do before we have even listened.")

This should be the attitude of every believer. However, Israel quickly became distracted from God's ways and fell into doing things their own way.

In Mark 4:17, Yeshua described what happens when the Word of God (the Seed) falls on a stony heart. He taught that it quickly becomes offended through affliction and persecution.

This is exactly what happened to the children of Israel in the wilderness. Time after time they were tempted in the wilderness and the people became offended from their trials and tribulations and desired to return to Egypt.

Numbers 14:1-4 (NKJV)

So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. **And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and**

children should become victims? **Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?**” So they said to one another, **“Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.”**

These are all blatant characteristics of a “*stony heart*.” They might have agreed to and received God’s law with gladness initially, but as soon as things were not going their way, they expressed a desire to return to Egypt (which represented the world and sin). They were quickly impressed with God’s power, but lacked the real reason to keep the commandments of God, which is to love him back.

A stony heart rejects God’s law, it rejects God’s word. A stony heart does not want God’s commandments. It is written in Zechariah:

Zechariah 7:11-12

“But they refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders, and stopped their ears so that they could not hear. Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the LORD [YHWH] of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from the LORD [YHWH] of hosts.

Thus, what needed to change was the heart of men, not God’s law.

The tablets of stone (law through the stone) are used by Paul to relate to the hearts of stone. God’s law is perfect (Psalm 19:7), it is men’s hearts that were the root of the problem (Hebrews 8:8). We literally needed a heart transplant. We needed to be circumcised of the heart first (faith/Spirit) before we attempted to be circumcised in the flesh (obedience). This is what Paul is teaching, as many other witnesses of God’s Word have already established in Scripture.

Once God’s law (as written on stone) kills us, you know, when we see our sin, we then realize we need a Savior. This is the “*ministry of death*.” In faith we are now in the New Covenant. We are equipped with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that teaches us all (not some) things. We can overcome the flesh and keep his law as written, as well as the principles behind each law, with delight and excitement as intended (though we will still fail at times and thank God for grace).

This is what prophecy in the Old Testament teaches us about the New Covenant. Paul is simply attempting to teach us what the prophets have already declared. If God was going to abolish His law instead of simply giving us the desire to follow it, it would have been declared by the prophets.

Amos 3:7 (NKJV)

**Surely the LORD [YHWH] God does nothing,
Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.**

Anyone subscribing to a law abolishing theology will find no support from the prophets. That is a clear sign that such theology is in error just from Amos 3:7 alone.

Now as an example, we should consider Romans 8:2-10 again with all of this in mind (Heart of Stone vs. a Heart of Flesh):

Romans 8:2-10 (NKJV)

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua] has made me free from the law of sin and death [heart of stone]. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh [heart of stone], God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh [heart of

stone], on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh [heart of stone], that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh [heart of stone] but according to the Spirit [heart of flesh]. For those who live according to the flesh [heart of stone] set their minds on the things of the flesh [heart of stone], but those who live according to the Spirit [heart of flesh], the things of the Spirit [heart of flesh]. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind [heart of flesh] is enmity against God; **for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.** So then, those who are in the flesh [heart of stone] cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh [heart of stone] but in the Spirit [heart of flesh], if indeed the Spirit (heart of flesh) of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit [heart of flesh] of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, **but the Spirit [heart of flesh] is life because of righteousness.**

Should it not be of any surprise that Paul is teaching what the prophets said would happen?

The heart of stone and the heart of flesh are really the two opposing natures inside of us. (This is the same struggle that Paul details in Romans 7: “*what he wants to do*” versus “*what he often does*” so that we are equipped to understand Romans 8)

In Romans 7, Paul tells us that God’s law is holy and the commandments are holy, just, and good, and spiritual. It also teaches us that God’s law bears fruit after the inward man. In Romans 7:12,14, 22 Paul discusses the two natures again:

Romans 7:12,14, 22 (NKJV)

Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good...For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin...For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.”

Going after the Spirit (letting the Spirit lead and guide us) or being “*spiritual*” means obedience to the law of God. Being fleshy or carnal is one who denies and breaks the law of God.

Paul continues to explain this in chapter 8 of Romans. It is the carnal mind that refuses to obey God’s law and does not want to. However, it is the Spiritual mind in Christ that does want to obey God’s law.

Now, as Paul is teaching and writing this, there is only one Law of God. Paul makes no mention of slicing and dicing, picking and choosing, what commandments of God are or are not part of the Law of God. In fact, if Paul was doing any such thing, no one would believe him because God already declared no man could teach anything of the sort (Deuteronomy 12:32).

The newer covenant is the law written upon a heart of flesh (Jeremiah 31:33). This would be accomplished by God putting his Holy Spirit within us so that the Spirit of God can teach God's people how to walk in the ways of God and keep his law and be obedient to his commandments. In Ezekiel 11:19-20 it is written in prophecy about the New Covenant:

Ezekiel 11:19-20

And I will give them one **heart**, and a new **spirit** I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a **heart of flesh**, that they may **walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them.** And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

A stony heart brings death but a heart of flesh brings life. This is what Paul was talking about in 2 Corinthians 3:3, 6

2 Corinthians 3:3, 6 (NKJV)

clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the **Spirit** of the living God, **not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh**, that is, **of the heart...** who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, **not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**

So, what is the purpose of the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant?

1. The Holy Spirit is a witness that the Newer Covenant = Law written upon our heart (*Jeremiah 31:31, 33; Hebrews 10:15-16; Romans 8*)
2. The Holy Spirit was sent into the earth to teach us the TRUTH of God (*John 14:16-17, 26, 15:26; John 16:13*)
3. What is the **TRUTH**? God's Law/Word of God IS TRUTH? (not WAS truth) (*Psalms 119:142; John 17:17*)
4. God wanted to write his law (all, not some) upon our heart and teach us his law, which is called "TRUTH" (*Psalms 119:142*), through his Holy Spirit, who is called "THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH" (*John 14:16-17, 26, 15:26, 16:13*)
5. We need God's Spirit WITHIN us for the following reasons:
 - a) Have the power to overcome the sin nature inherited by Adam
 - b) To bear spiritual fruit in our lives (*Galatians 5:22-25*)
 - c) To understand, grow, and have a revelation of God's Torah/Word

That is the foundation from which 2 Corinthians should be approached because that is what the Scripture teaches.

This was all laid out in the prophets beforehand as to what was going to happen. Paul lays out what did happen.

Scripture does not teach that God's law was a problem and thus we needed a new law.

Scripture teaches that our hearts were a problem and we needed a new heart.

With that, our eyes are opened to what Paul is teaching, which is simply prophecy becoming reality. When we look at the reality through the lens of prophecy, what was already written to come, then Paul becomes easy to understand.

However, if we continue to read Paul not through the lens of the Word of God and prophets, but through the lens of the doctrines of men, then Paul is difficult to understand and generates lawlessness (sin)(2 Peter 3:15-17).

Let's go back to 2 Corinthians 3 and have what we just said, in mind:

2 Corinthians 3:7 (NKJV)

But if the **ministry of death**, written and **engraved on stones**, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away,

The stony heart is death, and the stony heart is revealed through God's law. God's law "serves us" (ministration) in such a way that it reveals our stony heart (death). This is a good thing.

The same happens when we read God's commandments to unbelievers. Their sin and nature of their heart is revealed (truth exposes the intent of the heart).

The receipt of God's law started as glorious, but Israel quickly turned away from it and wanted to go back to Egypt because of their stony heart. They wanted a new leader (not Moses). So receipt of the law was glorious but the glory quickly faded because of the stony hearts of Israel. It was not the law that was done away, but the glory that was faded away because of the stony heart of Israel.

So, the problem still exists, how do we deal with the stony heart to get Israel to do God's law?

Do we get rid of God's law and create a new one?

No, that is not the stated solution that addresses the stated problem.

The solution is a new heart (tablets on the flesh heart instead of tablets on the stone heart). Thus, the new covenant was to be the solution.

The law came in a certain glory or splendor but there were limitations.

Do we mean limitations to God's law?

No, there were limitations with our heart in respect to God's law. The author of Hebrews even comments on this. He demonstrates that the fault was with them, not God's law.

Hebrews 8:8 (NKJV)

Because **finding fault with them**, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, **when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah**—*House of Israel (now Gentiles) + House of Ju(Jew)dah (Jews) = All of Israel

The problem is related to the heart of the people (8:10) not God's law, therefore the solution and change is related to the heart and not God's law. As it is said, "If it isn't broken, don't fix it."

God's law was and is not broken. It was and is perfect (Psalm 19:7).

We (our hearts) are broken, God's law (as written by Moses) is perfect, freedom, the way, truth, life, and light (why would He change or abolish any of that?). Those are all definitions of God's law from the Old Testament, so we cannot say God gave us a new law that was more perfect, with more freedom, a better way, more true, or more life, and different light.

God's law was not and is not broken, we are broken. God fixed what was broken...us...not what was already perfect freedom. (Psalm 119:44-45; Psalm 19:7)

Obviously, what is Biblically defined as perfect cannot be fixed or made better. If we confuse that about the Bible, then what hope do we have in understanding anything?

2 Corinthians 3:8 (NKJV)

how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?

So, if what kills the stony heart is glorious, how much more glorious is the Spirit that will enable us to keep God's law?

2 Corinthians 3:9 (NKJV)

For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.

So, this glory will last. Why? Because we now have had the heart transplant.

2 Corinthians 3:10 (NKJV)

For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels.

Thus, the written law cannot save nor cause us to want to do his law. This is all accomplished in faith in the Word.

2 Corinthians 3:11 (NKJV)

For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.

The stony heart is done away with now what remains is the fleshy heart through the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:12 (NKJV)

Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—

Now that we have a solution for the stony heart, we use plainness of speech to discuss it. It is no longer hidden. It is clear why we are to love God back.

2 Corinthians 3:13 (NKJV)

unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.

Moses had no solution to the stony heart. They wandered in the desert while Moses continued to deal and complain about the clear and blatant symptoms of their stony heart. In light of the surpassing glory that we have in the New Covenant, we are to be bold in our ministry. Unlike Moses who had to hide the fading glory of the law, we proclaim the truth openly "without veils."

2 Corinthians 3:14 (NKJV)

But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.

Paul establishes it again. It is what God did through Christ that opens our eyes. It gives us the desire to love God back (to obey His law).

At first Moses wore the veil in order to prevent those around him from being blinded by God's glory (see Exodus 34:29-35), but as time passed the veil hid the fact that the glory Moses had received when God gave him the Law was fading away.

This glory began to fade as soon as Moses left the Lord's presence. Note that this is still the veil that is done away with, not God's law.

2 Corinthians 3:15-16 (NKJV)

But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the Old Covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:14).

As Moses' veil prevented Israel from seeing the end of the fading glory of the Law, so also the "hardness" is like a veil over their minds at the reading of God's law (Torah), that they might not see that the Messiah is the goal of the Law (Romans 10:4).

2 Corinthians 3:17 (NKJV)

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

As established earlier, those in the Spirit (Spiritual mind) are obedient to God's commandments because they want to (fleshy heart) obey God's commandments.

The commandments are written on our heart, not stone. God's Word says that we are to find freedom in His law (Psalm 119:45). The Holy Spirit leads us to all Truth (John 14:16-17, 26, 15:26, 16:13) and God's law is defined as the Truth (Psalm 119:142, John 17:17).

The Truth sets us free (John 8:32) because that is what Truth does and all that it can do. God's Truth is and always has been freedom which is all of the Word, not just some of it.

The Spirit is freedom because it leads us to the Truth which is defined as God's law. God's law is freedom.

Anything outside of and against God's law is bondage. Thus not obeying the Sabbath, feast days, dietary instructions, etc. are all bondage. As it is written, there is true freedom found in his ways. There is no freedom in our ways.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NKJV)

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.

The image we are changed into is still exactly the same, it is the same Word taught and enabled through the Spirit of the Lord and nothing has changed. The image (Word) did not change, instead the glory faded.

We are changed (without a veil, without a stony heart), the law remains intact as the same image going from its first glory its next glory.

All that has changed is from a glory that faded to another, and this glory will last instead of fade. The reason the glory of the law (in the same image) will last is because of our heart transplant and indwelling of the Spirit. Because the veil is lifted, the intended purpose and fulfillment of the law can be realized. We practice it as we gradually conform more and more to the exact image of Christ, who also walked the exact same law and Word. We are to desire to walk the same image of the Word as he walked, bringing the glory back to the law of God.

So, let's do as Paul said. Let's bring the glory back to the Law of God, by doing the Law of God.

In conclusion, in 1 Corinthians 3, when Paul speaks about the glory of the Law, he is referencing the story of Moses beholding God's glory when he received the commandments on the tablets of stone. God's glory was said to reflect from his face (Exodus 34:29-30), but this glory faded over time (2 Corinthians 3:13) because of Israel's disobedience. In contrast, the glory of the New Covenant is permanent and results in full obedience to God's Law from the heart. Scholar Dr. Colin Kruse sums it up nicely:

It is important to recognize that Paul does not imply that the law itself was fading away. The law as the expression of the will of God for human conduct is still valid. In fact, Paul says the purpose of God in bringing in the New Covenant of the Spirit was precisely that the righteous demands of the law might be fulfilled in those who walk by the Spirit (Rom 8:4).

-Colin Kruse, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 96

In light of the New Covenant, which results in the Law being written on the hearts of believers, Paul says, "Since we have such a hope, we are very bold" (1 Corinthians 3:12). That is, as a minister of the new covenant, Paul has the boldness to speak bluntly. He then proceeds to contrast the glory of the new covenant with the glory of Moses:

2 Corinthians 3:13-16

... not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

Moses wore a veil over his face to prevent those around him from being blinded by God's glory (Exodus 34:29-35), a glory that began fading away as soon as Moses left the Lord's presence. To this day, those who do not know Messiah have a veil covering their hearts; they are prevented from encountering the greater glory of the new covenant, which would write God's Law on their hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3).

Only through Messiah can one have the veil from their heart removed and walk in freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17).

This veil is not God's Law but the barrier between God and man as a result of sin. The Gospel removes the veil so we can behold God's glory and be transformed into the image of Messiah through the work of the Spirit in accordance with the new covenant promise (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Now that we've reviewed all the difficult passages in First and Second Corinthians, it's clear to see that Paul was not denigrating the Law of God or teaching that it is no longer relevant—quite the contrary! Paul's teaching is based on the promise of the New Covenant, affirming the ongoing validity of the Torah, which the Spirit writes on the hearts of believers. In Messiah, we can behold the glory of God and be truly transformed.

We hope that this teaching has blessed you.

Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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