

Series: 2 Corinthians

Title: The Glory that Excelleth!

Text: 2 Corinthians 3: 7-11

Date: May 11, 2017

Place: SGBC, New Jersey

2 Corinthians 3: 6: Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. 7: But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away: 8: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? 9: For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. 10: For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. 11: For if that which is done away *was* glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious.

Proposition: The ministration of the law was glorious but the ministration of the spirit (the gospel of Christ) is far, far more glorious.

Title: The Glory that Excelleth

MINISTRATION OF DEATH

2 Corinthians 3: 7: But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance...8: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

The ministration of death was “*written and engraven in stones.*” That tells us it includes both ceremonial law and the ten commandments. That law is one law. We do not divide the law. Some divide the law in order to say that it is only the ceremonial law that is done away, not the moral law. But the law is one law. Here, the ministration of death (called before the letter that killeth) includes the ten commandments, as well as the ceremonial law.

In Mt. Sinai, God gave Moses the ten commandments which was written by the finger of God, engraven in stones.

Exodus 32:16: And the tables *were* the work of God, and the writing *was* the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

When Moses came down and saw the children of Israel engaged in idol worship, he became angry and cast the tablets down and broke them.

Exodus 34: 1: And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon *these* tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest

Exodus 34: 28: And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he [God] wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

Then from Exodus 34:11-27, God gave ceremonial laws and Moses wrote that part. Our text says the ministration of death “*written*” and “*engraven upon tables of stone.*” God engraved the ten commandments upon the tables of stone. But God commanded Moses to write the ceremonial law.

Exodus 34: 27: And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.

So the ministration of death is the whole law, ceremonial and ten commandments, “*written and engraven in stones.*”

THE MINISTRATION OF DEATH WAS GLORIOUS

2 Corinthians 3: 7: But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance...8: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

One reason the law was glorious is because the name of the LORD who gave it is glorious! The first thing the Lord did when he began giving the law was declare his name. The Lord attaches his name to his covenant. His name is glorious!

Exodus 34: 5: And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. 6: And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, 7: Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth *generation*. 8: And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.

The glory of God’s countenance caused Moses face to shine when he came down to give the law to the people.

Exodus 34: 29: And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. 30: And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. 31: And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them. 32: And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai. 33: And *till* Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face. 34: But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel *that* which he was commanded.

So the ministration of the law was glorious because it was given by our glorious God, with his glorious name attached. The law is holy, just and good because God who gave it is holy, just and good.

Also, the law was glorious because it was given to minister death. It is called “*the letter that killeth*” and in our text it is called “*the ministration of death.*” If God leaves a sinner in his flesh, in the day of judgment God will use the law to minister death unto him.

But Christ *makes* the law glorious unto us giving us spiritual discernment to hear it. Notice 2 Corinthians 3: 10 speaks of the law as “*that which was made glorious.*” Christ *makes* the law glorious to a sinner by making us hear it spiritually. The Spirit of God gives spiritual discernment to make the sinner hear that the law requires perfect obedience even in the thoughts and intents of the heart. Therefore, the law ministers death unto him. The apostle Paul said,

Romans 7:9: For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. 10: And the commandment, which [I thought] *was ordained* to life, I found *to be* [ordained] unto death. 11: For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by [the law] slew me. 12: Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Paul thought he was alive when he was without the ability to hear the law once. But when Christ gave him discernment the commandment came and Paul's sin became alive and Paul died. Then he found that the law he thought was ordained to life was really ordained to minister death. When Christ gave him discernment to hear the law, Christ made the law—the ministry of death—glorious unto Paul. He said,

Romans 7: 13: Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

So in the hands of Christ law is made glorious unto us when Christ gives us discernment to hear the law and the law *ministers death* unto us. In the inward, spiritual man, the believer delights in the law because it *ministers death* unto us, making us die to all our self-righteous, self-sanctifying vanity.

THE MINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT

2 Corinthians 3: 7 But if the ministration of death was glorious,..8: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

If the law which ministered death to me was glorious, how much more glorious is the gospel of Christ by which Christ ministers the spirit and life unto us! Christ said,

John 6: 63: It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.

In the garden, God took a dead body and literally breathed into Adam the breath of life and he became a living soul. Christ takes a dead sinner, speaks his word into us and his word is spirit and life, Christ quickeneth us through God the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:45: And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit.

John 5:21: For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth *them*; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

The ministry of the spirit is far more glorious than the law because through the gospel of Christ God gives us a new spirit. And in that new spirit, we are taught the gospel of God's free grace.

1 Corinthians 2: 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the [little s] spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

So the law is made glorious unto us when Christ ministers death to us with it. But the gospel is much more glorious because through it God ministers the spirit and everlasting life in Christ our Life!

THE MINISTRATION OF CONDEMNATION

2 Corinthians 3: 9: For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. 10: For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

Again, the law is glorious because if left to himself, the law will justly condemn a sinner. But the law is made glorious to Christ's redeemed when God makes us hear that the law condemn us. That is the purpose for which the law was given. The law was given to declare us guilty before God.

Romans 3: 19: Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20: Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Religious, self-righteous folks say, "God would not give a law we could not keep." Yes he did! It is pictured in the giving of the law the first time. When Moses came down the first time with the ten commandments the children of Israel had already broken the law by their idol worship. It pictures the fact that we had already broken the law in Adam when the law was given. (Ex 32: 1-19)

THE MINISTRATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

2 Corinthians 3: 9: For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. 10: For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

If Christ makes the law glorious unto us when he makes us hear that it condemn us, how much more glorious is the gospel when he makes us hear that Christ has made us the righteousness of God in him!

Romans 5:20: Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: 21: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

When we speak of righteousness, we are speaking of Christ himself! Christ is the Covenant of God in which all God's promises are yes and in him amen unto the believer to the praise of the glory of God's grace. (Is 42: 6; 49: 8; 2 Cor 1: 20) Christ is the Life who lives in us and us in him (Jn 6: 56-57; 14: 6) Christ is the Righteousness of the believer.

Romans 8: 3: For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Isaiah 53:11: He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Romans 10: 1: Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2: For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3: For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4: For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

The law was made glorious to us when we saw that it condemned us. But it has no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth—Christ our Righteousness himself who ministers his righteousness to us through the preaching of the gospel.

THAT WHICH IS DONE AWAY, THAT WHICH REMAINS

2 Corinthians 3: 7: But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious,...which was to be done away:...11: For if that which is done away *was* glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious.

The gospel, the everlasting covenant of grace, is more excellent in glory because the ministration of law is done away but the ministration of Christ remains.

Christ has fulfilled the law and the prophets. The old covenant is done away and only the new remains.

Hebrews 10: 9...He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

Hebrews 8: 13: In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away.

How much more glorious is the covenant that remains—the everlasting covenant of grace! The shadows of the old covenant have been replaced with the Substance, the Reality of the New, Christ Jesus our Lord. But this is even more true in the heart of God's child to whom God makes all things new.

2 Corinthians 5: 17: Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

The new, everlasting covenant of grace is so much better to the believer than the covenant of law and works because Christ hath,

Hebrews 8: 6: obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

The promises of God to us in Christ are ordered in all things and sure. They are all yes and amen in Christ! That means there is nothing left to be done by us. Christ has established it.

Not only that, we have a far better high priest in Christ Jesus our Lord, who ministers not in an earthly tabernacle, but in glory at God's right hand

Hebrews 8: 1: Now of the things which we have spoken *this is* the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; 2: A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

Furthermore, earthly priests under the old covenant died and had to be replaced. But Christ our High Priest lives forever. This is good news to the believer because Christ is our constant Intercessor with God the Father!

Hebrews 7: 25: Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Best of all, Christ does not need to make more offerings. He offered himself for his people once for all time because he got the job done!

Hebrews 10:14: For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

The law requires perfect love to God and to our neighbor. Christ is the only one who fulfilled it. He loved God and his people so perfectly that he was willing to bear the sin of his people and be forsaken of God to make us righteous and declare his Father just and Justifier. Christ alone established the law in Righteousness for God and his people. No work of ours can add to that! We establish the law in righteousness through faith in him. His righteousness is made ours!

Better than the old covenant, this covenant is not written on stone, it is written in the new heart.

Hebrews 10: 15: *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 16: This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws [my doctrine] into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

Hebrews 8:10:...and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.

Under the old covenant they had to make sacrifices year after year because the blood of bulls and goats never put away sin. Now, since God remembers the believer's sins no more there is no more offering to be made for our sins.

Hebrews 10: 17: And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. 18: Now where remission of these *is*, *there is* no more offering for sin.

Romans 6: 11: Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord

Romans 8: 1: *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2: For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Under the new covenant, each believer now lives unto God, led of the Spirit, free to draw near unto God in Christ in full assurance of faith.

Hebrews 10: 19: Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20: By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21: And *having* an high priest over the house of God; 22: Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

We have new boldness by Christ's blood. We have a new and living way into God's holy presence by Christ's flesh who died for his people. We have a new high priest, Christ Jesus, over the house of God. By Christ our Sanctification we can draw near with a new heart in full assurance of faith.

The old was done away with but this kingdom of grace will never be moved.

Hebrews 12:28: Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

Brethren, the new covenant—Christ Jesus our Redeemer and his ministration of life and righteousness—is the glory that excelleth! Believers are now in our right mind by this new, glorious ministration so we would never think of going back to the old covenant law. Instead, as the apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 2,

Colossians 2:6: As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk ye in him: 7: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. 8: Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. 9: For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 10: And ye are complete in him,...

Amen!