

## “Therefore, Seeing We Have This ...”

“... ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we faint not: but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God” (2 Cor. 4:1-2).

In the former section Paul has compared the veil on Moses' face to a veil which lay on the hearts of his unbelieving countrymen for just as the fading of the glory on Moses' face was not apparent to his countrymen because the veil hid that from their sight; so the veil which lay on minds of unbelieving Jews prevented them from perceiving that the glory of the Old Covenant faded in contrast to the glory of the New: they could not see the first covenant had been displaced by the second. He wrote, “... we use great boldness of speech and are not as Moses who put a veil upon his face that the children of Israel should not look stedfastly on the end of that which was passing away: but their minds were hardened: for until this day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remaineth, it not being revealed to them that it is done away in Christ. But unto this day, whensoever Moses is read, a veil lieth on their heart” (2 Cor. 3:12-15).

To serve as a minister of the New Covenant demanded openness and sincere dealings. Paul assured the Corinthians he had this ministry; a claim he also made when he wrote “our sufficiency is from God; who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant” (2 Cor. 3:5f). Coupled with “we have this ministry” is the phrase assigning this ministry (or apostleship) and mercy (forgiveness) to the same thing: grace. He said in Ephesians 3:8, “unto me ... was this grace given to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” Yet while he said his “apostleship” was by grace; such also was the reason for his forgiveness: “For by grace have ye been saved, through faith” and “the grace of God had appeared, bringing salvation” (Titus 2:11). His apostleship and his forgiveness both came from the same source: God's grace.

What led the apostle to follow his statement that by God's grace he had the ministry he had and the mercy he had with the words “but we faint not”? Twice in this chapter the apostle writes “we faint not”: here in v. 2 and again in v. 16. Some other translators have it this way: “we do not lose heart”. In the face of such great gifts what circumstances could exist which might cause the apostle “to faint” or “to lose heart”? There are two ready answers to this question. First, the ministrations God gave him brought its testing: persecution by the unbelievers, deprivations suffered to make that message known and in addition there was the spiritual blindness men had to the divine message from God. Jesus marveled at the unbelief of His generation and Moses felt the burden of his ministry which he also received from God.

But Paul would not lose heart. There were obviously dark moments when loss of heart would be natural, such as prophecies that he would be delivered into Roman hands became reality (Acts 21:11f; 30-33), when he was almost torn from limb to limb in his encounter with the council (Acts 23:1-10), or when death by drowning seemed to be eminent and inevitable (Acts 27:20, 23). Through all his trials the Lord stood by him, as

He did as when he was forsaken by all others when he stood before Caesar (2 Tim. 4:16f).

Paul forged ahead, fulfilling his ministry. He renounced the hidden things of shame (dishonesty). He did not distort the word. He did not walk in craftiness, using trickery or sleight of hand in his teaching. He did not handle “the word of God deceitfully” which claim he made earlier when he wrote, “Not corrupting the word of God” (2 Cor. 2:17). To the contrary, by the manifestation of the truth he commended himself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. He spake the word boldly. He let the “chips fall where they may,” speaking openly, candidly, and loving the message of God.

Because he was conscious that everything was in the “sight of God” he so spake the word. He knew that the salvation of his hearers lay in their obeying the truth, which demanded that he speak truth to them. The Hebrew writer said, “All things are naked and laid open in the eyes of whom we have to do,” and no one was more aware of that than Paul. We ought also so to be.

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