

Series: 2 Corinthians  
Title: Seeing We Have This Ministry  
Text: 2 Corinthians 4: 1-2  
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## **2 Corinthians 4: 1: Therefore seeing we have this ministry,...**

What is our ministry? We are not preaching the old covenant of works; our ministry is the new *ministry of the new covenant of grace* performed by God in Christ. We are not preaching the old covenant which said, "This do and live." Our ministry is *the new covenant of grace*—where every obligation is fulfilled by our triune God in Christ for his people. Our message is, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.*" He did all the works.

## **2 Corinthians 4: 1: Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;**

How did we receive mercy? If we find out how we received mercy then we find out how we faint not. By the grace of God which we could not resist—grace which was effectual to get the job done. The Spirit of the Lord removed the veil from off our hearts, giving us spiritual sight. God said, "Let there be light!" And made us behold the glory of God in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was through the preaching of the gospel. Verse 4 says "*the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, ...shined unto us*". Verse 6: "*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*"

So then the same way as we have received mercy, we faint not. By the same irresistible grace and power of God that called us in the first place, we faint not. Christ is our strength who keeps us and who keeps us preaching his person and works instead of preaching lies—by Christ, we faint not.

2 Corinthians 4: 11: For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake,...

Preaching the gospel of Christ is the most heartbreaking thing there is. You labor to bring a word to brethren you love. Sometimes God saves a child in their family. Then one day they depart over something that would probably amount to nothing if they would just ask. Yet, they depart without so much as a goodbye, as if they never knew you, as if you were their worst enemy and you never did one profitable thing for them. It really is like being "*delivered unto death for Jesus' sake.*" It is suffering you bear because you preach what God's word says concerning Christ rather than what men say. But what makes us faint not?

2 Corinthians 4: 11: For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh 16: For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

## **2 Corinthians 4: 1: Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; : But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty,...**

The word "hidden" references the "veil" spoken about in chapter 3.

2 Cor 3: 12: Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: 13: And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: 14: 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. 15: But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. 16: Nevertheless when it shall turn to

the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. 17: Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18: 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. 1: Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; 2: But have renounced *the things by which some veil the gospel in dishonesty and shame*.

The message of Christ's person and works by which his people are redeemed and made the righteousness of God is v4: *the light of the glorious gospel of Christ*. God has given us the light, not for us to veil it so no one can see, but for us to shine it forth.

If you were given a flashlight to lead others out of a dark place you would not put a veil over the flashlight so that the light cannot shine forth. Neither do God's people. Christ said,

Matthew 5: 14: Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 15: Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16: Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

What our good works that we shine forth for men to see? They are the good works of our Lord Jesus Christ by which he fulfilled the law on our behalf and made us the righteousness of God in him by which our Father in heaven is glorified.

Therefore, we have renounced the shameful dishonesty of veiling and hiding Christ the Light in both the means we use and in our message. He lists both our means and our message as ways we no longer veil the gospel of the Light of Christ.

## **2 Corinthians 4: 2:...not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully;**

*Walking in craftiness* includes *the means* we have renounced which many use to attract folks to join with them. In order to attract folks, false religion advertises the very things Christ said not to do before men: alms giving—their various benevolent ministries; prayer services; the education and titles of their preachers; their clothes and pomp and programs. It is all walking in craftiness to be seen of men, to attract men, to make disciples after themselves.

Matthew 23: 5: But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, 6: And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,...and so on.

Will and I met a fellow that lives down the street here who was drafted to play for the New York Giants. He has a very interesting story about the things he overcame to play pro football. If we advertised that he would be telling his story here, we could fill every seat here. Couldn't we do that then preach the gospel the gospel to them? No, they would not be here to hear the gospel, they came to hear that fellow, not Christ! We would have started off using our craftiness rather than relying on the wisdom and power of God to draw his people in. So the light of our works which we show forth is that the only means we use to draw men in is the preaching of Christ and him crucified.

Vain preachers *walk craftily* when they try to entangle God's preacher in their words then accuse him to men of preaching a lie so they can lead away disciples after themselves. The religious leaders tried to do this to Christ.

Luke 20: 20: And they watched *him*, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor. 21: And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person *of any*, but teachest the way of God truly: 22: Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no? 23: But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?

Vain preachers and vain religionists cannot deceive Christ nor can they deceive his people though they use much cunning craftiness.

Proverbs 21:30: There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

1 Corinthians 3: 19: For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

Job 5: 12: He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform *their* enterprise. 13: He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. 14: They meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope in the noonday as in the night. 15: But he saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty. 16: So the poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth.

Not only do we not use crafty, dishonest means nor do we *handle the word of God* deceitfully. How does one handle the word of God deceitfully?

Men handle God's word deceitfully by knowingly preaching man-made doctrines as if they are the word of God—by taking scripture out of context—by defining godly terms by man's definition rather than comparing scripture with scripture declaring God's definition.

For example, the accusations some men have been making against me and others for some time is that we are preaching that Christ was made a sinner. That is not so. We are not preaching that Christ was made a sinner. We declare Christ was made sin as do the scriptures. The scriptures never say sin was imputed to Christ they say Christ was made sin, the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

But the division is in part due to man's definition of imputation. If God imputed sin to us without us first being made sin by Adam's prior act it would have been unjust. If God imputed righteousness to us without Christ first making us the righteousness of God in him it would have been unjust. Likewise, if God imputed sin to Christ without Christ first being made sin by God's prior act of making him so it would have been unjust because Christ knew no sin.

Throughout scripture, imputation and its forms are defined as God imputing to a man what he really is by a prior act that made him so. In 2 Samuel 19:19, Shimei had been made sin to David by a prior act so he was asking David not to impute sin to him because he knew David would have been just to do so. In 2 Samuel 4:2 the reason Beeroth is reckoned to Benjamin is because God had given that city along with eleven others to Benjamin back in Joshua.

The exception in the way imputation is used is when Paul told Philemon that if Onesimus owed him anything to put that on Paul's account and he would pay it. (Phil 1: 18) That is what Christ did in eternity when he became Surety when he said whatever they owe you put that on my account and I will pay it.

But when it came time to pay it, before sin could be charged to him justly, God had to make him sin, who knew no sin, then God could impute sin to him and punish him in our room and stead. Another reason is the

death that is the wages of sin is not simply physical death it is the worm that never dies, the fire that is not quenched. Christ bore that death when he felt the weight of the iniquities of all his people laid on him so that he said, “Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.” (Ps 38: 4)

He bore the shame of our sins in his conscience so that he said, “*For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh...My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.*” (Ps 38: 7, 11)

By bearing our sins he was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, which are due to sin, though he never sinned himself so that he said, “Innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.” (Ps 40: 12)

It was much more than the shadow with the lamb. That is what my accusers say it was, exactly like the lamb on the day of atonement. But the wages of sin is death. With the same of our sins on him, Christ bore the second death for his people and thereby condemned sin in the flesh.

God says of his people that we really died in Christ and arose in Christ therefore “*reckon—impute—ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin.*” It is strong language declaring that God’s reckoning to us is not merely treating us as if we are dead but we are dead because we died in Christ. We are alive because we arose in Christ.

Since I have renounced handling the word of God deceitfully, I declare to you what God’s word says come what may.

Another thing that falls into the category of handling the word deceitfully is to use his word to achieve a selfish carnal purpose: self-promotion, numbers on the church roll, money in the plate, to change your doctrine in order take a pulpit for selfish glory. The apostles warned believers and I warn you:

2 Peter 2:3: And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

Also, handling the word of God deceitfully is using God’s word to please men instead of preaching the offence of the cross. We preach salvation is not by any work of the sinner but by Christ’s works alone. Paul said, “*If I yet please men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*” (Gal 1: 10)

Lastly, but not exhausting the subject, handling the word of God deceitfully is to conceal or keep back part of the truth. Will-workers accuse us of not preaching man’s responsibility or man’s works. We most certainly do preach man’s responsibility but we declare the truth that we are incapable of fulfilling our responsibilities except the veil is removed by the Spirit of the Lord, except we are made willing in the day of Christ’s irresistible power, and our responsibility is not to fulfill the law ourselves but to trust Christ who did it for us—so the glory goes to God not us. And we preach the importance of a believer’s good works. But we do so giving God all the glory for producing those good works. Nor do we keep back the truth of electing grace, predestination, limited atonement, preservation of the saints or any doctrine profitable to men.

**2 Corinthians 4: 2:...but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.**

Opposite to veiling and hiding the truth of God, we openly make known Christ before all men, by preaching the truth according to God’s word. God blessed his people “*with all spiritual blessings in heaven, in Christ, according as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world.*” (Eph 1: 3-4) God imputed sin to every

man born of Adam because Adam made us sin. But Christ obeyed God, for his elect alone, who put away our sin, made us the righteousness of God in him. Therefore God imputes the righteousness of Christ to his people through faith because Christ made us righteous in him, apart from any work in us! (Rom 5: 12-21) The fruit of Christ's shed blood is that the Spirit of God removes the veil off the hearts of each of his redeemed, creating in us a new spirit, forming Christ in you thus bringing us to cast all our care on him and one day shall raise us entirely new. (2 Cor 3) This work of saving his elect is begun in us and continually carried on by our triune God through the foolishness of preaching—therefore, having this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not! (1 Cor 1: 21)

Therefore, *by the truth, we commend ourselves to every man's conscience*—that is, ourselves as your servants, your ministers, because we are ambassadors for Christ. He says in verse 5, “*For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants* [your minister ministering to you the gospel] *for Jesus' sake* [as ambassadors for Christ]”

This we do *in the sight of God*—as those who must give account to God, not to men. The Lord's word to Ezekiel is the Lord's word to all Christ's preacher's:

Ezekiel 3: 17: Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. 18: When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 19: Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. 20: Again, When a righteous *man* doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: [one who professed faith in Christ but Christ became a stumblingblock and he turned away from the truth] because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 21: Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous *man*, [one who proved by faith to be God's true child] that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

We are not going to be tried before the tribunal of human fleshly opinion. We are going to stand before the King of kings and the Lord of lord's.” So we preach God's word! And we faint not so as to turn back to those things we have renounced by the same power of Christ by which we received this ministry!

**Amen!**