2 Corinthians 3:12 and 4:1 Therefore, since we have this kind of hope, we act with great boldness…therefore, since we have this ministry as a result of the mercy shown us, we are not discouraged.

The first thing we need to do is provide you with background. You need to know the reference point that the Apostle Paul uses to bring this section of God’s Word to life for us. So here goes.

Paul references Old Testament history. He goes to the time that Moses was the leader of God’s people. It was Moses who was instrumental in bringing about the freedom of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. It was Moses who raised his arms and with that the sea parted and full escape from Egypt was given. It was Moses who led to them to the border of the land of Canaan and encouraged the people to go in and conquer the land. It was the people who mumbled and groaned about Moses. It was the people who lacked confidence and faith in God. Yet remember that, it was Moses who served the people as the spokesman of God for as long as he lived.

Remember also that once the people refused to go into the land of Canaan, God then commanded that they wander in the wilderness for 40 years until the unbelieving of that nation should die out. To impress upon the people that Moses was His spokesmen, God often met with Moses face to face. We are told in Scripture that the “Pillar of cloud” would descend upon the Tent of Meeting when Moses went to meet with God. When Moses came out from the presence of God, Moses would tell the people exactly what God had said. And every time that Moses spoke with God, Moses’ face would glow with the wonder of God. We are also told that Moses would then put a veil on his face so that the people would not see the glow of the Lord fade from his face. It is that veil and the fading glow that Paul uses to teach a lesson that is valuable for us as Christians to hear.

What was the lesson? You can read more fully about it in the previous chapter and verses of the lesson before us. Let me sum up what is said. Paul reminds us that Moses was a preacher and bearer of the Law of God. Paul calls this law of God **“the ministry that brought death.”** How true this is. Please remember that the Law of God was never designed to save us but rather the Law of God was given that we might clearly see our sins and the damnation that our sins deserve. Paul tells us the ministry of the law was glorious, but he also points out that this ministry was “fading.”

Now we get to the things Paul points to as the very things that teach this truth. The glowing face of Moses and how that glow would fade is the first thing. That fading glow of Moses’ ministry was a lesson on the fact that the Law and its demands was not permanent but rather was temporary. It faded, it went away. That was God’s intent with the Law. It was temporary. It was given until the fullness of God’ grace and mercy in the Christ should be revealed. In Galatians this lesson is made more pointed. In 3:18 we read, **“Then what about the law? It was added for the purpose of revealing transgressions, until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.”** Or again in 3:24 we read, **“So the law was our chaperone until Christ.”** So, the law was temporary, given to us until what was permanent came. Listen to how this section finishes in verse 11 of 2 Cor. 3, **“Indeed, if what is fading away was glorious, how much more glorious that which is permanent.”**

It is here that the first part of our highlighted texts occurs. It said, **“Therefore, since we have this kind of hope, we act with great boldness.”** **“Therefore!”** That word means we pay attention to what was taught because what was taught is now the whole point of what we need to learn. And what we learn is that our salvation is not based on the temporary and fading law but rather on the permanent and eternal victory of Jesus. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law. Jesus ended the threat of death from the law by his resurrection from the dead. That is the whole point of Jesus. And Jesus gives us hope.

What can be said of this hope? It is not just a pious wish and desire. The word hope is a word that means “a sure and certain confidence.” In Jesus I have a hope, a sure and certain confidence, not about death, which is the lesson of the law, but about eternal life which is the lesson of Jesus and his gospel victory from the grave. Jesus lives. He lives eternally. This victory of Jesus is not temporary, but is permanent. Such is the very point of Jesus living eternally and because Jesus lives so shall we. And so we have this hope, this permanent, sure, and certain confidence of eternal life and salvation because of the victory of Jesus. And this hope makes us **“act with great boldness.”**

Do you know what that means? That means we don’t have to be filled with fear about anything. Jesus lives and reigns for all eternity. All things in heaven and on earth have been put into the hands of Jesus. Jesus acts and rules always for the eternal good and salvation not only for his church but for each and every individual soul that has become his by grace through faith. Jesus is the Lord! I am his child. You can take my life, my goods, my freedom, my anything of this world and I don’t care. Because I am a child of God and heir of eternal life. No matter what, because of Jesus, believers win. We have eternal life and salvation because Jesus paid for our sins and Jesus watches over our lives. That is the boldness of Jesus. I will march on with Jesus. I will step out for Jesus. I will be a Christian soldier marching as to war, which simply means I will boldly and bravely proclaim Jesus Christ the Lord and Savior of all to all! Bold, very great boldness in Jesus.

There is more. The next lesson Paul points to is the lesson of the veil. The Jews missed the lesson of the veil. They missed that the law was temporary and that something greater was coming. So Paul says that was a veil that covered their hearts. They could not see that the Law could not save. They could not see that the Law was not about how wonderful and good we can be, how we can meet and exceed everything needed for life and salvation. They thought the Law was everything and so when Jesus came, the promised Messiah, to bring them salvation they could not see and grasp the truth of Jesus and his wonder. And note that it is pointed out that many today still have this problem. The problem of self-righteousness. The problem of thinking you are going to get to heaven because you are so good and wonderful that God must let you in.

There are so many that have their hearts veiled from the pure joy and wonder of Jesus. God’s Son died on the cross to atone for us. God’s Son took on the punishment of hell and damnation so that we could have eternal life. Simply and solely because of Jesus our sins are forgiven and eternal life is ours. All this by faith. All this because God says, **“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the whole world.”** Or again, **“This then is his command: that we believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ.”**

This is the message of the Gospel. This is the good news of God. It is what Jesus is all about. God has atoned for sin. God has given the gift of eternal life simply because of Jesus and what Jesus has done. And here is where our second highlighted verse comes in. It said, **“Therefore, since we have this ministry as a result of the mercy shown us, we are not discouraged.”**

I pray you grasp what uplifting words those are. Notice again the **“therefore”** which tells you that what was said before has immediate impact and bearing on what is now being said. We were told that we were being transformed into the likeness of Jesus, that we reflect the glory of Jesus with unveiled face. All of this because **“whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.”**

We grasp that salvation is from Jesus. We grasp the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life found in Jesus. We grasp that we do not have to be afraid but can be filled with boldness. We have Jesus. Jesus impacts us. Jesus changes us. And one of the things that happens is that we have a hard time keeping our mouths shut about Jesus. You see, we have this ministry!

We have the gospel ministry of Jesus. We have been given the task, better yet, we have the drive to teach and preach this message of Jesus and eternal life in his name. It is not about me or you or anything fearful and fickle in this world. It is about Jesus, God’s Son come to be our Savior and we want everyone, everyone to hear this awesome and wonderful message of Jesus.

There is a ministry of Jesus. It is the ministry of this church. It is the ministry of the man who has been called to serve this church. But I will tell you this ministry can be stressful and difficult, seemingly impossible if we don’t keep these words in mind. We, each one of us, is to be motivated to fulfill this ministry. Each of us. Your task may be different from another. Our ministry help may be in our offerings, in our encouragements to other Christians, in our inviting people to our church or making sure we drag our kids to church, in our doing works of service in our church, in our Bible class attendance or in so many other ways in which we can reflect the eternal glory and wonder of Jesus in our lives. And did you hear what our attitude about this ministry is to be? **“We are not discouraged.”**

Let me share with you some words found in a sermon study book that I use. It is speaking of this statement “we are not discouraged or we do not lose heart.” *“What minister of the gospel doesn’t need such encouragement? We did not become ministers because of our good character, or our surpassing gifts, or our hard work. We became ministers of the gospel through God’s mercy. God had mercy on us and entrusted his glorious message to us “jars of clay.”*

*We do not lose heart. The ministry of preaching the gospel to a people who are obstinate and stubborn can involve many things that could lead preachers to lose heart. The words of God we speak do not meet the reception they deserve, nor do we meet the reception God’s spokesmen deserve. Things go wrong. Our efforts seem unsuccessful. And then we remember that it is through God’s mercy that we have this ministry. We do not have this ministry because we went out and acquired it for ourselves, but because God, in his mercy, put us here. Therefore we do not lose heart, but instead go back to doing what God told us to do: Preach the gospel.”*

So you think your church is not growing as it should or that you are not accomplishing the things you think you should? You think you don’t have enough for this or that, that no one helps, that we are just not up to the task of ministry? But it is not about what you think or even about what you want. God put us here to conduct his ministry. God gave us the task of proclaiming his gospel message clearly and precisely so that people might hear and believe the truth of Jesus. Our job is to simply sow the seed of the Gospel because we have this wonder and marvel of Jesus. It is our job to sow. God will grant the growth as He sees fit. God will grant his bounty or God will hold back his bounty. That is God’s job. Our job is the ministry of sowing the wonder of Jesus.

For us, what a joy to realize that God has blessed this congregation with 150 years of existence, but more than that, with 150 years of proclaiming the gospel for the sake of souls. Many souls heard and as to be expected, many souls turned away from the treasure of Jesus because **“This is a hard teaching, who can accept it”** or “**the evil one snatches what was sown in his heart…trouble and persecution comes and he immediately falls away…the worry of this world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word and it produces no fruit.”** God is the cause of blessing or not. God simply calls upon us to get this ministry done and to do so without being discouraged. What a joy to realize that God has given us 150 years of preaching the wonderful Gospel of Jesus.

(For you here at St. James, you need to keep this goal in mind. Yes, your pastor has just taken a call to serve another church, but that doesn’t end your ministry. You might face struggles and challenges but that doesn’t mean that you should step down the work before you. I mean, do you have the treasure of God found in Jesus? Then with boldness and confidence step up and let that glorious Gospel of Jesus shine forth from this place.)

We are not discouraged. We are filled with great boldness. We have the wonder and marvel of Jesus. Jesus has given us eternal life and salvation and it is that message of Jesus that I, or you, just can’t help but share. The glorious wonderful ministry of God. Lord continue to help us be filled with wonder and awe at Jesus and continue to help us never waver in proclaiming Jesus to all the world. Amen.