

WHAT WAS ABOLISHED OR 'DONE AWAY' WITH IN 2 CORINTHIANS 3? WAS IT THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OR SOMETHING ELSE?

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Confusion reigns among the churches today, because God's Word is not being 'rightly divided' (2 Timothy 2:15). There are many ministers and people today who believe that the ten commandments were abolished or 'done away' with, and one of the chapters they base this upon is what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3. Are they right? Did Paul say that the ten commandments were done away with in 2 Corinthians 3? The purpose of this page is to show what Paul really said and find out the answer as to what exactly was done away with and abolished. We will begin with verses 3 to 6.

*2 Corinthians 3:3-6 ...'Forasmuch as ye 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. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; 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.'*

The first point to make here is this. By what did Moses 'minister' to the Israelites? It was the 'letter' of the law right? The Israelites were governed by the letter of the law. And what did the letter of the law do?

*Exodus 31:14 ...'Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: **every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death:** for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.'*

Can you see here how the 'letter' of the law killeth? This is how the Israelites were governed in the Old Testament. We are told by John that '*sin is the transgression of the law*' (1 John 3:4), and Ezekiel 18:20 says that the '*soul that sinneth, it shall die.*' So what does the letter of the law do when we look at it? It shows that we are worthy of death, because we have all transgressed the law of God. Paul said himself in Romans 7:9-11 that when the commandment came, he 'died' and it 'slew him.' This is what that 'mirror', that 'schoolmaster' is supposed to do - to show us our sin and defects of character. **But that is as far as the**

written law in of itself can go. So if there was nothing else, only the written 'letter' of the law, what would it do to us? It would slay us! This is because the law is 'holy and good' (Romans 7:12), and we are not. But there is no provision within the written ten commandments itself to save us. It merely shows us what is right and what is sin.

Now please note the context of what Paul says in verses 3-6 above. He is talking of how the apostles are **ministers** of the new testament. So the context is about '**ministration.**' This will help with the following verses of 2 Corinthians 3.

*2 Corinthians 3:7-11 ...'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: How shall not **the ministration** of the spirit be rather glorious? For if **the ministration** of condemnation be glory, much more doth **the ministration** of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.'*

It is amazing how many people look at those words ... 'written and engraven in stones' ... and 'done away' and apply this to meaning that the ten commandments are now 'done away with', without even looking at all the other words in these verses. Do you see why I mentioned to look at the context of what Paul was saying in verses 3 to 6? That he was talking about 'ministration'? And now look at verses 7 to 11 above. What is the context? '**MINISTRATION.**' Look at what Paul is saying. He is NOT saying that the ten commandments were 'done away.' He is saying that the **Old Testament ministration** of the ten commandments was done away. And what ministration was that? **The ministration of Moses.**

What was the 'glory' which was 'to be done away' according to the above verses? The glory of Moses' countenance, not the ten commandments. Moses had just been in the presence of God on the mount, and his countenance shone with the glory of God's righteousness, to which the written law is a transcript of. But instead of seeing the righteousness of God through the law and the work that Christ was to do for them, the Israelites simply looked to Moses and the written law. They couldn't see past Moses to Christ and what Christ was to do for them. They could not bear even the sight of Christ's glory through Moses' face, and this is why Moses had to put a veil over his face.

2 Corinthians 3:12-16 ...'Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.'

First of all, where was the veil placed? Was it placed over the tablets of stone with the ten commandments? No, it was placed over the face of Moses. And what did that veil cover? It covered the 'dimmed' glory of Christ's righteousness that shone through Moses' face. This is what the Israelites could not see and this is what was to be 'abolished' - the 'glory' of the ministration of Moses (man) on behalf of Jesus Christ and which pointed to the ministration of Christ Himself in the new testament covenant. Do you see this? Paul gave such 'plainness

of speech', that any who properly read the context of these verses cannot miss. Look at verse 15:

2 Corinthians 3:15 ...'But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.'

Who is Paul speaking of when he says '*their heart*'? It is written in present tense at the time of writing this. Paul is speaking of the Jews. And what did the Jews do when reading Moses, even after Christ died for them and was resurrected? They looked solely at the letter of the law and could not see past Moses! This was the whole problem. They were still focused on the 'ministration' of Moses.

Paul is not saying the ten commandments were abolished in the new testament covenant. Because Paul even said himself in Romans 3:31 ...'*Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, **we establish the law.***' How can you 'establish' something that is 'abolished'? No, Paul is clearly saying in 2 Corinthians 3 that it was the **ministration** of the law which was to be abolished - the ministration of MAN. This was replaced by the ministration of the Spirit - of Jesus Christ Himself.

Think about it! What could Moses and the priestly service of the Levites do for man? Could they write the law upon the hearts of men? No, they could do no more than what the written law itself can do for us - which is, show us our sin and point us to Christ. But what can Christ Himself, through the ministration of the Spirit do for us? Write the law upon our hearts, causing us to keep the law (Ezekiel 36:26-27, Jeremiah 31:33) and **give us life!** This is why the '*ministration*' of man **through the written letter** had to be '*abolished*' and replaced with the ministration of the Spirit. But what remains constant through all of this? THE LAW OF GOD.

Sadly, the Jews thought that they could attain righteousness by simply abiding by the letter of the law. The written law was everything to them, and they completely missed the spiritual aspect of the law and what the ministration of Moses and the Levitical priesthood pointed to - Jesus Christ. This is why they rejected Christ when He finally came to fulfil the types and shadows written in the law of Moses. They did not realize that the old covenant ministration was to 'pass away' and be replaced by the new covenant ministration.

Hebrews 10:16-17 ...'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.'

The ministration of man is abolished and the ministration of the Spirit has come! Under the previous ministration, the ten commandments were written and engraven on stone. Under the new ministration, those commands are written upon the heart. **What changes? THE MINISTRATION. What remains? THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.**

Now why did Paul say ... "*But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.*"? Again, what did the veil cover? The glory of Moses' face, which was a reflection of the righteousness of Christ. But what did the Jews continue to do? They continued to look simply to Moses himself and the 'letter of the law.' They could not see Christ. But when the heart turns to Christ, then the veil is taken away and they at last see the righteousness of Christ and the

work that He did for them, which the ministration of Moses pointed to. The ministration of man, through the letter only, which can do no more than point us to Christ, comes to an end in their life and they now have the ministration of Christ Himself, through the Spirit, which is able to write the law upon our hearts and **CHANGE us from within**. Something the old ministration and letter could never do.

There is a difference between a law and the ministration of that law. The law is that constitution necessary for the governing of a people. The ministry is that ordained power by which the law is executed. The **WAY** the law is ministered can change, but that law itself cannot change. To change the moral law of God is to change God Himself, and the Bible says that 'God never changes' (Malachi 3:6). And what is the clear message from Paul in 2 Corinthians 3? That the **WAY** God's law is ministered has changed. The old Mosaic ministration has been 'done away' to make way for the ministration of the Christ Himself as our ONLY Mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5).

The ministration of the old covenant brought death, as it could not 'take away sin.' But the ministration of the Spirit in the new covenant brings LIFE, the very life of Christ secured through His becoming man and overcoming sin for us. This ministration does take away sin through the precious blood of Christ and imparts life through His divine Spirit.

Neither of those 'ministrations' are the ten commandments itself. But they are the ministration OF the ten commandments. In other words, the ministrations determine HOW the law of God is to be executed. Under the old covenant ministration, based solely on the 'letter' of the law, it brought death to the people. But under the new covenant ministration, based upon the perfect, spotless blood of Jesus Christ and His righteousness, it brings LIFE to us. But the ten commandments remain. It is only the ministration that has changed.

So it is clear to any honest truth seeker that Paul did not say the ten commandments were done away with, but the Old Testament **ministration** of the ten commandments has been 'abolished.' That ministration of the old covenant, which shone with a 'dimmed' glory of Christ Himself, was to be 'done away' with and replaced with a 'more glorious' ministration that would transfer God's moral law from tablets of stone, to the tables of our hearts!

*2 Corinthians 3:17-18 ...'Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are **changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as *by the Spirit of the Lord.***'*

If our lives are governed by the letter of the law, seeking to do what is right by the letter, then it will bring us nothing but death. The law will condemn us and we will die by that holy law. But if we are governed by the Spirit of Christ through FAITH, beholding Him, then He will write His law and character upon our hearts and minds, changing us into His image, then this will bring us LIFE.