

**2Cor. 4:1 ¶ Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;**

**2Cor. 4:2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.**

I really like the NLT translation for these verses; they express the intent in simple language very clearly.

“And so, since God in his mercy has given us this wonderful ministry, we never give up. We reject all shameful and underhanded methods. We do not try to trick anyone, and we do not distort the word of God. We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know that.”

Oh, that all those who claim to be teachers of God's word today embraced the same mindset.

Paul is boldly declaring that he does not teach from a personal agenda; He teaches the truth as set forth in the word of God with a pure heart. He is not afraid of public scrutiny. He knows that honest men will not be able to deny that he is teaching the truth as declared by God.

I can't help but wonder at the thought processes of those who distort the truth of God's word to their own purposes as well as those who allow themselves to be deceived by their teaching. In reference to false teachers, I think many just become puppets in the hands of the enemy through the lust of power, position and/or fame. I think there are others who so want to justify their own sinful lifestyles that they are motivated by the desire for acceptance without stigma. There are others who are motivated through a desire to destroy the body of Christ from within because they reject the idea of a sovereign God. Most people who fall for their false teachings are deceived because of lack of knowledge of the word of God, and/or they are easily duped through the charisma of the teacher and/or his skillful use of language and/or ability to manipulate people's emotions.

**2Cor. 4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:**

**2Cor. 4:4 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.**

These verses give support to some of my thoughts from the previous section. I thought it was interesting to note that the Greek for the word *hid* made reference to a root meaning “to steal.” The “god of this world” is a reference to Satan.

Ephesians 6:11-13 “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Those who reject or don't grasp the truth of God's word are actually having their understanding stolen by the enemy. They have allowed themselves to be susceptible to his lies through his ability to utilize their weaknesses in the flesh that make them most vulnerable—the desire for wealth, the desire for healing

from physical infirmity, the sense of elitism of belonging to a special group, the self esteem associated with acts of charity, the desire to be in control of one's own destiny through the spirit of pride that does not want to be in submission to God, etc. Paul identifies this group as the "lost," those who are headed for destruction.

Paul is again emphasizing that Christ is "the image of God," God in flesh.

**2Cor. 4:5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.**

This scripture states two defining factors of one who teaches the truth according to God's word.

- His message is centered on exalting Christ Jesus as Lord; he is not interesting in drawing attention to himself.
- He presents himself as a servant of the Lord—not one to be served.

**2Cor. 4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**

Paul is making reference to Genesis 1. It was long after my first journal on Genesis before I learned that something had happened to the initial creation that resulted in waste, confusion and ruin (from the Hebrew). (See journal on Genesis 1 for more detail.) I now believe this to be a reference to the resulting impact of the fall of Lucifer and one-third of the angels. I think Paul is saying that just as God caused the light to shine out of that darkness into a new creation, so too has He caused the light to shine into the darkness of the hearts of fallen men as He creates them anew through the ministry of the Holy Spirit made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That light reveals to us the glory of God as embodied by Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:3 "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;"

**2Cor. 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.**

I think Paul is saying that when we serve God in faith and obedience, it gives glory to God because it testifies to His supernatural empowerment through the Holy Spirit, the evidence of our new life in Christ—the treasure contained in these earthen vessels we call a body. Scripture is clear that we can do nothing that accomplishes eternal good or produces spiritual fruit except through God's empowerment.

John 15:4-5 "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

Anything we do that shines the light of God's love into this fallen world gives testimony to His power working in and through us.

**2Cor. 4:8 ¶ We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;**

**2Cor. 4:9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;**

We Christians are living in a fallen world, a world currently ruled by the “god of this world,” “the prince of the power of the air,” Satan.

2Corinthians 4:4 “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not,”

Ephesians 2:2 “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:”

The Lord Jesus specifically identified this power as Satan when He spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus.

Acts 26:16-18 “But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”

Our lives in this world will bring trouble, perplexity, persecution and times when we might wonder if we can keep on going. In Christ, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to respond to these times of testing with confidence that the Lord only allows into our lives what we can bear and what He intends to use for good.

1Corinthians 10:13 “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

I truly don't see how those who don't know Christ as Savior cope in such times of trouble, fear, injustice and heartache. Where do they find hope?

**2Cor. 4:10 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.**

This verse was a hard one for me to get started on. I'm thinking that in context with the previous verses it is a reference to the life that Jesus led in the flesh and in which He was subject to these same hardships—trouble, perplexity, persecution and extreme suffering. I had a hard time applying my understanding of perplexity to the Lord Jesus, but it comes from a root word that references a journey. So I would liken that to the life journey that was specific to Jesus—the temptation in the wilderness, the attempts to kill Him, the betrayal of a friend, the rejection of His people, and the persecution and humiliation of the cross. As we serve the Lord in faith and obedience, we are going to experience these types of attacks on our faith and be given the opportunity to let His life in us be seen by others in how we respond.

**2Cor. 4:11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.**

This verse seems to be an exclamation point to the previous one. Paul experienced great testing in his life in all of these areas. In his ministry he certainly died daily to self in order to be able to endure all that he suffered because of his ministry "for Jesus' sake." Every Christian who wants his/her life to show forth the power of God at work in his/her life has to be willing to do the same. Most of us will not be called upon to suffer to the same extent as so many of those in the early church did, but we need to be prepared for whatever the Lord might allow us to suffer in accomplishing His will. The more we learn to die to self and yield to the leading of the Spirit, the more likely that others will see the life of Christ shining through us.

**2Cor. 4:12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.**

I think Paul is saying that the sufferings we endure as a Christian are meant to encourage and strengthen others in the faith. It is actually how he began this letter.

2Corinthians 1:3-6 "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation."

**2Cor. 4:13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; 2Cor. 4:14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.**

"as it is written" – Where? Psalm 116.

Psalm 116:10 "I believed, therefore have I spoken...."

Paul is declaring that the Spirit that empowered the faith of the psalmist is the same Spirit empowering the faith of every believer in Christ Jesus. That faith is what inspired the psalmist and Paul and continues to inspire other believers to testify publicly about their faith. This faith is rooted in the confident expectation of resurrection to eternal life because its source is the same as "He" which raised up the Lord Jesus—God the Father.

Romans 10:9 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that **God hath raised him from the dead**, thou shalt be saved."

Galatians 1:1 "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and **God the Father, who raised him from the dead;**)"

Ephesians 1:17, 19-20 "That **the God of our Lord Jesus Christ**, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the

knowledge of him...And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he **raised him from the dead**, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*...."

1Thessalonians 1:9-10 "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true **God**; And to wait for his Son from heaven, **whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus**, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

**2Cor. 4:15** For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

This verse seems to echo the truth of verse 5—that Paul’s ministry is focused on serving the body of believers so as to encourage actions that produce fruit that honors and glorifies God in gratitude to the Savior, Jesus Christ.

“Abundant grace” is a reference to the increasing influence of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the believers as evidenced by the fruit produced. When God’s people are truly thankful and obedient, the result will always serve to glorify God.

**2Cor. 4:16** For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.

Paul is saying that although one day this body of flesh will die as a result of the sufferings we endure in this life, we have a daily renewable source of energy through the Holy Spirit to strengthen us to continue to share the gospel and the love of God with others. This verse reminds me of a verse in Lamentations.

Lamentations 3:22-23 "It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. **They are new every morning**: great is thy faithfulness."

**2Cor. 4:17** For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;

**2Cor. 4:18** While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

With these verses Paul puts into perspective the troubles and suffering that the Christian will experience in this life compared to the glory that we will experience for eternity. That glory he describes as “far more exceeding.” In other words, our sufferings will pale in comparison to the reward that awaits us; in fact, I seem to remember a verse in Isaiah that implies we won’t even remember them.

Isaiah 65:17 "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."

Verse 18 echoes the thoughts Paul expressed in his letter to the Colossians.

Colossians 3:1-2 "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

For Paul to describe his afflictions as “light” gives testimony to the faith that gives voice to those words. In chapter 11 he details quite a listing of those sufferings.

2Corinthians 11:22-27 “Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”