# 2 Corinthians 4:1-4

Christ’s Life & Ministry, and the Glorious Gospel

1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, 2 but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Picking up from the pinnacle of chapter 3 verses 17 and 18 Paul segues from the theme of chapter 3 into the meat of chapter 4 with verses 1-4. Moving from being veiled he will reach into the frailty of humanity and the ceaseless pursuit of sharing the gospel through all trials.

*What do we know about our unveiled life?*

# We have This Ministry

Paul is focusing on the ministry that he and those traveling with him have been given. Some of the principles may apply, but he is referring, in contrast to Moses, and in further justification of their service, to the journey he is taking with those in his entourage.

*Are all called to travel on missionary journeys? Do we need to prove we’re saints through missionary work?*

## As We Have Mercy, We Do Not Lose Heart

While we have a definition of grace that is often repeated at Holly Hills the word for Mercy here doesn’t show up in the New Testament as often in the epistles [15 times, 7 of which are in Romans]. Mercy is compassion or forgiveness shown upon someone that you have the power to punish. Paul knew the punishment he deserved and recognized that preservation was very real and intentional.

Since God had mercifully, purposefully, and lovingly spared Paul (over and over) he took courage to do the ministry work that God had assigned for he and his cohorts. In a few verses (v. 16) Paul will again re-iterate this principle and further encourage that their inner man was being encouraged day by day. In 2 Thessalonians 3:13 Paul writes that the church there should not lose heart in doing good themselves.

*When we think of mercy what is our response as believers?*

# We Have Renounced the Things Hidden because of Shame

The Greek compound word translated ‘renounced’ carries with it the idea that something has been declared separated. Paul wants to publicly (by letter) cast these sorts of behaviors away. And the context of that in this letter is in part the restating that he was not trying to trick the Corinthians and that it was not in his character to just fool them by not coming back around to see them [2 Corinthians 1:15-17]. His character is clean.

Shame is a human reaction (not something God has) to being aware of failure or sin. Shame is a major motivator of the flesh and of Satan. This is a major reason why Paul is renouncing those behaviors that cause it. It has no place in an abiding church for several reasons:

1. The church is justified and all of the things that cause shame have been paid for
2. An abiding believer should not be walking in shameful things
3. We should be restoring each other so that these sorts of things are rare in the mature body

Shameful things, once they are known, lose their power due to grace, but often we try to hide them to save face. Paul is just publicly renouncing them to remove their influence on his own behavior, to expose what God has paid for, and to destroy the influence of shame.

*What are you most ashamed of in Christ?*

## Not Walking in Craftiness

Walking in craftiness implies a lifestyle and a daily practice of craftiness. Within various gentile circles the ability to be able to lie would have been advantageous. Within the Jewish community trying to circumvent the Law through creative practices would have been facilitating where strict adherence would have been difficult. Paul’s concern is that this is not in congruent with integrity. Craftiness is not rooted in heavenly thinking, Spirit-directed living, and it doesn’t edify the body.

*When we’re discovered in sin, how do we naturally want to respond in the flesh?*

## Adulterating the Word of God

Paul, who had been a Pharisee and a student of the Law, also knew that he had been trained to misrepresent parts of the Old Testament. Because of this he was also publicly renouncing that this was not in alignment with what he was about and he was not going to allow it to be part of his ministry and was not acceptable for those within the church.

*How can we as believers be sure we’re not adulterating the word of God?*

## Manifestation of Truth

Paul’s contrast to shameful things is towards truth and integrity. We can look and see that God is about manifesting His truth, His character, and His life in His people (c.f. Ephesians 4). As believers we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to do this very thing (Galatians 5:16).

*When we’re manifesting the truth who is the focus on?*

### Commending Ourselves to Every Man’s Conscience

As a result of this truthfulness we are able to see Paul here (and in many other places in this book alone 3:1, 5:12, 6:4, 7:11, 10:12 & 18) is seeing the value of his ministry increased because he was able to draw people to himself through Spirit-led moral uprightness.

*Why does Paul repeat this idea of commendation throughout the book of 2nd Corinthians so much?*

# If it is Veiled, It is Veiled to Those Who Are Perishing

Paul ties back into the veil referenced in chapter 3 as he addresses the gospel not being responded to. When we discuss people being blinded we have to recognize that there are lots of influences that limit those who wear this veil: the World, the Flesh, and the devil.

The world explicitly operates with deception to manipulate and control the broader thinking about what is true and what can be known. The flesh is constantly drawing us towards sin, which leads to shame, which leads to hiding and keeps us from coming to Jesus for salvation. And of course the devil wants to keep us from knowing God as He is.

*How does a veil function and why is it a good analogy here?*

## The God of This World Has Blinded the Minds of the Unbelieving

In John 8:44 Jesus interacts with the Jews and he says that their father is not just earthly Abraham, but the devil. Furthermore he is a liar and he hates truth. With that in mind he blinds his children. They already don’t believe, and their minds are further blinded because of his influence then the outcome would definitely be a veiled face.

*What are the techniques used to blind the minds of the unbelieving?*

## So That They Might Not See the Light of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ

The gospel is the glory of Christ! What a wonderful statement of that relationship. Jesus’ work on the cross, His death, His burial, His resurrection and ascension are what give us eternal life. But beyond that they are Jesus’ glory. Moses’ veil kept God’s glory hidden from Israel, but this is a veil that is warn by everyone else, in a reversal of roles, that keeps God’s glory hidden and Christ hidden as the intercessor. Paul does not desire this, but it is an outcome he is battling in his ministry.

*When the gospel is presented what shines light on the darkness of sin?*

## Who is the Image of God

Jesus is the image of God. There are several things about this that are worth exploring theologically:

* Jesus is the image of God that Adam would have been patterned after
* Jesus as the image of God is the type after whom we are made a new creation in Him

Christ was able to come as fully God and fully man because the character of God’s image was already reflected in Adam (Genesis 1:26-27). Adam had complexity of body, mind and spirit that was reflective of God’s triune makeup. It was reflective of God the Son. Without the hypostatic union [Ephesians 2:15-16] Jesus would not have been the perfect sacrifice.

2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us that we’re created in Christ Jesus as a new creation. That new creation is of a type and that type is of a Jesus-like quality. Not with deity, but without blemish and with a new nature untainted by sin, rooted in a new position in the heavenlies.

*What is the number one technique of cults to change who Christ is?*

# Conclusion

We find that Paul’s passionate request to the church in Corinth to forgive his change of plans continue to weave through this chapter as he is focused on the presentation of the gospel to as many as possible and that through the direction of the Holy Spirit. When we consider the weight of the gospel it is not heavy in doctrine, it is condemnation of the flesh, and that leads many to pull the veil down ever more tightly to try to hide their shame. We do not relent, though, because we know that as we abide God’s character is manifest through us in truth and they are likely to respond as a result of the wooing of the Holy Spirit and our being used as God’s ministers.

What is the gospel message? [c.f. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4]