

# 2 Corinthians 4:10-12 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

2 CORINTHIANS - PAUL'S MINISTRY IN THE LIGHT OF THE INDESCRIBABLE GIFT  
Click chart to enlarge  
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
[Another Overview Chart](#) on right side

## Overview of

### Second Corinthians

2Co 1:1-7:16

Character  
of Paul

Testimonial & Didactic

Past:  
Misunderstanding & Explanation

Apostle's Conciliation, Ministry & Exhortations

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Ephesus to Macedonia:  
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2Co 10:1-12:21

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2Co 10:1-12:21

[2Corinthians written ~ 56-57AD - see Chronological Table of Paul's Life and Ministry](#)

Adapted & modified from [Jensen's Survey of the New Testament \(Highly Recommended Resource\)](#) & [Wilkinson's Talk Thru the Bible](#)

**2 Corinthians 4:10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. (NASB: Lockman)**

**Greek:** pantote ten nekrosin tou Iesou en to somati peripherontes, (PAPMPN) hina kai e zoe tou Iesou en to somati hemon phanerothe. (3SAPS)

**Amplified:** Always carrying about in the body the liability and exposure to the same putting to death that the Lord Jesus suffered, so that the [resurrection] life of Jesus also may be shown forth by and in our bodies. ([Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** In our bodies we have to run the same risk of death as Jesus Christ did, so that in our body the same life as Jesus lived may be clear for all to see. ([Westminster Press](#))

**God's Word:** We always carry around the death of Jesus in our bodies so that the life of Jesus is also shown in our bodies. ([GWT](#))

**Easy English:** We always carry around in our body the death of the \*Lord Jesus. As a result, people will see the life of Jesus in our body.

**ESV:** always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ([ESV](#))

**KJV:** Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

**NET:** always carrying around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our body. ([NET Bible](#))

**NIV:** We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. ([NIV - IBS](#))

**NLT:** Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** Every day we experience something of the death of the Lord Jesus, so that we may also know the power of the life of Jesus in these bodies of ours. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Weymouth:** always, wherever we go, carrying with us in our bodies the putting to death of Jesus, so that in our bodies it may also be clearly shown that Jesus lives.

**Wuest:** always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus in order that the life of Jesus might be clearly and openly shown in our body, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Young's Literal:** at all times the dying of the Lord Jesus bearing about in the body, that the life also of Jesus in our body may be manifested,

- **Carrying:** 2Co 1:5,9 Ro 8:17,18 Ga 6:17 Php 3:10,11 Col 1:24
- **So that:** 2Co 13:4 Jn 14:19 Ac 18:9,10 Ro 8:17 2Ti 2:11 1Pe 4:13 Rev 1:17
- 2 Corinthians 4 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A LIVING DEATH SENTENCE

Paul now summarizes and interprets summarizes the paradoxes in the previous two passages, specifically the 4 contrasts, each of which was in a sense "**carrying about... the dying of Jesus**", suffering for His sake. On the other hand, the phrase "**the life of Jesus**" pictured the Lord's power to keep him from being crushed, despairing, forsaken or destroyed.

**Always carrying about ([periphero](#)) in the body the dying of Jesus.** - **Carrying about** is in the present tense picturing this as Paul's continual practice Paul's point is that he was continually, at all times and all places, exposed to people and circumstances that sought to bring him harm even as these enemies of the Cross sought to kill the Lord Jesus. In a true sense this acknowledgment by Paul is a "fulfillment of prophecy" for His Lord (speaking to Ananias) had foretold "I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." (Acts 9:15+). In his first letter Paul alluded to his suffering for the sake of Christ when he asked "Why are we also in danger every hour?" (1Co 15:30+). The implication of that question is that they were **always** in danger (and in context his point was why would he be willing to do so if there were no life after death?)

**MacArthur** - The truth that Paul was continually carrying about in his body the dying of Jesus was a powerful rebuttal to the allegations of the false apostles. They argued that Paul suffered because God was chastening him for his secret life of sin. But in reality Paul suffered at the hands of evil men because of his identification with Jesus Christ. Those who hate the Lord persecute His people. Therefore Paul's trials, far from being a sign of God's displeasure, were actually a badge of honor (cf. 2 Cor. 1:5; Gal. 6:17; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24). Suffering for the cause of Christ should not surprise any Christian, since Jesus Himself predicted it (Jn 15:18-21) ([2Corinthians Commentary](#))

**Homer Kent** - Here Paul begins an explanation of the preceding paradoxes. The sufferings that the apostolic party experienced, along with the successful accomplishment of its mission in spite of impending disaster, must be interpreted as Paul indicates. Their sufferings were actually a "carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus." The next verse is parallel in thought and makes it clear that Paul was considering Christ's physical sufferings and death. Paul and the other apostles were constantly under threat of physical death just as Jesus was. Now the hatred of men for the Son of God was being directed against Paul and others as they attempted to carry out their Christian ministry. The word "dying" (*nekrōsin*) does not mean simply death but the process of dying. Paul chooses this term to emphasize not just one act, but the repeated sufferings that were directed against his life in order to put him to death. ([A Heart Opened Wide - Studies in 2 Corinthians](#); see also [2 Corinthians 2:14-4:18 The Glory of Christian Ministry - An Analysis](#))

Pain has purpose for Christ followers.

**So that** (*hina* = [term of purpose or result](#)) **the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body - Amplified** helps understand Paul's testimony which to a natural man is not only paradoxical but enigmatic - "Always carrying about in the body the liability and exposure to the same putting to death that the Lord Jesus suffered, so that the [resurrection] life of Jesus also may be shown forth by and in our bodies." I have also found the **New Living Translation (NLT)** helpful in providing interpretative clues, but one must use discretion for it is much more of a paraphrase than the Amplified (see Chart comparing Literalism of Bible Versions) and I do not

always agree with their interpretative paraphrase (in this verse I do) "Through suffering, these bodies of ours constantly share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies." ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Recall the **4 sets of adversities** Paul has just described (2Co 4:8,9+) and how in each antithetical couplet he was (in a sense) victorious. And given that he was but a clay pot (2Co 4:7+), the fact that he was "more than a conqueror" (Ro 8:37) over each of the more intense adversities, clearly indicates that he was only able to do so only by virtue of a power greater than himself. Specifically the resurrection life and power of Christ (~ **the life of Christ**) via the filling and energizing ministry (Ep 5:18+, Gal 5:16+, et al) of the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Christ -Ro 8:9+, 1Pe 1:11+) was put on display (**manifested**) in Paul's body through his "triumph" in each circumstance.

**Homer Kent** - Paul could look beyond the trials to the grander purpose that was being served. God's suffering servants not only showed their identification with Christ by their willingness to suffer as He did, but they also displayed His life in their bodies. Christ living in them enabled them not to be crushed or despairing, feel forsaken, or be destroyed. They ran the risk of death in order to proclaim the new life in Christ, and they did this by personal demonstration of Christ's life in their own lives. ([A Heart Opened Wide - Studies in 2 Corinthians](#); see also [2 Corinthians 2:14-4:18 The Glory of Christian Ministry - An Analysis](#))

**MacDonald** - The life of the servant of God is one of constant dying. Just as the Lord Jesus Himself, in His lifetime, was constantly exposed to violence and persecution, so those who follow in His steps will meet the same treatment. But it does not mean defeat. This is the way of victory ([Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Utley on Always carrying about (periphero) in the body the dying of Jesus** - This refers to the paradox of our being rightly related to God, but exposed to physical problems because of a fallen world. We have eternal life, but we are physically dying (cf. 1:8). As Jesus was rejected and persecuted (cf. John 15:20), so too, are believers (cf. 1 Cor. 15:31; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; 1 Pet. 4:12-19).

**William MacDonald** explains that "Just as the Lord Jesus Himself, in His lifetime, was constantly exposed to violence and persecution, so those who follow in His steps will meet the same treatment. But it does not mean defeat. This is the way of victory. Blessing comes to others as we thus die daily. It is only in this way that the life of Jesus can be apparent in our bodies. ([Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

Later in this Second Corinthians Paul mentions (repeatedly) that he was "**often in danger of death**" illustrating in manifold ways how he carried about in his **body the dying of Jesus**...

Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in **danger** of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in **dangers** from rivers, **dangers** from robbers, **dangers** from my countrymen, **dangers** from the Gentiles, **dangers** in the city, **dangers** in the wilderness, **dangers** on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? (2Co 11:23-29+)

In Romans 8 **Paul** again alludes to **carrying about... the dying of Jesus**...

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (**Answer? No one!**) Shall tribulation (thlipsis related to the thlibo Paul had described in 2Co4:8-**see note**), or distress (stenochoria related to stenochoreo described in 2Co4:8-**see note**) or persecution (diogmos related to dioko used in 2Co 4:9 -**see note**), or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "FOR THY SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; (cp **always carrying about... the dying**) WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." But in all these things **we overwhelmingly conquer** through Him who loved us (cp His power "**manifested in our body**" 2Co4:10). For (**Paul goes on to explain in what circumstances and why believers are "super conquerors" in Christ**) I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ro 8:35 36+ Ro 8:37 38 39+)

Writing to the **Galatians** Paul says...

From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks (stigma, plural = stigmata) of Jesus. (Gal 6:17+)

**Ryrie comments on Paul's brand-marks:** i.e., scars suffered in persecution, which spoke more eloquently than the mark of circumcision that the Judaizers sought to impose. ([The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation: 1995. Moody Publishers](#))

Writing to the saints at **Colossae**...

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake (eg, Paul was in prison for the sake of the Gospel at the time of this writing - Col 4:18+), and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions. (Col 1:24+)

**Comment:** Don't misunderstand what Paul is saying here - nothing was **lacking** regarding **Christ's** payment for sins (see meaning of "It is finished" on Jn 19:30+). And yet Christ's death did not bring an end to suffering of His brethren for His Name's sake (cp ). When we as believers allow Christ to live out His life through us, God promises that we will also experience suffering (2Ti 3:12+, 1Pe 2:21-+ 1Pe 3:14+, Jn 15:18 19 20 21 16:33 Mt 5:10, 11, 12+ Php 1:29 30+ Ro 8:17-+, Ro 8:18+). Paul's suffering (and our suffering) for the sake of Christ has no atoning value, and thus is distinct from the unique sufferings of the sinless Savior as the full payment for sins (1Pe 2:24, 25+).

Note also that the fact that Paul was able to **rejoice in sufferings** (not just "grin and bear it") is clear evidence of the Spirit's enablement (cp fruit of the Spirit... joy Ga 5:22) which in turn would have been a clear and glorious manifestation of the **life of Jesus** in his body! Beloved, the world is watching. They are looking for "Pauls", men and women who are radical, authentic, willing to carry about the **dying of Jesus** in their bodies that His glorious supernatural, resurrection life might be indisputably manifest. To some the risen life of Christ will be a life giving aroma, while to others it will be an aroma that smells like eternal death (2Co2:14 15 16). In either case, the privilege of **clay pots** (2Co4:7-+) is to be willing to be broken for Jesus' sake, that "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" might be evident to both the living and the dead. Amen!

Earlier **Paul** had written a statement which parallels 2Co 4:10,11...

For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. (2Co 1:5).

**Comment:** The **sufferings of Christ** do not refer to His unique atoning suffering for sin. They are called **sufferings of Christ** because He endured them when He was on earth, and because He still endures them when the members of His Body experience them (see Acts 9:3 4,5). The more they endure righteous suffering ( reproach, rejection, hostility, hatred, denial, betrayal, etc that come to those in and through whom He now lives ), the greater will be their comfort and reward. .

**Always** (3842) (**pantote** from **pás** = all, every + **tóte** = when, then) an adverb which literally is "every when" means always, at all times, ever (more), on all occasions. In **English always** is defined - invariably, forever, perpetually, on every occasion, throughout all time, without variation. Continually, regularly, repeatedly or constantly during a certain period, or regularly at stated intervals (eg Mephibosheth - 2Sa 9:10KJV = "always"); At all convenient times. Without exception. Every time. **Richards** writes that "'Always" in the Bible does not link time with eternity. It is a word that focuses attention on experience within the world of time and space. "Always" may direct our attention to that which is stable over a period of time or to that which is to be experienced continually. When the issue is God's relationship with us, "always" reminds us powerfully that God is present at every moment in time and thus is with us constantly. When the issue is our relationship with God, "always" calls us to continual commitment and to consistent holiness. ([Expository Dictionary of Bible Words](#))

**Pantote** - 41x in 38v - Mt 26:11; Mk 14:7; Lk 15:31; 18:1; Jn 6:34; 7:6; 8:29; 11:42; 12:8; 18:20; Ro 1:10; 1Co1:4; 15:58; 2Co 2:14; 4:10; 5:6; 9:8; Gal 4:18; Ep 5:20; Php 1:4, 20; 2:12; 4:4; Col 1:3; 4:6, 12; 1Th 1:2; 2:16; 3:6; 4:17; 5:15f; 2Th 1:3, 11; 2:13; 2Ti 3:7; Phile 1:4; He 7:25. **NAS** = all times(1), always(40).

**Carrying about** (4064) (**periphero** from **perí** = around + **phéro** = carry) (Only 2 other uses - Mk 6:55; Ep 4:14+) literally means to carry round, to bear about everywhere (as here in 2Co 4:10), to carry about from one place to another, to carry here and there or to transport hither and thither. It is used of spinning tops. **Periphero** according to Liddell-Scott in some secular uses meant to carry round, to publish, to make known.

**Body** (4983) (**soma**) is literally the living body of man or animals (Mt 5:29, 30, 6:22, 23 25, Jn 2:21 Ro 1:24 Ro 8:10 = "dead because of sin", Jas 3:3 1Co 6:18), sometimes to a dead body (corpse) (Mt 14:12, 27:59 Mk

15:43, 45 Lk 17:37 He 13:11), sometimes to sun, moon, stars (1Co 15:40), sometimes as the center of all mortal life which can experience immortality in the resurrection body (1Co 15:44), sometimes the "material" part of man distinct from the soul or spirit (1Th 5:23), sometimes referring to reproductive power (Ro 4:19, 1Co 6:13), sometimes in a figurative sense to describe that which is "real" versus that which is shadow (Col 2:17) and finally sometimes describing the "body" of Christ, the Church (Ep 1:23, Ep 4:12, Ep 4:16, Ep 5:23, Ep 5:30, Col 1:18, Col 1:24, Col 2:19, Ro 12:5 1Co 12:27, cp 1Co 10:17, 12:13, Ep 2:16, Ep 4:4, Col 3:15).

**Ralph Earle** -The word **soma** was used by Homer (about ninth century B.C.) for a dead body. But beginning with Hesiod (eighth century B.C.) it came to be employed for living bodies, whether of animals or men. Metaphorically it is "used of a (large or small) number of men united into one society, or family as it were; a social, ethical, mystical body; so in the New Testament of the church" (Thayer, p. 611). (BORROW [Word meanings in the New Testament](#)).

**W E Vine** - is the body as a whole, the instrument of life, whether of man living, e.g., Mt 6:22, or dead, Mt 27:52; or in resurrection, 1Co 15:44; or of beasts, He 13:11; of grain, 1Co 15:37, 38; of the heavenly hosts, 1Co 15:40. In Re 18:13 it is translated "slaves." In its figurative uses the essential idea is preserved. Sometimes the word stands, by synecdoche, for the complete man, Matt. 5:29; 6:22; Ro 12:1; Jas. 3:6; Rev. 18:13. Sometimes the person is identified with his or her body, Ac 9:37; 13:36, and this is so even of the Lord Jesus, John 19:40 with Jn 19:42. The body is not the man, for he himself can exist apart from his body, 2Co 12:2, 3. The body is an essential part of the man and therefore the redeemed are not perfected till the resurrection, He 11:40; no man in his final state will be without his body, Jn 5:28, 29; Re 20:13. The word is also used for physical nature, as distinct from pneuma, the spiritual nature, e.g., 1Co 5:3, and from **psuche**, the soul, e.g., 1Th 5:23. "Sōma, body, and pneuma, spirit, may be separated; pneuma and **psuche**, soul, can only be distinguished" (Cremer). It is also used metaphorically, of the mystic Body of Christ, with reference to the whole Church, e.g., Ep 1:23; Col 1:18, 22, 24; also of a local church, 1Co 12:27. ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

**Soma** - 142x in 120v in **NAS** - Mt 5:29 30; 6:22 23, 25; 10:28; 26:12, 26; 27:52, 58 59; Mk 5:29; 14:8, 22; 15:43; Lk 11:34, 36; 12:4, 22 23; 17:37; 22:19; 23:52, 55; 24:3, 23; Jn 2:21; 19:31, 38, 40; 20:12; Acts 9:40; Ro 1:24; 4:19; 6:6, 12; 7:4, 24; 8:10 11, 13, 23; 12:1, 4 5; 1Co 5:3; 6:13, 15 16, 18 19 20; 7:4, 34; 9:27; 10:16 17; 11:24, 27, 29; 12:12 13 14, 22 23 24 25, 27; 13:3; 15:35, 37 38, 40, 44; 2Co 4:10; 5:6, 8, 10; 10:10; 12:2 3; Gal 6:17; Ep 1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23, 28, 30; Php 1:20; 3:21; Col 1:18, 22, 24; 2:11, 17, 19, 23; 3:15; 1Th 5:23; Heb 10:5, 10, 22; 13:3, 11; Jas 2:16, 26; 3:2 3, 6; 1Pe 2:24; Jude 1:9; Rev 18:13. **NAS** = bodies(11), body(128), personal(1), slaves(1), substance(1).

**Jamieson** - The Greek for "**the dying**" is literally, "the being made a corpse," such Paul regarded his body, yet a corpse which shares in the life-giving power of Christ's resurrection, as it has shared in His dying and death. ([2 Corinthians 4](#))

**Guzik** comments that "Paul, like any Christian, wanted the life of Jesus evident in him. But Paul knew this could only happen if he also carried about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. There are some aspects of God's great work in our lives that only happen through trials and suffering... In Php 3:10+, Paul speaks about the glory of knowing Jesus: that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. Many long to know the power of His resurrection, but want nothing to do with the fellowship of His sufferings or being conformed to His death. But there are certain fragrances God can only release through a broken vial, so Paul rejoiced in knowing both the suffering and the glory. He knew the two were connected. ([2 Corinthians 4](#))

**McGee** - Remember that in 1 Corinthians 15:31 Paul could say that he died daily. In Romans 8:36 he wrote, "As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." In 1 Corinthians 4:9 he wrote: "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." Christian, do not be afraid to suffer. Jesus said the world would hate us if we were following Him. It is wonderful to take our place with the Lord Jesus Christ in these days.

**The dying of Jesus... the life of Jesus** - In 2Co 6:9 he writes of himself "as dying, yet behold we live."**Dying** is not [thanatos](#) Paul's usual word for death but [nekrosis](#) because the former speaks of death as a fact or event, while [nekrosis](#) speaks of the process of dying. Paul was experiencing death in progress.

**Dying** ([3500](#))(**nekrosis** - see **nekroo**; English = **necrosis** {localized death of cells most often secondary to interruption of blood supply}) describes a putting to death or state of death. **Nekrosis** was a Greek medical term for the withering or **mortification** (medically the death and consequent putrefaction of one part of an animal body, while the rest is alive. Spiritually something saints are commanded to do [**How goes your mortification lately dear brother or sister?**] see below] Col 3:5KJV+) of a member or the body.

In Ro 4:19+ **Paul** uses **nekrosis** figuratively to convey the sense of "utter lack of strength and vital power... But here the literal sense, 'the being put to death,' must evidently be kept, and the expression understood as 1 Cor. 15:31+." (Henry Alford)

Let's take a **brief excursus** (digression) on [Webster's \(1828\) Dictionary](#) definition of **mortification** - "In Scripture, the act of subduing the passions and appetites by penance (act of self abasement), abstinence or painful severities inflicted on the body. The mortification of the body by fasting has been the practice of almost all nations, and the mortification of the appetites and passions by self-denial is always a Christian duty." This is a potentially misleading definition - yes self-denial is clearly called for in Scripture (Mk 8:34+, Col 3:5+ being examples). But "self" can hardly "cast out" self so to speak (cp Mk 3:24, 25, 26+). Such efforts to do so may impress others (and even deceptively "impress" oneself), for as Paul clearly warned "These (See **context** = Col 2:20, 21, 22+) are matters which have, to be sure, the **appearance** (they look good!) of wisdom in **self-made religion** and **self-abasement** (e.g., penance) and **severe treatment** of the body, but are of (absolutely) no value against fleshly indulgence (NLT paraphrases this last part = "they have no effect when it comes to conquering a person's evil thoughts and desires")"(Col 2:23+) We have no power to carry out a supernatural work (self-denial) and need to rely on the Holy Spirit for power. Yes, we must choose to deny self, but even the **desire** (or motivation) to choose to deny self ultimately comes not from self but from God. Mystery of mysteries. Note this is not saying let go and let God (quietism) but more like "Let's go and let God!". See Ro 8:13+, Php 2:12+, Php 2:13NLT+, Ezek 36:26, 27+ all of which show the Scriptural balance of believers working out what the Spirit works in! Is this somewhat difficult to comprehend? Absolutely (in my opinion)! But is it God's way? Absolutely! Is it possible to accomplish? Absolutely! But never perfectly in this lifetime (1Jn 1:8+). If you falter or fall, don't let your enemy bring you to the brink of despair (He "majors" in the 3D's - **Doubt, Despair** and **Discouragement** 2Co 2:11+, Ep 6:10+, Ep 6:11+ Ep 6:16+). Cry out to God. Lean hard on Him (Ps 3:3+ Ps 42:5+ Ps 43:5+). Remember David's wise words that "The sacrifices of God are **abroken spirit**; a **broken** and a **contrite heart**, O God, Thou wilt not despise." (Ps 51:17+)

**ILLUSTRATION - H A Ironside:** It was Arthur T. Pierson, I believe, who when visiting George Mueller asked him, "Mr. Mueller, would you be willing to tell me the secret of your great work and the wonderful things that God has done through you?" Mr. Mueller looked up for a moment, and then bowed his head lower and lower until it was down between his knees, and he was silent a moment or two, and then said, "Many years ago there came a day in my life when George Mueller died. As a young man I had a great many ambitions, but there came a day when I died to all these things, and I said, 'Henceforth, Lord Jesus, not my will but Thine,' and from that day God began to work in and through me." General Booth expressed it in a different way. J. Wilbur Chapman said to him, "Will you tell me the secret of the great work that you have accomplished?" He said, in his straightforward way, as he looked right into the face of Doctor Chapman with that eagle eye of his, "Dr. Chapman, when I was a lad of seventeen, I determined that God should have all there was of William Booth." That is it! When I come to the place where I am through with my own ambitions, when I can say, "None of self, but all of Thee," I understand what Paul means when he talks about "Bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus."

**So that** (2443) ([hina](#) - term of purpose) is used to express purpose or to introduce a conclusion, in this case the paradoxical conclusion that "death" resulted in manifestation of life.

**The life of Jesus also may be manifested** (clearly revealed, made to be seen) **in our body - Amplified** = "so that the [resurrection] life of Jesus also may be shown forth by and in our bodies." **Utlely** says it well that "As our earthly vessel is broken, the treasure inside becomes more visible (cf. 2Co 12:9–10)." This brings to mind the picture of "[walking posters](#)," people walking on the street with placards or boards on their front and back clearly advertising something such as the nearby restaurant. Think of yourself as "Posters for Jesus!"

**William MacDonald** writes that the **life of Jesus** obviously "does not here mean primarily His life as a Man on earth, but His present life as the exalted Son of God in heaven. How can the world see the life of Christ when He is not personally or physically present in the world today? The answer is that as we Christians suffer in the service of the Lord, His life is manifested in our body. ([Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**R Kent Hughes** comments that the manifestation of the **life of Jesus** "refers both to the here and now and to the life hereafter. Those who observed Paul saw the **life of Jesus** in the amazing power that was displayed through Paul's weakness as he was "not squashed" and "not befuddled" and "not abandoned" and "not knocked out." (2Co 4:8,9) In the same way, the life of Jesus is manifested in the lives of those who truly follow Him. And ultimately these realities will be full-blown in our final deliverance from mortality in the great resurrection of the dead. ([2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness. Preaching the Word](#))

**John MacArthur** explains that "The apostle's courageous, faithful, patient enduring of suffering manifested the power of the living Christ in his life... there was no explanation for the impact of Paul's ministry except that God's power flowed through

him. ([2Corinthians Commentary](#))

**Henry Alford** interprets this to indicate "that in our bodies, holding up against such troubles and preserved in such dangers, may be shown forth that mighty power of God which is a testimony that Jesus lives and is exalted to be a Prince and a Savior ([The New Testament for English Readers](#))

**Life (2222) (zoe)** in Scripture is used (1) to refer to **physical life** (Ro 8:38-+, 1Co 3:22, Php 1:20-+, James 4:14, etc) but more often to (2) to **supernatural life** in contrast to a life subject to eternal death (Jn 3:36, see all 43 uses of "eternal life" below). This quality of life speaks of fullness of life which alone belongs to God the Giver of life and is available to His children now (Ro 6:4-+, Ep 4:18-+) as well as in eternity future (Mk 10:30+, Titus 1:2+ on Eternal Life).

**Manifested (5319) (phaneroo)** from **phanerós** = manifest, visible, conspicuous in turn from **phaino** = give light; become visible in turn from **phos** = light) is literally "to bring to light" and primarily means "to make visible" or to cause to become visible. To clearly reveal, to cause to be seen or to make clear and/or known. And so the root idea of **phaneroo** is that there is an external manifestation to the senses which is clearly visible. For example, in Ro 1:19 God has made it known to all men through His creation that He exists (see Ro 1:20).

**Thayer** adds the thought that **phaneroo** means "to make manifest or visible or known what has been hidden or unknown, to manifest, whether by words, or deeds, or in any other way." In the context of 2Co 4:10, it follows that if we try to avoid "the dying of Jesus" in our bodies (i.e., shy away from being willing to suffer for His Name's sake), the One Who is in us (Col 1:27-+) will remain hidden from those we encounter, especially those who have never received Christ and are still dead in their trespasses and sins (Ep 2:1-+).

**Vine** notes that "To be manifested, in the Scriptural sense of the word, is more than to "appear." A person may "appear" in a false guise or without a disclosure of what he truly is; **to be manifested** is to be revealed in one's true character; this is especially the meaning of **phaneroo**, see, e.g., John 3:21; 1Co 4:5; 2Co 5:10, 11-+ ; Ep 5:13-+. ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#)) (Bolding added)

It is notable that almost 1/4 of the 44 NT uses of **phaneroo** are in the **Corinthian** epistles - 1Co4:5 2Co2:14 3:3 4:10,11 5:10,11 7:12 11:6

**In our body** - This envisions Paul's body functioning as a platform or stage for the resurrection life of Christ to be displayed as "the main act" to a dying world. This truth should put a new perspective on the suffering you are currently experiencing for the sake of His Name (and remember that Paul will cap off this chapter with the additional encouraging promise of 2Co 4:17-+, 2Co 4:18-+). Earlier Paul described himself as a "jar of clay" that contained a priceless treasure. In the present passage it is as if the clay pot must be broken for that treasure to be most clearly presented.

**Adam Clarke** on that the life of Jesus also may be manifested "That in our preservation, the success of our ministry, and the miracles we work, we might be able to give the fullest demonstration that Jesus is risen again from the dead; and that we are strengthened by him to do all these mighty works.

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**Dying Daily** - Are you in a situation where you are often misunderstood for your faith in Christ? Are you surrounded by people with a carping, critical spirit? Do you get little or no credit for the work you do in your church or for your family?

The proper response is a willingness to have a humble and submissive spirit—to die as Jesus did throughout His life. Yes, our Lord died once on the cross; but in another sense He also died every day. The cross was the culmination of an entire lifetime of dying. He was willing to be misunderstood and maligned, to give up home and comforts, to take the role of a servant. That was His "death." We must be willing to die in that way as well.

When we die with Him, God's gift to us is "the life of Jesus" (2Corinthians 4:10), the most attractive life ever lived. His beauty will gradually grow in us and become our beauty as well.

Remember this saying: "A picture is worth a thousand words." The portrait you draw of Jesus with your humble, tranquil presence in the face of grievous wrong is worth many words on the subject. Some may see the life of Jesus revealed in you and long to enter into that life. That's how dying daily can help bring life to another. - David H. Roper (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Dear Jesus, take my heart and hand,  
And grant me this, I pray:

That I through Your sweet love may grow  
More like You day by day.  
—Garrison

**2 Corinthians 4:11** For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek** : aei gar hemeis oi zontes (PAPMPN) eis thanaton paradidometha (1PPPI) dia Iesoun, ina kai e zoe tou Iesou phanerothe (3SAPS) en te thnete sarki hemon.

**Amplified**: For we who live are constantly [experiencing] being handed over to death for Jesus' sake, that the [resurrection] life of Jesus also may be evidenced through our flesh which is liable to death. ([Lockman](#))

**Barclay**: For all through our lives we are continually handed over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life also which Jesus gives may be clear for all to see in our mortal flesh. ([Westminster Press](#))

**God's Word**: While we are alive, we are constantly handed over to death for Jesus' sake so that the life of Jesus is also shown in our mortal nature. ([GWT](#))

**Easy English**: Because, whilst we are alive, we are always in danger of death. This is because we serve Jesus. As a result, people may see his life in our human bodies.

**ESV**: For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ([ESV](#))

**KJV**: For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

**NET**: For we who are alive are constantly being handed over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our mortal body. ([NET Bible](#))

**NIV**: For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. ([NIV - IBS](#))

**NLT**: Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips**: Yes, we who are living are always being exposed to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be plainly seen in our mortal lives. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Weymouth**: For we, alive though we are, are continually surrendering ourselves to death for the sake of Jesus, so that in this mortal nature of ours it may also be clearly shown that Jesus lives.

**Wuest**: for, as for us, we who are living are perpetually being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake in order that the life of Jesus might be clearly and openly shown in our mortal body. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Young's Literal**: for always are we who are living delivered up to death because of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our dying flesh,

- **Are constantly**: Ps 44:22 141:7 Ro 8:36 1Co 15:31,49
- **Our**: 2Co 5:4 Ro 8:11 1Co 15:53,54
- 2 Corinthians 4 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

1 Corinthians 4:9 For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

**Utley** comments that "Theological insight into this verse can be seen in 1 Cor. 4:9, where the Apostles are on exhibition both to angels and men. Believers also are on exhibition to a lost world and the angelic world (cf. Eph. 2:7; 3:10)."

**REITERATION OF THE TRUTH**



## OF THE DEATH THAT GIVES LIFE

Continues the thought from verse 10. Paul acknowledges the reality that any of his daily trials could have resulted in physical death (and finally did result in his martyrdom). However, through his weaknesses and sufferings (see who God uses - 1Co 1:26-29), Christ's resurrection power and life in Him (cp Gal 2:20) was put on display and became instrumental in bringing spiritual life to the Corinthians. Even as a precious stone is best seen against a black background, the precious life of Christ in us the hope of glory (Col 1:27) is best seen against the dark background of death.

**For (gar)** is explanatory. "*Explanation and confirmation of 2Co 4:10*" (Alford). In a sense Paul is repeating himself as he continues to amplify his teaching on **life** coming from **death**. In fact, **Bernard** writes "The key to the interpretation of 2Co 4:10 is to observe that 2Co 4:11 is the explanation of it; the two verses are strictly parallel: "our mortal flesh" of 2Co 4:11 is only a more emphatic and literal way of describing "our body" of 2Co 4:10. ([2 Corinthians 4](#))

**William MacDonald** is correct when he says that life out of death "is one of the deepest principles of our existence. The meat we eat and by which we live comes through the death of animals. It is so in the spiritual realm. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." The more the church is persecuted and afflicted and hunted and pursued, the more Christianity spreads. And yet it is difficult for us to accept this truth. When violence comes to a servant of the Lord, we normally think of it as a tragedy. Actually, this is God's normal way of dealing. It is not the exception. Constant exposure to death for Jesus' sake is the divine manner in which the life of Jesus is manifested in our mortal bodies. ([Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Homer Kent** - In this parallel expression, Paul's meaning in the preceding verse is more fully explained. ([A Heart Opened Wide - Studies in 2 Corinthians](#); see also [2 Corinthians 2:14-4:18 The Glory of Christian Ministry - An Analysis](#))

**We who live are constantly (aei) being delivered (paradidomi)** like a prisoner to the executioner, (cf 2Co 1:9) **over to death for Jesus' sake** - Literally "the living". **Constantly** is first in the Greek text for emphasis (parallels "always" in 2Co 4:10). In this passage Paul is referring to physical life, and yet to be sure he is also experiencing the divine paradox of living life to the full, by allowing the **dying of Jesus** to continually take place. **Being delivered** is in the present tense emphasizing that this is a continual process in Paul's life (deliverance over to the power of death) (cp his statement "**I die daily**" 1Co 15:31+ = Daily Paul was exposed to the possibility of literal death. While the daily exposure to **physical death** is the **primary sense**, it certainly does not exclude that He also died daily to self. Cp Lk 9:23 where taking up the Cross speaks of death to self and possibly even physical death)

**Utley** - The call to ministry is a call to intentional daily death to self (cf. 2Co 5:14-15; Ro 6:7; 1 Cor. 15:31; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:8, 10; 1 John 3:16). This attitude is the reversal of the fall of mankind. It is evidence of Christlikeness, which is the restoration of the image of God in humanity.

**Murray Harris** has a slightly different interpretation of **constantly (aei) being delivered (paradidomi) over to death for Jesus' sake** than Utley - He faced perilous hazards every hour and death every day, as he says in 1Co 15:30, 31 (cf. 1 Cor 4:9). This contextual interpretation of the phrase seems preferable to understanding it as a reference to the Christian's once-for-all baptismal identification with Christ in his death (Ro 6:3-5), or his daily mortification of his sinful nature (Gal 5:24; cf. Luke 9:23), or the gradual weakening of his physical powers while serving Christ. ([Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

**Death** is personified as a power to which Paul was given over continually. He allowed himself to be continually delivered over to suffering. This was costly in many ways and he could have easily reasoned "I've had enough. It's time to retire." But Paul kept the goal of prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus continually in his vision as he ran with endurance, tired yes, but giving up, never.

**MacDonald** - This thought of life from death is continued in verse 11. It is one of the deepest principles of our existence. The meat we eat and by which we live comes through the death of animals. It is so in the spiritual realm. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." The more the church is persecuted and afflicted and hunted and pursued, the more Christianity spreads. And yet it is difficult for us to accept this truth. When violence comes to a servant of the Lord, we normally think of it as a tragedy. Actually, this is God's normal way of dealing. It is not the exception. Constant exposure to death for Jesus' sake is the divine manner in which the life of Jesus is manifested in our mortal bodies.

**For Jesus' sake** emphasizes we need to Make sure you are suffering for the right reason. Jesus is not just *thereason* for the *season*, but is also to be the *reason* for the *suffering!* (see "for My name's sake" = Acts 9:16+, Php 1:29+ = "but also to suffer for His sake")

**Utley on for Jesus' sake** - Our ministry burdens do not benefit Christ, but they are ours because we follow Him. As they persecuted Him, they will persecute us. However, it is also true that the things we suffer as Christ's followers are the very things that can help us grow more and more like Him.

See [related note](#) above under "always carrying about...".

**Homer Kent** - As ministers of Christ he and the other apostles were continually exposed to the danger of physical death ([paradidomi](#) in the present tense). This is what Paul means when he writes of carrying about in his body "the dying of Jesus." He had learned at the very beginning of his Christian life that Jesus regarded persecution directed against Christians as actually against Him (Acts 9:4-5; cf. Col. 1:24). The purpose, however, was not to undergo suffering for suffering's sake, but that "the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." The proclamation of the new life in Christ became more clearly demonstrated when it was set against such a dramatic background. The eternal life provided by Jesus, who said "I am ... the life" (John 14:6), enabled His messengers to be victorious in spite of physical weakness, and would ultimately make them triumphant even though many of them would experience a martyr's death. ([A Heart Opened Wide - Studies in 2 Corinthians](#); see also [2 Corinthians 2:14-4:18 The Glory of Christian Ministry - An Analysis](#))

**Beet on we who live** "in contrast to Christ who died, and to the death into which day by day they are being given up. They were living victims of death. ([2 Corinthians 4](#))

**Clarke** - And yet, although we are preserved alive, we are in such continual dangers that we carry our life in our hands, and are constantly in the spirit of sacrifice. But the life-the preserving power, of Christ is manifest in our continual support.

**Live** (2198) (**zao**) can refer to natural physical life (as opposed to death), to return to life from death (Mt 9:18, Acts 9:41, 20:12 Re 20:4, of Jesus Lk 24:5, Acts 1:3), to recovery from illness (Mt 5:23, Jn 4:50), to the sphere in which one lives (Acts 17:28), to one's conduct (how they live) (2Ti 3:12, cp Ro 6:2), to supernatural life (Jn 11:25, 26), of abundant life lived in the Spirit of Christ (Gal 2:20).

**Constantly** (104) (**aei**) means always, forever (2Co 6:10, 1Pe 3:15). Aei can also describe a "duration of time as episodic" (BDAG) or as a frequently recurring action as here in 2Co 4:11. Incessantly.

**Aei** - 7x in 7v - Acts 7:51; 2 Cor 4:11; 6:10; Titus 1:12; He 3:10; 1Pe 3:15; 2Pe 1:12. **NAS** = always(6), constantly(1).

**Aei** - 5x in the non-apocryphal Septuagint - Esther 3:13 8:12; Ps 95:10; Isa 42:14; 51:13

**Delivered** (3860) (**paradidomi** from **para** = alongside, beside, to the side of, over to + **didomi** = to give) conveys the basic meaning of to give over from one's hand to someone or something, especially to give over to the power of another as illustrated by Judas handing Jesus over to the authorities (Mt. 20:18-19; Mk. 10:33). Uses in Corinthian letters - 1 Co. 5:5 = "I have decided to **deliver** such a one to Satan"; 1 Co. 11:2 = "hold firmly to the traditions, just as I **delivered** them to you."; 1 Co. 11:23; 1 Co. 13:3; 1 Co. 15:3 = "For I **delivered** to you as of first importance what I also received"; 1 Co. 15:24 = "He hands over the kingdom (Millennium) to the God and Father, "; 2 Co. 4:11

Why was Paul constantly **delivered over to death**? For the same reason John was on the Isle of Patmos "I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. (Rev 1:9+)

**THOUGHT:** If you are proclaiming the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus, you may not be on the Isle of Patmos but doubtless you have experienced significant spiritual warfare for the enemy hates when a preacher or teacher is diligent to handle accurately the Word of Truth (2Ti 2:15-+)

**Jesus** used **paradidomi** in a similar statement about **LIFE** coming out of **DEATH**. The difference of course is that when Jesus was given over to the power of death, it was a one time event (the Cross)...

For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to **be delivered** (**paradidomi** - also used in a similar context in Mk 10:33) into the hands of men, and they will kill Him (**DEATH**); and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later (**LIFE**)." (Mk 9:31, cp use of **paradidomi** in parallel passages = Mt 20:18, 19, Lk 18:31-33, Lk 24:7)

**Jesus** also presented an agricultural metaphor to emphasize the paradoxical spiritual principle that **LIFE** comes out of **DEATH**

Truly, truly (Amen, Amen), I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (Jn 12:24)

**Comment:** In context (shortly before His crucifixion) Jesus was metaphorically describing His crucifixion which would provide the way of salvation by which many might receive eternal life.

**Wiersbe:** Jesus used the image of a seed to illustrate the great spiritual truth that there can be no glory

without suffering, no fruitful life without death, no victory without surrender. Of itself, a seed is weak and useless; but when it is planted, it "dies" and becomes fruitful. There is both beauty and bounty when a seed "dies" and fulfills its purpose. If a seed could talk, it would no doubt complain about being put into the cold, dark earth. But the only way it can achieve its goal is by being planted. God's children are like seeds. They are small and insignificant, but they have life in them, God's life. However, that life can never be fulfilled unless we yield ourselves to God and permit Him to "plant us." We must die to self so that we may live unto God (Rom. 6; Gal. 2:20). The only way to have a fruitful life is to follow Jesus Christ in death, burial, and resurrection. In these words, Jesus challenges us today to surrender our lives to Him. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary - New Testament. 1989. Victor](#))

## **THE MARK OF TRUE MINISTRY NOT STARS, BUT SCARS**

In light of what it cost Paul, **Warren Wiersbe** makes a cogent comment "It has been my experience that many churches are ignorant of the price a pastor pays to be faithful to the Lord in serving His people. This section is one of three sections in 2 Corinthians devoted to a listing of Paul's sufferings. The other two are 2Co 6:1-10 and 2Co 11:16-12:10. The test of a true ministry is not stars, but scars... How can we keep from giving up? By remembering that we are privileged to have the treasure of the Gospel in our vessels of clay!"

**Guzik** adds that "Paul knew the spiritual riches that he brought to the Corinthian Christians came, in part, through the death-like suffering he endured in ministry. God made Paul more effective in ministry through his suffering. Sometimes we think that if someone is really spiritual, or really used of God, they will live in a constant state of "victory" that means life will always be easy. Understanding what Paul writes here not only tells us that God's servants may experience death-like suffering, but that God has a good and glorious purpose in allowing it. **G. Campbell Morgan** tells the story of a great young preacher who was impressive early on in his ministry. Once he had the young man to speak at his church, and after the sermon Morgan asked his wife, "Wasn't that wonderful?" She quietly replied, "Yes, but it will be more wonderful when he has suffered." Morgan adds: "Well, he suffered, and it was more powerful." ([2 Corinthians 4](#))

### **Living daily for Christ Requires dying daily to self.**

**So that** (*hina*) again introduces a purpose clause, in this case the reason for the suffering. It has a high and holy purpose. As someone has well said "There is no abundant life without first an abasing death."

**The life of Jesus also may be manifested** (revealed, clearly shown, be made visible - [phaneroo](#)) **in our mortal flesh - Amplified** = "that the [resurrection] life of Jesus also may be evidenced through our flesh which is liable to death." That others may see Christ in Paul the hope (absolute assurance of future good) of glory. **In our mortal flesh** means in real lives of real people who really suffered for Christ.

[KJV Bible Commentary](#) makes an interesting analogy "A diamond is best seen against a black background. The brilliance of the life that is in Christ Jesus is best seen against the background of death."

**Alford**...God exhibits **Death** in the *living*, that He may exhibit **Life** in the *dying*. ([The New Testament for English Readers](#))

**Wiersbe** comments that "Sometimes God permits our vessels ("clay pots" 2Co 4:7) to be jarred so that some of the treasure will spill out and enrich others. Suffering reveals not only the weakness of man but also the glory of God. Paul presented a series of paradoxes in this paragraph (1Co 4:7-12):

**earthen vessels—power of God;  
the dying of Jesus—the life of Jesus;  
death working—life working.**

The natural mind cannot understand this kind of spiritual truth and therefore cannot understand why Christians triumph over suffering. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary - New Testament. 1989. Victor](#))

**Mortal** (2349) (**thnetos**) means that which is subject to death, destined to die (the destiny of everyone because of Adam's sin - Ro 5:12). It is interesting to note that in the ancient Greco-Roman "the basic difference between humans and deities relates to the mortality of the former and the immortality of the latter" (BDAG), except that their "gods" were really no gods at all, demonstrating the utter foolishness of rejecting the clear natural revelation of the Creator (cp Ro 1:22, 23).

**Thnetos** - 6x in 6v in the **NAS** and all are rendered "mortal" in the **NAS**.

Romans 6:12+ Therefore do not let sin reign in your **mortal** body so that you obey its lusts,

Romans 8:11+ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your **mortal** bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

1Corinthians 15:53+ For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this **mortal** must put on immortality. **54** But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this **mortal** will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.

2 Corinthians 4:11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our **mortal** flesh.

2 Corinthians 5:4+ For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is **mortal** will be swallowed up by life.

**Flesh** (4561)(**sarx**) can have several meanings in Scripture depending on the context but in this context clearly refers to the physical body.

## 2 Corinthians 4:12 So death works in us, but life in you. (NASB: Lockman)

**Greek** : hoste o thanatos en hemin energeitai, (3SPMI) e de zoe en humin.

**Amplified**: Thus death is actively at work in us, but [it is in order that our] life [may be actively at work] in you. ([Lockman](#))

**Barclay**: The result is that death operates in us, but life operates in you. ([Westminster Press](#))

**God's Word**: Death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. ([GWT](#))

**Easy English**: So death is our experience, but life is your experience.

**ESV**: So death is at work in us, but life in you. ([ESV](#))

**KJV**: So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

**NET**: As a result, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. ([NET Bible](#))

**NIV**: So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. ([NIV - IBS](#))

**NLT**: So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips**: We are always facing death, but this means that you know more and more of life. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Weymouth**: Thus we are constantly dying, while you are in full enjoyment of Life.

**Wuest**: So that death is operative in us but the life is operative in you. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

**Young's Literal**: so that, the death indeed in us doth work, and the life in you.

- **death**: 2Co 12:15 13:9 Ac 20:24 1Co 4:10 Php 2:17,30 1Jn 3:16
- 2 Corinthians 4 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE PARADOX OF LIFE OUT OF DEATH

Paul's example of suffering was meant to bring about the same resurrection life in the saints at Corinth. The paradox of physical suffering, yielding spiritual life. (cp 2Co 1:5, 6 - similar thought in Ep 3:1, Col 1:24, 2Ti 2:10).

**So death works** ([energeo](#)) **in us, but life in you** - **Amplified** - "Thus death is actively at work in us, but [it is in order that our] life [may be actively at work] in you." **Works** is in the present tense emphasizing the effective work of death is an ongoing process in Paul's life and included physical persecution for Paul and spiritual life in those to whom he preaches the gospel. **Death** was like a "busy mortician" during the deadly [bubonic plague](#) and is continually at work. Most commentators agree that "us" is used "editorially"

to refer to himself. Paul was continually willing to **die to self** that others might experience **life in Christ**, specifically the Resurrected Life of the resurrected Christ, the Source of present grace (2Co 13:14, 2Ti 2:1) and future glory. Furthermore, it was Paul's belief in a future resurrection which made him willing to carry about in his body the dying of Jesus, willing even to **die daily** (1Co 15:31+)

**MacArthur** - The phrase **death works in us** refers back to the reality of 1Co 4:10, 11 that Paul faced death every day. He literally looked death in the face regularly so he could bring the message of eternal life to the Corinthians; he was even willing to die physically so that they could live spiritually....It was Paul's joyous privilege to suffer in bringing the gospel to others, who then became the fruit of his courageous endurance. ([2 Corinthians Commentary](#))

**P. E. Hughes** adds "It is the unconquerable life of the risen Jesus within that enables His servants willingly and perpetually to be handed over to death for His sake, in order that the same life of Christ may be kindled in the hearts of others, enabling them to win others. This is the chain of faith ... unbroken through the ages." ([The Second Epistle to the Corinthians](#))

**Brian Bell** - When we die He lives; when we lose He wins; when we are weak He's strong; when we are dependent He is powerful. This is paradox at its finest! ([Earthen Vessels](#) - older sermon; [Earthen Vessels](#))

**Kent Hughes** comments that "Paul concludes this astonishing paragraph with an unexpected twist because, by the way Paul has been structuring his thought, we would expect him to say something like, "So death is at work in us, but life is also at work in us." But surprisingly, he says, "So death is at work in us, but life in you." **This is, of course, the great principle of the cross. Christ died that we might live.** The great exchange of the gospel is: Christ's life for ours. And those who are used most to spread the good news of Christ embrace death as the operational principle of ministry. When George Muller, pastor and provider for thousands of children, was asked his secret, he hung his head and said, "There was a day when I died." Then he hung it lower and said, "Died to George Muller." ([2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness. Preaching the Word](#))

**Adam Clarke** paraphrases Paul as saying "We apostles are in continual danger, and live a dying life." ([2 Corinthians 4](#))

**Jesus** spoke of the paradoxical principle of **death** birthing **life** in John 12 (speaking of His crucifixion)

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him. (Jn 12:24-26)

"Ministry that costs nothing, accomplishes nothing."

-- J H Jowett

**Beet** explains that **death** is personified in a sense "In the plots and attacks of enemies Death was active, stretching out its hand to take them. And in their spared life, preserved by God's power and spent in proclaiming the Gospel, the abstract principle of Life was at work among their hearers. The preachers daily felt themselves sinking into the grave: and their daily deliverance was daily working eternal life among their converts. ([2 Corinthians 4](#))

In allowing **death** to work in him, **Paul** was living out John's exhortation in his first epistle "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and **we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.**" (1Jn 3:16+)

**Kruse** explains that "Daily exposure to forces leading to death is Paul's experience, but accompanying that is a continual manifestation of the life of Jesus in the apostle, here not only to sustain him, but to work through him, bringing life to others. ([Full text of the Tyndale NT Commentary on 2 Corinthians](#))

**William MacDonald** comments on the **work of death** in Paul writing that "In order for Paul ever to go to Corinth with the gospel, he had to suffer untold hardships. But it was worth it all, because they had trusted in the Lord Jesus and now had eternal life. Paul's physical suffering and loss meant spiritual gain to others. Robertson says, "His dying was working out for the good of those who were benefited by his ministry." Oftentimes we have the tendency to cry out to the Lord in sickness, asking Him to deliver us from it, so that we might serve Him better. Perhaps we should sometimes thank God for such afflictions in our lives, and glory in our infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon us. ([Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Albert Barnes** on **death works in us** "We are exposed to death. The preaching of the gospel exposes us to trials which may be regarded as death working in us. Death has an energy over us, (*energeitai* = is [continually] at work, is active, or operates; it is constantly employed in inflicting pains on us, and subjecting us to privation and trials. This is a strong and emphatic mode of saying that they were always exposed to death. We are called to serve and glorify the Redeemer, as it were, by repeated deaths and by constantly dying. ([2 Corinthians 4](#))

**Paul** describes his willingness to die to self and to suffer for the sake of Christ in Acts 20 affirming that

I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself (He was willing to die for Jesus. He knew he was not his own but belonged to Him cp 1Co 6:19, 20), in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God (**Ed**: The Gospel that effectively works **life in you**). (Acts 20:24+)

**But life (works) in you** - Presents the dramatic life and death contrast. So even in view of death being an ever present possibility for Paul, et al, the prospect of death brought life, spiritual life to the Corinthians.

**Barnes** explains that "You live as the effect of our being constantly exposed to death. You reap the advantage of all our exposure to trials, and of all our sufferings. ([2 Corinthians 4](#))

**Kent Hughes** comments that "This weakness-power principle was, in effect, the life-death principle of Christ himself—so that Paul was carrying in his body the dying of Jesus with the result that the life of Jesus was manifested in his mortal flesh. The effect was that as death was at work in him, life was at work in his hearers. Paul's weakness was definitely the ground of God's power. ([2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness. Preaching the Word](#))

**KJV Bible Commentary** - Through a ministry of weakness and suffering Paul was able to accomplish a very positive ministry in Corinth (cf. 1Co 2:1 2 3 4). ([KJV Bible Commentary:](#))

**Wiersbe** - If we die to self, it is so that the life of Christ might be revealed in us. If we go through trials, it is so that Christ might be glorified. And all of this is for the sake of others. As we serve Christ, death works in us—but life works in those to whom we minister.

**Death** (2288) (**thanatos** from **thnesko** = to die) describes a permanent cessation of all vital functions. In this context Paul speaks of death as a picture of the suffering and afflictions he is experiencing for the sake of Christ. Death speaks of a separation (as of the soul from the physical body). Spiritually, death describes separation from God (Jn 5:24). The second death (eternal damnation in the Lake of fire) (Rev 2:11, Re 20:6).

**Works** ( 1754)(**energeo** from **en** = in + **érgon** = work. English = energetic) means to work effectively to cause something to happen. To energize, to operate, to work effectually in. It means power in exercise, and is used only of superhuman power. To work energetically, effectively and/or efficiently. To put forth energy. To be at work. To produce results. **Energeo** describes active, efficient, effective working. Paul is saying that the power of God's word exerts effective, energetic power in believers. This activity put forth in an individual energizes him to the doing of certain things intended by the one who is doing the energizing.

**Life** (2222) (**zoe**) in Scripture is used (1) to refer to **physical life** (Ro 8:38+, 1Co 3:22, Php 1:20+, James 4:14, etc) but more often to (2) to **supernatural life** in contrast to a life subject to eternal death (Jn 3:36, see all 43 uses of "eternal life" below). This quality of life speaks of fullness of life which alone belongs to God the Giver of life and is available to His children now (Ro 6:4+, Ep 4:18+) as well as in eternity future (Mk 10:30, Titus 1:2+ on Eternal Life).

Some commentators like **Guzik** feel that some of what Paul was saying in this last section had a touch of irony (I'm not sure about this interpretation but will mention it for your pondering) -- Here is the irony. The Corinthian Christians despised Paul because of his great sufferings, and because of what they thought was their great lives of "victory." But they did not see that their lives of victory were only made possible because God had made Paul such an effective servant through suffering! ([2 Corinthians 4](#))

**Henry Alford** (I agree with his assessment) argues against the ironic sense noting that "Chrysostom., Calvin, al., take the verse ironically, "*so we have all the danger, and you all the profit*", but such a sentiment seems alien from the spirit of the passage. Meyer, as unfortunately, limits **zoe** to natural life, whereas (as above) the context plainly evinces spiritual life to be meant, not merely natural. In Ro 8:10, 11, the vivifying influence of His Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is spoken of as extending to the body also; here, the upholding influence of Him who delivers and preserves the body, is spoken of as vivifying the whole man: LIFE, in both places, being the higher and spiritual life, including the lower and natural. 'And, in our relative positions,—of this life, ye are the examples,—a church of believers, alive to God through Christ in your various vocations, and not called on to be exhibited in an arena [cf. 1Co 4:9; He 10:33] as we are, who are (not indeed excluded from that life,—nay it flows from us to you,—but are) more especially examples of conformity to the death of our common Lord:—in Whom death works.' ([The New Testament for English Readers](#))