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The Pauline Paradox Series: Part 5 – Corinthians

Welcome to the section on Corinthians in the Pauline Paradox Series.

We expect that there may be two types of persons interested in watching this teaching.

The first type might be one who does not understand or agree that those in the faith should be observing the Torah, or the whole Law of God. 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.

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, in essence, is what we believe the ministry of Yeshua (Jesus) was all about, apart of his actions on the cross or torture stake. Thus, we will mostly be focusing on the verses in these two books that are often used to produce modern doctrine about the Law of God.

This teaching will focus on 1 Corinthians 9 and 2 Corinthians 3.

So, let's get started...

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

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

[For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the](#)

more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

Here are some common interpretations 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?

To explain his following of Torah in his ministry, Christian theologians point to an idea that Paul was only doing this to appeal to Jews, not because the Torah holds validity as our faith-based instructions in our lives.

Let's ask a very important question.

How much sense would it make for Paul to proclaim the gospel while demonstrating the righteous ideals of Torah and to be its goal in order to convince Jews or non-Jews to understand Yeshua as the Messiah if at the same time Paul either degraded Torah as invalid or worthless, as many propose?

Paul would be acting deceitful and hypocritical by holding to and exemplifying the validity of the Torah to Jews, while teaching the opposite to converted Gentiles.

Perhaps some do not have a problem with this.

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.

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 men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;

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 or is not in their faith. Paul then goes on to provide some examples:

1 Corinthians 9:20

and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews

Being “*as a Jew*” simply means that Paul understood Pharisee culture, doctrine and traditions and was able to leverage that knowledge in a presentation of the gospel to the dominant sect of the Jews. The law is not mentioned anywhere here in context. 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.

That is nowhere found in the Bible, yet Pharisees made this tradition to be authoritative.

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. 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;

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 3:18

...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

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 who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak.

The Gentiles did not have a foundation in the Torah. When presenting the gospel to Gentiles, Paul could not leverage the Torah to persuade them of the legitimacy of the Messiah, like he could with the Jews.

Paul had to adjust his message accordingly. Paul makes specific mention here that he is “*not without law*,” but that he has the Law of God, the same Law of God taught and practiced by our Messiah. The Messiah taught and practiced the Torah. It would not make sense to say that the Law of Christ was somehow different than the law He lived and walked. 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

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

I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

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 act like an adulterer, to share the gospel with someone who was an adulterer. He did not act like a pagan sun god worshiper, to share the gospel with a sun god worshiper. 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 that cannot accept that Paul practiced and taught Torah not because he was a people pleaser, but because the Torah is a valid source of our Creator's instructions in the faith.

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.

For example, here is additional evidence of Paul putting this concept into practice.

Acts 17:22-31

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?

How offended Paul would be if he was alive today to hear such things.

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

Is Paul deceitful and hypocritical?

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 as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.” Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, **this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.**

Paul says that he is not saying things as a mere man, but appeals to the Law of Moses as the authority in what he is saying.

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...we are just being silly.

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

Hopefully this helps us to collectively understand 1 Corinthians 9 better.

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.

2 Corinthians 3:7-8 – Exactly What Came to an End, the Glory or God’s Law?

2 Corinthians 3:7-8

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?

Did the Law of God come to an end? Is that really what Paul is teaching?

Some teach that Paul is clearly teaching this in 2 Corinthians 3:7-8.

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

And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.

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

*"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 is truth, we then 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

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 death, 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.

(Remember, Jesus, His Hebrew name being Yeshua, referred to Himself as “life” because He is the “Word made flesh.”)

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 in the very next verse.

Romans 7:12

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 (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)

I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

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 another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is 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 in Christ Jesus (Messiah Yeshua) has made me free 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 can not.

Romans 3:31

Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

Romans 6:1

What shall we say then? Shall we 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 is 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 in Christ Jesus has made me free 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

Because the carnal mind 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 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 tables of stone and tables 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 surrounding text as additional context. We will cover 2 Corinthians 3 in detail.

2 Corinthians 3:3

Forasmuch as you are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, **but with the Spirit** of the living God; **not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.**

For those who understand the Biblical prophecy of the New Covenant, it might be quickly realized that Paul is an 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

"This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the LORD (YHWH). **"I will put my law (Torah) in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will 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 36:27

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them.

A major problem, that made the New Covenant a necessary solution, was the divorce of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Jeremiah 3:8 - scattered and turned into the Gentiles) leaving only the Southern Kingdom (House of Judah), which we know today as Jews.

Both houses rejected God's law and both were punished. The Southern Kingdom (Jews) went into Babylon. The Northern Kingdom (Ephraim) went to the Assyrians.

Only the Jews came out of Babylon. Ephraim stayed with the Assyrians in their rejection of God's law, so they received a certificate of divorce from God (Jeremiah 3:8-10). They left God's nation (Israel) and became part of the nations (Gentiles) scattered abroad (We see that even James even writes to them in James 1:1).

For more on this, we recommend 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 and the House of Israel (Northern Kingdom) being divorced. The New Covenant is a solution to Israel's disobedience (both houses) 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.

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 the way of God, not reject it or abandon it. That 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

Forasmuch as you are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the **Spirit of the living God**; not in tables of stone, **but in fleshy tables of the heart.**

Again, this is already established in prophecy:

Ezekiel 36:26-27

A new heart also will I give you, and a **new spirit** will I put within you: and I will take away the **stony heart** out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. **And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them.**

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 (a desire to do God's law).

2 Corinthians 3:4

And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

So through Christ we place our trust, and the trust in Christ extends to God. Christ is the Word made flesh and God is the Word (John 1:14). We are to place our faith in the (whole) Word and not ourselves.

2 Corinthians 3:5

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of 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 focus in error 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 is attempting to explain how the New Covenant is to work according to the 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 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 state and 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, in our faith in the Word, we are born again in that same Word (the Seed).

1 Peter 1:23

having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, **through the word of God which lives and abides forever,**

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.

Psalms 119:9

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto **according to thy word.**

Psalms 119:10

With my **whole heart** have I sought thee: O let me not wander from **your commandments.**

Psalms 119:11

Your **word** have I hid 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; and my law as the apple of your eye. Bind them upon your fingers, write them upon the table 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 we 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.

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 grievous.

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

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 3:5

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of 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

Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord (YHWH) and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the Lord (YHWH) has spoken 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 child 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

And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. **And all the children of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!** Why is the LORD (YHWH) bringing us unto this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey? **Would it not better for us to go back to Egypt?** And they said one to another, **Let us choose a leader, and go back 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 pay attention** and turned a stubborn shoulder and **stopped their ears** that they **might not hear.** They **made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law** and the words that the Lord (YHWH) of hosts **had sent by his Spirit** through the former prophets. Therefore great anger 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

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

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Messiah Yeshua) (a heart of flesh) has made me free from the law of sin and death (a heart of stone). For what the law would not do in that it was weak through the flesh (a heart of stone), God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh (a heart of stone). That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh (heart of stone), but after the Spirit (a heart of flesh). For they that are after flesh (heart of stone) do mind the things of the flesh (a heart of stone): but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit (a heart of flesh). For to be carnally minded is death (a heart of stone) but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (a heart of flesh). Because the carnal mind is enmity against God (a heart of stone): **for it is not subject to the law God, neither indeed can be.** So then they that are in the flesh (a heart of stone) cannot please God. **But you are not** (have not been given a stony heart) in the flesh, but in the Spirit, (a heart of flesh), if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you (a heart of flesh). Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ (a heart of flesh), he is none of his. And if Christ be in you (a heart of flesh), the body is dead because of sin (a heart of stone): **but the Spirit is life because of righteousness** (a heart of flesh)."

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

"Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandments 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 after 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 I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do 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

"Forasmuch as you are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart ... Who also has made us able ministers of the new testament (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*)
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)
(*Psalm 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" (*Psalm 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 in 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 and whatever seminaries are teaching, 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

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,**

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

For he finds fault with them when he says: Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish 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 have in understanding anything?

2 Corinthians 3:8

How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather 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

For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more does the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

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

2 Corinthians 3:10

For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason 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

For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remains is glorious.

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

2 Corinthians 3:12

Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness 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

And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

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

But their minds were blinded: for until this day remains the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done 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 it is still the veil that is done away with, not God's law.

2 Corinthians 3:15

But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

2 Corinthians 3:16

Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be 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

Now the Lord is that 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 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. Christ is the way, truth, light, and life because that is what God's Word is and Christ is the Word made flesh.

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

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord (YHWH), are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (YHWH).

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.

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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