

2 Corinthians 3:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. Paul presents a second parallel contrast, this time between **condemnation** (Greek katakrisis, κατάκρισις) and **righteousness** (Greek dikaiosynē, δικαιοσύνη). The old covenant is called **the ministration of condemnation** because its function was to expose sin and pronounce judgment (Romans 3:19-20; 7:7-13; Galatians 3:10). Without the Spirit's transforming power, the law could only condemn.

By contrast, **the ministration of righteousness** (Greek hē diakonia tēs dikaiosynēs, ἡ διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης) refers to the new covenant gospel that imparts righteousness—both the imputed righteousness of justification (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 3:21-26) and the imparted righteousness of sanctification through the Spirit. Paul uses **exceed in glory** (Greek perisseuin en doxē, περισσεύειν ἐν δόξῃ, "abound" or "overflow in glory") to emphasize the immeasurable superiority. The new covenant doesn't merely improve on the old—it overflows with surpassing glory because it accomplishes what the law never could: making sinners righteous.

Historical Context

Jewish theology rightly understood the law as holy, just, and good (Romans 7:12), given by God Himself. However, rabbinic tradition often emphasized human ability to keep the law and merit righteousness through obedience. Paul's gospel

shattered this framework: the law's purpose was never to make people righteous but to reveal their unrighteousness and drive them to Christ (Galatians 3:24). The "ministration of righteousness" fulfilled the promise of Jeremiah 23:6, where Messiah is called "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Christ imparts what the law merely demanded.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does understanding the law's purpose as "condemnation" (not salvation) free you from trying to earn God's favor?
2. In what ways have you experienced the "ministration of righteousness"—God imparting righteousness rather than merely demanding it?
3. How can you help others trapped in the "ministration of condemnation" discover the glorious liberty of the new covenant?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	γὰρ	ἡ	διακονία	τῆς	κατακρίσεως	δόξη
if	For	G3588	doth the ministration	G3588	of condemnation	be glory
G1487	G1063		G1248		G2633	G1391
πολλῷ	μᾶλλον	περισσεύει	ἡ	διακονία	τῆς	
much	more	exceed	G3588	doth the ministration	G3588	
G4183	G3123	G4052		G1248		
δικαιοσύνης	ἐν	δόξῃ				
of righteousness	in	be glory				
G1343	G1722	G1391				

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 5:21 (Righteousness): For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

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