2 Corinthians 4:1 Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.

Did you notice that first word of our text? It was a **“therefore.”** Whenever you see that word, especially in the NIV84, you can pretty well bet that it is a word that simple reminds you that everything you are going to be talking about is based on everything that has already been talked about. The **“therefores**” of the Greek language are so interesting because they help you see in many ways just how everything in God’s Word is connected. So, yep, that **“therefore”** of our verse refers back to what we heard in the verses beforehand.

And did you notice that where our text started: 2 Co. 3:12 that that first verse says basically the same thing our highlighted verse said! It does. It says, **“Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.”** Our verse said, **“Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.”** The first verse is telling you that because of the hope that we have, we are pretty fearless. The second verse is telling us that because of the ministry that we have, by the way, the ministry of hope built on Jesus, we are pretty fearless!

Now why would we have two verses that pretty much say the same thing? Because of the importance of what is being said. We have a whole section in 2 Corinthians that is expounding the wonder and marvel of what we have in Jesus. You can see that if you just look at section titles, and please note those titles often follow the outline of the book. In chapter 2 you have the title: “*Forgiveness for the sinner.”* After that section we then have the title: *“Ministers of the New Covenant.”* In chapter three comes the next title: *The Glory of the New Covenant.* It is in this chapter that our verses are found. Can you see the progression? God is trying to lead us deeper and deeper into an appreciation and grasp of what we have in Jesus!

So what do we have in Jesus? Let’s you and I come to grips with the revelation of our text under the theme: **THE CAUSE OF FEARLESSNESS!**

So let’s go back to verse 12 which said, **“Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.”** Now if you paid attention to the titles I shared with you, you realize you could conclude that the hope being spoken of here is somehow and most probably connected to “the forgiveness of sins” that has been proclaimed in the earlier verses and that then lead to talking about the fact that we are “*Ministers of a New Covenant*.” That would be a good assessment. We can now talk about forgiveness of sins based upon a New Covenant. What is wrapped up in the New Covenant causes us to be **“very bold.”** Another way to translate those words is to say “we are fearless or we are very confident” in what we know and proclaim. Now what is interesting is that our text is really one that is going to help you grasp why you are bold, confident and fearless!

So did you know the truth of Moses and what happened when Moses went into the presence of God? When Moses spoke with God, Scripture tells us that Moses’ face was “radiant” from being in the presence of God. So, Moses put a veil over his face. That veil was so the people would not be afraid of him and so that the people would not be able to see how that radiance faded. And now, here is God revealing a lesson for his New Testament people in that history. God reveals in our text, **“But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed…Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.”**

Please think about those words. First, the Lord himself reveals **“their minds were made dull.”** To me those are very sad words. It reminds us that the generation of Jewish people who were the adults in the Exodus, were unbelieving people and that’s why they ended up dying in the wilderness. Here, their unbelief is spoken of as **“their minds were made dull.”** They couldn’t get the wonder of what was happening. They couldn’t see the glory of God or even grasp his majesty. And when God gave them his Law, the first or old covenant, they didn’t get it. They didn’t know how to apply it or what it was for or what it was telling them. And not only was it that first generation of Jewish people who were that way, but please note that God says that even into the present day the Israelites still have a veil over their hearts. They still don’t get Moses and the Old Covenant. They still don’t get the wonder, glory, majesty and salvation of God! For that matter, a careful reading of these words will lead you to realize that these words are telling you that anyone who doesn’t get the message of Jesus is a person who has a veil over his heart and mind, a veil that hides the truth, wonder, and glory of God!

Where is that said? How about the words: **“It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away….But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.”** Those words are really declaring what one clever little meme says. You know the one I mean. No Jesus, No salvation! Know Jesus, Know Salvation! Without Jesus, without God’s help and guidance, wisdom and revelation you and I cannot and will not get the awesome and saving message of the Lord. And by the way, the New Covenant being spoke of, that New Covenant that we are ministers of, and that New Covenant that is filled with glory, that New Covenant is nothing else than the Gospel of Jesus, the good news of our life and salvation in Jesus!

Hey, Pastor, does that mean that the Old Covenant is the Law of God? The answer is yes! But don’t be so foolish as most of the world is today, to think that God’s Law can be ignored. True, we are no longer bound to carry out the Ceremonial laws, the religious laws of the Jews. True, we are no longer required to live our lives according to the Civil laws of the Jews, those laws that governed them as a nation and a people. But don’t think for one minute that the Moral Law of God, that unchanging will of God for all the world for all of time has ever stopped doing what it is to do. That moral law of God shows us our sins and our desperate need of a Savior! To not grasp the purpose of God’s Law already means that you have a veil over your heart, the same veil the Jews did.

Beware of that. In today’s world, so many churches, because it isn’t politically correct, shy away from speaking of sin and the absolute horror that sin is. They don’t mention sin as the destructive force that is causing God’s creation to decay. They certainly don’t mention personal sin or even like to acknowledge that there are any wrongs in the world. That would be wrong. By the way, if you don’t have sin, if there is no sin, if there is no fallout from sin, like death and damnation, they why would you need Jesus? Why would you need a Savior? And now you are beginning to see the problem that the Israelites of Old had, yeah, the problem they had even at the time of Moses and that carried over to when Jesus himself came! Why would you murder Jesus unless you had no reason to be concerned for or with sin and what the Lord our God says sin will bring? That’s the veil over their hearts.

But when Jesus is a part of your life, that veil is lifted. You grasp the depth and complete despair of sin. You grasp that God in love, sent his Son Jesus to be our Savior. Jesus lived the perfect life we could not. He then went to the cross and there died, suffering the wrath and anger of his Father for all the sins of all the world for all of time. And then Jesus was raised from the dead. His resurrection is the whole point of our faith. His resurrection tells us that the message of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus is real and true and that it is in Jesus that everything becomes clear and filled with wonder.

THEREFORE, we are a people filled with hope. Hope because we know the promise of God that in Jesus our sins are forgiven. In Jesus, God the Father reveals to us that we are His children and heirs of eternal life. In Jesus, we can see, grasp, bask in, receive and be fearless in eternal salvation. In Jesus we have the Gospel message. Shall I share with you a passage that summarizes that Gospel? Nope, not John 3:16! How about Titus 2:11-15! **For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope-- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. 15 These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.**

Where in there do you see that sin is of no account? When in there are you told that what God has declared evil you can now do? Or are we being reminded that since the Father in grace, has sent His Son to completely redeem us that we are to do what is good and right? Here is our faith! God sent His Son to save us, to forgive our sins, yep, those sins we wrestle with not doing! God our Father, because of his grace and love, as we in Christ, are eager to do what is good, God our Father keeps forgiving us. Notice this is not a matter of “I can do whatever I want” but rather it is a message of “Though I sin, I am forgiven in Jesus and I desire to do only what is good and right!” If that last attitude is missing, you know, the attitude of the New Man, the new creature in Christ, I will tell you something is wrong with your faith!

I will tell you that I just spent two days at Pastors’ Conference and it was absolutely one of the best Conferences in recent memory. The opening preacher, spoke to Pastors and teachers, and reminded all of us that we are not the cause and heart of God’s salvation, Jesus is. He spoke clearly of our short-comings, our failures, and our stupidities as servants of the Lord. And yet He also reminded us that it is because of the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins we have in Jesus that we can do our jobs. We can carry out this ministry of the New Covenant because we have the Word of God, that absolute, trustworthy, and complete revelation of God for our eternal life and salvation. He was right!

And then we had papers after that, that constantly reminded us to rely on, trust in, trust only in Jesus and His Word. We are saved because Jesus paid the price and redeemed us. We are people of faith because God the Holy Spirit has called us, strengthens us, keeps us and guide us in the faith through the gospel in Word and sacrament. The church grows or fades because that is what God brings about. People come to faith because God does it, not you, and yet God wants you to share his glory and proclaim his name. All glory, honor, wonder and praise goes to Father, Son and Holy Spirit because He has promised, He has redeemed and He has made alive.

I was reminded of what 2 Co. 2:15-16 says as I studied for and worked at this sermon. It says this: **“For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?”** We are the aroma of Christ! Isn’t that an awesome thing to grasp? But understand, there are those who believe and they think we smell wonderful. Yet there are those who do not believe and they think we stink to high heaven. As God’s children we smell of Jesus but we can’t do a thing about how we smell to others. In a way, it is very similar to that veil. No Jesus, no salvation. Know Jesus, know salvation!

Dear people, in Christ we have this ministry that proclaims the truth, wonder, sweetness and smell of the Gospel. It is a glorious ministry. It is a ministry filled with the hope of Jesus, the fearlessness that our Savior brings to our world and life. May God grant you this hope, this boldness, this wonder of Jesus, our Savior from sin! Amen.