

2 Corinthians 3:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

Analysis

How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? Paul completes his qal wahomer (light-to-heavy) argument: if the ministry of death had glory, then **the ministration of the spirit** (Greek *hē diakonia tou pneumatos*, ἡ διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος) must **be rather glorious** (Greek *mallon estai en doxē*, μᾶλλον ἔσται ἐν δόξῃ, "be more in glory"). The contrast is between death (*thanatos*, θάνατος) in verse 7 and Spirit (*pneuma*, πνεῦμα) here—between what kills and what gives life.

The rhetorical question expects an obvious "yes" answer. The logic is irrefutable: the lesser (law-giving) possessed glory; therefore the greater (Spirit-giving) must possess surpassing glory. Paul's use of the future tense *estai* (ἔσται, "shall be") may suggest the full manifestation of new covenant glory awaits consummation, though it is already present in the Spirit's work. The new covenant is not merely slightly better than the old—it is categorically superior in every way.

Historical Context

Paul writes to a church influenced by Judaizers who insisted Gentile converts must observe Mosaic law (circumcision, dietary restrictions, Sabbath). These teachers likely argued from the glory of Sinai to support their position. Paul turns the argument on its head: yes, Sinai was glorious, but that very glory was designed to fade, pointing forward to something greater. The new covenant ministry, empowered by the indwelling Spirit rather than external law, surpasses the old as

substance exceeds shadow. This was revolutionary theology that redefined Israel's story around Christ.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Do you experience the Christian life as "glorious," or does it feel like drudgery and duty? What might Paul's words reveal about the difference?
2. How does the "ministration of the Spirit" in your life demonstrate surpassing glory compared to mere rule-keeping?
3. In what ways can you more fully embrace and display the glory of the new covenant to those still living under the bondage of law?

Interlinear Text

πῶς	οὐχὶ	μᾶλλον	ἢ	διακονία	τοῦ	πνεύματος	ἔσται
How	not	rather		G3588	shall	G3588	of the spirit
G4459	G3780	G3123			G1248		G4151
ἐν	δόξῃ						be
G1722	glorious						G2071
		G1391					

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 3:16 (Spirit): Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

Ephesians 2:18 (Spirit): For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Galatians 3:14 (Spirit): That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Isaiah 44:3 (Spirit): For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

Isaiah 59:21 (Spirit): As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

Isaiah 11:2 (Spirit): And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

John 1:17 (Parallel theme): For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:2 (Spirit): Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 (Spirit): But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: