

Discussion Questions
2 Corinthians 4

Read through all of 2 Corinthians 4. Define who all the “we’s,” “you’s” and “us’s” are.

- What is Paul saying / emphasizing in verses 5 and 14 about the relationship between his apostolic missionary team and the church in Corinth?
- In verse 5, what do you think it means to “proclaim ourselves”? How is that different from “commending ourselves” in verse 2?
- Reread verses **12-16** in **chapter 3**. See also **Exodus 34:29-35**. Now, using this understanding, write together a commentary explanation of **2 Cor, 4:3-6**? Now as a group, try and succinctly summarize (1-2 sentences) what the “weight of glory in the face of Christ” means in verse 6.
- Why jars of clay? Why one treasure, but plural jars? What exactly is this treasure? Who/what are the jars?
- Is the crazy suffering and struggle of 8-12 only for apostles/missionaries? What does it mean to carry around the death of Christ?

Please seek to apply together! What does a call to be jars of clay entrusted with the treasure of the gospel found in the face of Christ mean for you and your group? Is there a ministry, person/people, or need you all feel called to reach out and love? Finish by reading together Micah 6:6-9a and pray for God to show you what is good and what he requires of you!

Commentary notes on Moses’ face shining referenced in Chapters 3 and 4 of 2 Corinthians

Exodus 34:33–35, which forms the basis of Paul’s exposition here, gives no indication that the reason Moses veiled his face was *so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendour*. The apostle seems to have drawn two inferences of his own from the text: first, that the brightness of Moses’ face did fade after a short while; and second, that the reason Moses veiled his face was to conceal the end of the fading splendour from the Israelites. Paul saw in the fading brightness a symbol of the transitory character of the old covenant, and inferred that Moses, lacking boldness because he was the minister of a fading covenant, veiled his face so that the Israelites might not see its end.²⁶

14. *But their minds were hardened.* The purpose of these words appears to be to correct any impression that Moses was to blame for the Israelites’ inability to behold the splendour of the old covenant reflected in his face. Moses may have veiled his face, but it was the Israelites’ minds that were hardened (cf. Ps. 95:8; Heb. 3:8, 15; 4:7). Rabbinic writings of c. ad 150 say that it was the effects of Israel’s sin in making the golden calf while Moses was on the mount which resulted in their being unable through fear to look upon the brightness of Moses’ face (Str-B 3, p. 515).

For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted. The hardness of mind of the Israelites of Moses’ day reminds Paul of the hardness of mind of the Jews of his

own day, and he finds in the idea of the veil a way of describing that hardness. Just as the veil prevented the ancient Israelites from seeing the brightness of Moses' face, so too *the same veil*, as it were, remained unlifted when the Jews of his own day read the Old Testament. They could not see that the old covenant had come to an end and the new had already been inaugurated. *Because only through Christ is it taken away.* It is *only through* [lit. 'in'] *Christ* that the veil over people's minds is removed. When people become believers in Christ, they experience at the same time the removal of the veil of ignorance and unbelief which previously prevented them from understanding the true meaning of the Old Testament, i.e. its witness to Jesus Christ and the end of the old covenant which his coming brought about.

Colin G. Kruse, [*2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 8, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 97–98.

Jars of Clay - *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels.* Earthenware vessels were a commonplace in virtually every home in the ancient Middle East. They were inexpensive and easily broken. Unlike metal vessels (which could be repaired) or glass ones (which could be melted down and the material reused), once broken, earthenware vessels had to be discarded. They were thus cheap and of little intrinsic value. Paul may have had in mind the small earthenware oil-lamps sold so cheaply in the market-places. If so, 'the light of the gospel' would be the treasure, while the apostles in their frailty would be the earthenware lamps from whom the light was made to shine in the world.

The contrast between the *treasure* and the *earthen vessels* which contain it is intended (*hina*) to show that *the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us*. In 1:9 Paul testified that the affliction he experienced in Asia taught him 'to rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead', and in similar vein the frailty of the messengers here shows, not so much to the apostles but rather to the world, that *the transcendent power belongs to God* and not his envoys.

Colin G. Kruse, [*2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 8, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 106–107.