

2 Corinthians 4:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

Analysis

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost (apollymenois, ἀπολλυμένοις, 'those who are perishing')—Paul addresses accusations that his ministry lacked effectiveness. If some don't receive the gospel, the fault lies not in the message or messenger but in the spiritual condition of hearers. The veiling is not in Paul's proclamation but in their hearts.

This echoes 3:14-15 where a veil lies over Israelite hearts when Moses is read. Kekalmmenon (κεκαλυμένον, 'veiled, hidden') implies active concealment. The gospel's hiddenness to unbelievers is not God's doing but the work of the 'god of this world' (v. 4). Paul refuses to accept responsibility for spiritual blindness rooted in satanic deception and human rebellion.

Historical Context

In a results-oriented culture like Corinth's, ministry success was measured by numbers and acclaim. Paul's critics likely pointed to his rejection and suffering as evidence of failed ministry. Paul reframes the entire discussion: the gospel's apparent failure with some reveals their spiritual condition, not ministry inadequacy.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How do you respond when people reject the gospel you share—do you question the message, the messenger, or recognize spiritual blindness?
2. In what ways does modern Christianity mistakenly measure ministry success by response rates rather than faithfulness?
3. How does recognizing satanic blindness (v. 4) change your approach to evangelism and prayer?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	δὲ	καὶ	ἐστὶν	κεκαλυμμένον	τὸ	εὐαγγέλιον	ἡμῶν
G1487	But	G2532	be		G3588	gospel	our
	G1161		G2076			G2098	G2257
ἐν	τοῖς	ἀπολλυμένοις	ἐστὶν	κεκαλυμμένον			
to	G3588	them that are lost	be	hid			
G1722		G622	G2076	G2572			

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 1:18 (Parallel theme): For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

2 Corinthians 3:14 (Parallel theme): 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.

Matthew 11:25 (Parallel theme): At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

2 Corinthians 4:4 (Parallel theme): In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Romans 2:16 (Parallel theme): In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

1 Timothy 1:11 (Parallel theme): According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

2 Corinthians 2:12 (Parallel theme): Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

1 Thessalonians 1:5 (Parallel theme): For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.