

October 4

Scriptures: Read 2 Corinthians 4

Key Verse: “But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of Cod deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” (2 Corinthians 4:2)

Overview

Paul continues to defend his ministry. He speaks of the integrity and vulnerability to which he has committed himself. There’s nothing secret, shameful, or deceptive about his ministry. He doesn’t distort the Word of God for personal profit or popularity. He tells it like it is; and what you see is what you get.

What you see is the “manifestation of the truth”. That’s quite a claim! Who of us would refer to what we teach and how we live as a “manifestation of the truth”? Most of us, I’m sure, would say, “Don’t look at me, look at Jesus.” A thought, by the way, with which I’m sure Paul would concur. But he’s not averse to putting his life under his congregation’s microscope. “Examine my life,” he says in effect, “and see the truth.”

And what is the “microscope?” Standards? Rules? Traditions? No. It’s something else: “every man’s conscience”. There may be nothing in life more personal than conscience, and nothing more judgmental. But before we react to this remarkable vulnerability, notice the qualifier, “in the sight of God”. Paul is talking about an educated conscience here: one that has been informed and transformed by the “word of God”.

But the point is clear. We’re to be discerning in our acceptance of professed ministries. Paul says, “scrutinize my ministry”, but don’t judge on the basis of style. Rather, judge on the basis of substance. And, as you submit yourself to the Word of God, let your conscience be your guide.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, please help us to be discerning, examining the fruit of the lives of those who are in a place of Christian leadership. But first of all, Lord, help us to be totally honest in examining our own lives, so as to be sure that we ourselves have the fruit of the Spirit. In Your name we pray. Amen.