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2 Corinthians

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18

In verse 16, Paul said that "...when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away." As a word to those who are in Christ, he shows that this is already true. For us there is no veil - "But we all, with unveiled face..." Instead of a veil, we are "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord." It seems rather difficult to scholars exactly how to translate this. Some say "contemplate the Lord's glory," "can see and reflect the glory," "beholding as in a glass the glory," "reflecting like bright mirrors the glory," and so on.

However, the Bible should always be interpreted with the Bible. In doing so, the difficulty will clear up. The word for "beholding" here is *katoptrizó*. It means "beholding as in a mirror." It is used only this once in the New Testament and therefore Paul has specific intent on choosing this word instead of a word comparable to, say, 1 Corinthians 13:12. By going back to the account of Moses, we can determine what the intent is. In Exodus 33, we read this exchange between Moses and the Lord -

"And he said, 'Please, show me Your glory.'

¹⁹ Then He said, 'I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.' ²⁰ But He said, 'You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.'" Exodus 33:18-20

In this, we are told that man "cannot see" the face of the Lord and live. However, in Jesus we are told that He is "the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3). Putting the thoughts together then, Paul has been contrasting the Law of Moses with the new covenant. Therefore, he is saying that when we see the gospel message, we are as if "looking into a mirror" which reflects the glory of God. In Christ we behold His glory. We cannot say we are looking directly at the Lord because He is not present with us at this time. Therefore, it is the truth of Christ that we are beholding in the message of Christ.

Therefore, the translation of the NKJV is correct. At this time, we are "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord" each time we contemplate the gospel or (now because it is written) search out the New Testament Scriptures. And, in the searching out of Christ in this way, Paul says that we "are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory."

Just as Moses' face reflected the glory of God when he came before the Israelites, so we are being transformed. It is not a physical transformation, but a spiritual one. As we conform to the prescriptions of the New Testament, and as we follow as disciples of Christ, we are being spiritually transformed into that same image; the image of Christ, thus, "from glory to glory." We behold the glory and it transforms us to that glory.

Paul finishes this thought and the chapter with the words, "just as by the Spirit of the Lord." It is the Spirit who calls, it is the Spirit who seals, and it is the Spirit who sanctifies. As we pursue Christ from glory to glory, the Spirit is accomplishing His role in the process to conform us to the image of God in Christ.

Life application: To know God, you must know Jesus Christ. To know Jesus Christ, you must know your Bible. If you claim Jesus while circumventing the Bible, then how do you know you're not following a false Christ? Read your Bible.

Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. 2 Corinthians 4:1

In the previous chapter, Paul noted that he and the apostles were ministers of the new covenant (3:6); that it was a ministry of the Spirit (3:8); and that it was a ministry of righteousness (3:9). This is the ministry that he is speaking of. Everything about it is superior to the old covenant which was received by Moses. This ministry, as he explained, is one of revealing the surpassing glory of God that will not fade away.

However, his next words show that he is not bragging about the marvelous honor that has been bestowed upon them. Rather, in the reception of the ministry, mercy had been bestowed. As fallen men, they were inherently unworthy of the position and status that they now bore. Paul alludes to this in 1 Timothy 1-

"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry, ¹³ although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief." 1 Timothy 1:12, 13

In the mercy poured out on him and the others, they were enabled to "not lose heart." On several occasions, Paul speaks of standing strong in the faith and he encourages others to act likewise. One example of this is found in Galatians 6 -

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." Galatians 6:9

The term to "lose heart" implies being worn out or wearied to the point that one is no longer effective. But Paul knew that with the reception of God's mercy came the inner strength to endure the challenges that came with the ministry. Two

other instances of the use of this word by Paul are found in Ephesians 3:13 and 2 Thessalonians 3:13.

Paul was constantly encouraging those who had been saved, knowing that like him, they had been given everything necessary to continue their walk of faith to the end.

Life application: If God has saved you, then He has a purpose for you in His church. If He has a purpose for you in His church, then He has also enabled you to meet that purpose. Don't shrink back from the honor bestowed upon you, but use it to its fullest to His glory.

But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, 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.

2 Corinthians 4:2

Building upon the thought of "this ministry" which he mentioned in verse 1, Paul acknowledges the purity of it. The word "but" is given as a contrast to "having received mercy." They had once needed mercy and based on the granting of that, they (meaning him and the apostles) "have renounced the hidden things of shame." Charges had been leveled against him for various reasons and certainly the others had been slandered in one way or another as well. But those were mere words without truth.

Rather than speaking of things which are inappropriate, the speech of the apostles was pure and pointed to holiness, not illicit behavior. And not only did he conduct his speech in this manner, but he encouraged others to as well. In his letter to the Ephesians, he said -

"For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret." Ephesians 5:12

Further, their conduct was "not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully." The word Paul uses for "craftiness" indicates "crafty behavior; unscrupulous cunning that stops at nothing to achieve a selfish goal." In contrast to such an attitude his life, doctrine, and intent for sharing the gospel was open and only had the best of others in mind.

There was nothing but good intent and honesty in his conduct. He proved this by working with his own hands to sustain himself rather than peddling the word of God for profit. And this is exactly what he means by the use of the word translated as "deceitfully." It is a word used only here in the New Testament and it gives the idea of "to ensnare; then to corrupt. Used of adulterating gold, wine, etc" (Vincent's Word Studies). If someone were to take something of value and water it down for by mixing in something of lesser value, they would be acting in this manner. But Paul held the word of God in the highest reverence and refused to budge an inch on its proper presentation.

Instead of acting in such a disgraceful way, he says they had conducted themselves "by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." In other words, they understood that what they did was in the sight of God and therefore they purposed to always act with this in mind. At the end of the day, their conscience was clean from anything that would be considered dishonest or disreputable. If only all of God's ministers would act in such a forthright manner today!

Life application: The Bible is God's word, not ours. When we share it, we are to hold it in the high reverence that it deserves, knowing that the Source holds it as His chosen means of relaying the truth about Himself to us. Further, when we share it, it is in His presence. Therefore, we must remember that He knows our treatment of it and will hold us accountable for how we present it.

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,
2 Corinthians 4:3

The previous verse spoke of the "hidden things of shame" which Paul and the apostles had renounced. Instead, he spoke of the "manifestation of the truth" which is found in the gospel message. He now writes words which are intended to correct any perceived contradiction. In saying that it is the manifestation of the truth, then how can it be veiled to some? A manifestation implies something that is open and available to all. But there are some who haven't received it because they are "perishing."

As he notes, "if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing." Therefore, there is no contradiction in his words. People must be willing to accept that Jesus is the explanation for, and fulfillment of, all Scripture. If they fail to accept this, then the veil remains (as he noted in the previous chapter). The result for such people is that they "are perishing." But there is a note of hope even in his words. He uses a present participle for the word "perishing" rather than a past participle. In other words, he doesn't say, "to those who have perished." Because of this, it does not exclude hope of the person turning to the Lord and having the veil lifted (Keep praying for your Jewish friends!).

The gospel is the manifestation of the truth and it is available to any who will but receive it - even until their dying breath. Albert Barnes gives a lovely set of examples of comparison for us to consider -

"It is not the fault of the sun when people shut their eyes and will not see it. It is not the fault of a running stream, or a bubbling fountain, if people will not drink of it, but rather choose to die of thirst. The gospel does not obscure and conceal its own glory anymore than the sun does. It is in itself a clear and full revelation of God and his grace; and that glory is adapted to shed light upon the benighted minds of people."

Life application: Minds are easily dulled and we tend to gravitate towards those things which we prefer, regardless if they are right or wrong. The gospel sets us free from this, and yet until we come to it, the perception is that we will lose all of the things we like in the process. Instead, when we come to Christ, we are enabled to appreciate things in their proper perspective. As we grow closer to Him

through His word, what is right becomes increasingly desirable and that which is wrong becomes increasingly undesirable. Truly a veil is lifted in Christ.

...whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. 2 Corinthians 4:4

The "whose" of this verse are "those who are perishing" of the previous verse. Those who have not received the gospel of Christ are perishing. And the reason for this is that their "minds the god of this age has blinded." Spiritual darkness is a pall which is found in all people born of man. Sin is an inherited trait and those who have sinned (all of them) are under the power of the devil. Here he is termed "the god of this age." This is the only time this phrase is used of him, but it corresponds with other such names for him in the Bible, such as -

"The ruler of this world" (John 14:30).

"The prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2).

"The wicked one" (1 John 5:19).

These terms, among others, give us varied descriptions of the devil so that we can see his sphere of influence and the characteristics which define him. In this verse, Paul shows that he is in control of the lost during this age until Christ is finished with His complete plan of redemption found in the dispensational model. Eventually he will be cast into the Lake of Fire and a new age will come to pass (Revelation 20:10).

However, during this age he has blinded the eyes of those "who do not believe." The tense of the Greek for "has blinded" is aorist-indicative-active. This means that he has blinded man in the past (which occurred at the fall of man), but it doesn't necessarily mean that the blindness continues in the present. In other words, he has blinded the world, but the world can come to see the light through

Jesus Christ. Until they do, they remain blind. Jesus alludes to this type of thing in John 9 -

"And Jesus said, 'For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.'

⁴⁰ Then *some* of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, 'Are we blind also?'

⁴¹ Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains.'" (John 9:39-41

The devil has done this, as Paul explains, "lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them." Though this is speaking of all who are in Adam, Paul has specifically been speaking of the veil which is over the eyes of the Jews who have failed to see Christ revealed in Scripture. He is giving an explanation of why this is so.

The word he uses for "light" is *photismos*. It is a special word which is used only here and then again in verse 6. Ellicott notes that the word signifies not merely a purpose, but a result. To understand this, we can think of a person with blinded eyes. When he turns his face to the sun, there is no perception of the sun at all. Not only does he not see the light, but he cannot see the light.

The intent of the Scriptures is to illumine the "glory of Christ." However, the Jews cannot see this because they have been blinded. God knew that this would occur and thus the dispensation of grace, which is the Church Age, was introduced. During Israel's time of blindness (Romans 9-11), salvation has come to the Gentiles. Instead of seeing Christ, who is the image of God, they see only darkness.

Finally, the word for "shine" here is *augazo*. It is only used here in the New Testament and it indicates "to shine forth." Christ radiates from the Bible just as

the sun shines forth at dawn (which is where the root of the word *augazo* comes from). Paul's use of this word is described by the Bible scholar Charles Ellicott -

It "...stands as intermediate between the object and the shadow, far plainer than the latter, yet not identical with the former, however adequately representing it."

In other words, Scripture is not the Lord, but it accurately represents Him. Thus His radiance shines forth from it. However, in eyes which are blinded, there can be no shining forth of this beautiful radiance.

Life application: If you wonder why someone hasn't come to Christ, this verse may adequately describe their situation. They have been blinded by the devil and they cannot see Him in Scripture. However, through prayer we have a weapon to overcome this blindness. Never stop praying for the lost!

For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 2 Corinthians 4:5

Paul is continually directing or redirecting his readers to Jesus and away from himself. However, he often uses himself and/or those with him in his conversation. It is a natural thing to do, but charges of either egotism or personal gain could arise if his words were misapplied or misinterpreted. Because of this, he occasionally reminds those to whom he is writing that Jesus, not he, is the center of his theology.

He has been discussing the veil which covered the eyes of those who had rejected Jesus as the focus of Scripture. Then he noted in the previous verse that "the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." Now his words show that the "light of the gospel" is "not ourselves." There is no personal boasting. Instead the light of which he writes is "Jesus Christ as Lord."

Early in his first letter to the Corinthians, he wrote -

"For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." 1 Corinthians 2:2

And then earlier in the letter he is now writing he said -

"For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ." 2 Corinthians 2:17

These and other reminders are brought into his letters to demonstrate clearly that it is all about Jesus. Personal references are simply life experiences that help make the message of Jesus more understandable, more personal, etc. They are not intended to draw the masses to himself, but to Jesus Christ. To further confirm this, he says that not only do they proclaim Jesus, but "ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake."

Paul always attempted to exalt Jesus at every chance, and he diminished himself and the other apostles to their rightful position of being *doulos* (literally slaves) to those they ministered to. If they were slaves to the Corinthians, then how could they be egoists or braggarts? Rather, they had only the exaltation of Christ as their main goal and intent.

Life application: When in church, what is the preacher focusing on most? Pay attention to his words, particularly those in the sermon. Are they centered on you? If so, he may be using platitudes to schmooze you. Are they centered on him? If so, then he probably has an ego problem that he wants filled with your adoration. Are they centered on a general "God" without specificity on Christ? Then his theology is probably severely lacking. Are they centered on the Holy Spirit? Then not only is his theology severely lacking, he has probably purposely directed your attention away from what is proper and onto himself. This is because he is most likely claiming to be a vehicle (rather than the Bible) by which

the Holy Spirit reveals truth - bad juju there. Or are they centered on Christ? If they are, then they are properly directed words, proclaiming what the intent of Scripture truly is.

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:6

Following Paul's order of thought, we can see how he is weaving together his words in order to best reveal what God has done in the giving of the gospel. In the previous verse, he seemed to stop his train of thought and redirect his readers to the understanding that everything he is conveying is not about himself, but about Jesus Christ.

And the verse just before that, he wrote -

"...whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them." (verse 4)

He now pens verse 6 which is given to contrast what was seen in verse 4. The "god of this age" is now contrasted with "the God" (meaning the true God). Those who have rejected Christ have their minds blinded. However, the true God who "commanded light to shine out of darkness" has once again revealed light. The creation account in Genesis 1 is being equated with the "new creation" in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). What occurs when the veil is lifted is as marvelous as the original light shining out of darkness!

And the intent for this is that God "has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." There is a definite point in time - in the life of Paul, in the life of each of the apostles, and in the life of

every person who comes to Christ at the time of their conversion, when the light of what God has done through the work of Jesus shines upon our hearts.

At that wondrous moment, the veil is lifted and Christ is revealed. However, there is another contrast in these words. The glory of the law was a reflection from Moses' face to the people of Israel. However, the glory of Jesus is not a reflection, but the transmission of God's glory. This is seen, for example, in Hebrews 1 -

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 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.." Hebrews 1:1-3

In Paul's words here, we find the second and final use of the word *phótismos*, or light, in Scripture. He used it in verse 4 (cited above) and now he uses it again to show that in seeing Christ, we are seeing the full illumination and splendor of God who is the Source of all light. In other words, Jesus is the one who reveals our heavenly Father. As he said in John 14 -

"He who has seen Me has seen the Father." John 14:9

The light came into the world at the spoken word of God and Jesus is that spoken Word. In Him the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily and in Him we have our eternal light and life.

Life application: If you feel beaten up by the world, refresh yourself in the word. Pick up your Bible and remind yourself that God has it all under control. He has given us Jesus and Jesus is fully sufficient to carry you through this world of darkness and into God's marvelous light.

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

Paul has been speaking of his ministry which is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (verse 6). It is a ministry which surpasses the reflected glory of the Old Covenant which was written on stone. This light is written on the hearts of the believers. Paul, using this symbolism says that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." There is a dual significance to those words.

First, man was taken from the dust and formed into a living being. Therefore, by mixing in the right amount of water, and then adding in God's animating breath, we have been formed into "earthen vessels." We are fragile and yet we are suited for various purposes; some noble and some ignoble. But we have all been fashioned by the Creator. This symbolism is found in the Old Testament, but a very good rendering is in Jeremiah 18:1-11.

The second significance is that of the habit of people to use earthen vessels (jars of clay) for storing valuables. This is seen throughout the Bible as well. A good example of this is the story of Elijah and the widow in 1 Kings 17:8-15. It was also known that kings, returning conquerors, and wealthy people would store gold, silver, and other valuables in such jars as well. Even the precious wine created by the Lord in John 2:1-12 was kept in such clay jars.

Paul ties the two concepts together - humans being made of clay and being "jars" suitable for containing things, and real clay jars that are used for storing all sorts of things, valuable or of little value. To him the "treasure" that he bore, which is the ministry of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, is the most valuable treasure of all. And yet, it is contained in a weak clay jar which has no value at all in comparison to what it contains.

The reason for this is "that excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." The word translated as "excellence" is *hyperbolé*. It literally means "a throwing beyond. Hence preeminence, excellence" (Vincent's Word Studies). Within the

saved believer is something of exceeding value - far, far beyond the value of the container which holds it. Such is the nature of the grace of God. He has condescended to allow His weak, fragile creatures to share in His exceeding glory, and He has allowed us to speak of it to others. It radiates forth from the darkened vessel with a magnificence which completely overshadows its faults. Thus it is obvious that the glory is "of God and not of us."

Life application: The most marvelous and glorious thing that we possess is the knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is a possession that is not intended to be kept hidden away, but shared with all. As we open our jar of clay and allow it to come forth, the contents are never diminished. Instead, they continue to overflow. Therefore, there is no loss to us when we share it, but there is great gain for all who receive it. Speak the word!

We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 2 Corinthians 4:8

There is a lot going on in these few words as Paul's ideas were printed onto the parchment. The previous verse began with "But we have..." The verb was present-indicative. Now this verse has all of the clauses in a present-participle form. Thus, they are in apposition - "we have/we are." Each of the articles in this verse respects inward conflicts, whereas each in the next verse will deal with external conflicts.

Also, in each of these clauses the idea is building upon the previous verse which noted first the "treasure in earthen vessels" and then "the excellence of the power...of God." The first deals with the fragility of the created, the second with the power of the Creator. He is showing the superiority of the contents in the vessel despite the weakness of the vessel itself.

His first words "hard-pressed on every side" show their seeming inability to break away from that which is troubling them. And yet because of God's power, they were "not crushed." Despite the pressures, they were able to bear up.

Further, he says they were "perplexed." The word indicates an inability to find a way out of something. And yet, at the same time, they were "not in despair." In these last two words a paronomasia results. They are *aporoumenoi* and *exaporoumenoi*. It is as if Paul was temporarily tempted by a tasty treat of targeted tones in order to tantalize the ears of his readers. In an attempt to reproduce the original, one translator says "pressed, but not oppressed."

Paul is showing that by living through the power of God, they were (and thus we are) able to bear up under the turmoil and trouble that constantly came their way. If we rely on our own physical make-up, we will surely see only defeat. But when we rely on the strength that is given by God, we will be able to bear up as the attacks come our way. As Paul says it elsewhere, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Life application: It is easy to read words such as Philippians 4:13 and say, "I will hold to this and trust in it." However, it is much harder to continue to trust those words when the difficulties come. This is why we must memorize them and repeat them to ourselves again and again. We do this so that when the difficulties arrive, we will be prepared mentally to allow the strength of the Lord to take the lead.

...persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—
2 Corinthians 4:9

Paul continues with his contrasts which began in the previous verse. Those previous contrasts were from internal struggles; these are from external ones. His imagery is as if a soldier in combat who is first "persecuted, but not forsaken." The words have the intent of "pursued, but not abandoned" (Ellicott). As if they were soldiers being pursued by an enemy, Paul says that even in such a state the Lord is with them. This follows along with the wording of Hebrews -

"*Let your conduct be* without covetousness; *be* content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'⁶ So we may boldly say:

'The LORD *is* my helper;
I will not fear.
What can man do to me?'" Hebrews 13:5, 6

And surely this imagery is appropriate because the state which Christians find themselves in is a true battle. Paul discusses this in detail in Ephesians 6. His description includes this thought -

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*." Ephesians 6:12

The second contrast is that they are "struck down, but not destroyed." This again is the imagery of a soldier whose life is spared despite being wounded. It could even be of wrestlers in a bout of mortal combat. When Jacob wrestled with the Lord in Genesis 32, the match continued without either letting up, and so in order to end the match, we read these words -

"Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him." Genesis 32:25

Jacob was struck down, but he was not destroyed in the process. The Lord could have done so, but instead He humbled him and yet spared him. Paul shows that this is the state of the apostles as they strived to share the message of Christ. With their many struggles, both internal and external, they were able to press on because the Lord was there with them to ensure they would never falter or fail.

Life application: The Bible says that the Lord will never leave His people and He will never forsake them. Paul was eventually martyred for his faith, as were almost every one of the apostles. Did the Lord break His promise? No! They have something that those who persecuted and killed them don't have. They have the

assurance of eternal life because of their trust in Christ. Truly, what can man do to one who is saved by the blood of Christ!

...always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 2 Corinthians 4:10

In the previous two verses, Paul made 4 contrasting thoughts concerning difficulties faced by the apostles and yet overcome by the power of God in them. Continuing on in a similar vein, he says that they are "always carrying about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus." This is a reference to the sufferings and death of the Lord. The word "dying" is *nekrósis*. It means both the process of dying and the deadness of something which lacks any life at all. The only other use of it is in Romans 4:19 when speaking of the deadness of Sarah's womb.

In their bodies, the apostles were always carrying about this state. They were exposed to the constant threat of death and even experienced acts which could easily lead to death. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says -

"And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? ³¹ I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." 1 Corinthians 15:30, 31

And in a great summary of his sufferings which he endured, and the reason for them, he says to the Philippians -

"Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."

Philippians 3:8-11

These references, and numerous others, show the constant threat of death which surrounded Paul and the other apostles. And yet they were willing to endure this, carrying the dying of the Lord with them, so "that the life of Jesus also may be manifest in our body." There are different opinions on what Paul is referring to here.

It could be that he was showing through his life of "dying" that he lives through the power of Christ, and thus he is an object lesson concerning death and resurrection. It could be that the power of Christ (because He is resurrected) is seen in the apostles; they are a witness to the life of Jesus. Or it could be that Paul is simply speaking as being one who emulates Christ. As he is dying and will die just as Christ died, so he will live again as Christ lived again; thus his life is patterned after the Lord - having died in a weak physical frame, and yet to be raised to an immortal new frame.

Whatever the intent of Paul's words truly is, he and the other apostles suffered for the name of Christ, both in death and in life. But to them (and therefore it should be to us) there was no loss, but only gain. As he said to those in Rome -

"For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."
Romans 5:10

Life application: Christ died so that we could live. In proof that this is true, He now lives so that we are to have no fear in death. If we are in Christ, we have moved from death to life. The body may perish, but the hope of everlasting life is assured.

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

This is a restatement and expansion upon the previous verse. Taken together, they read -

"...always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. ¹¹ For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh."

Paul has, in these two verses, mentioned Jesus four times by name. The repetition of the name, instead of using a pronoun, highlights the honor he feels towards the Lord. In this verse he says, "For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake." The contrast between "life" and "death" is highlighted.

The apostles lived for Christ, telling others of Him and sharing the good news everywhere. But during this, they were constantly subjected to the possibility of death. And eventually, a death for the sake of His name became a reality for most of them. In this life in the face of death, the result was "that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh."

Here Paul substitutes "body" of the previous verse for "mortal flesh." This was done to highlight the corrupt nature of the body. Not yet being glorified, we are subject to pains, decay, and death. And yet, it highlights the life of Jesus all the more poignantly. His divine nature is seen through our corruptible bodies, and the hope of the resurrection is seen in the fact that we are dying. As the Bible scholar Alford says -

"God exhibits DEATH in the living that He may also exhibit LIFE in the dying."

Life application: If you know someone with a terminal disease who exalts Christ Jesus through their affliction, then this verse may be more understandable. Jesus is manifest through the ending of their life; in their death is the assurance of fellowship with God through it all, including the coming resurrection unto eternal life.

So then death is working in us, but life in you. 2 Corinthians 4:12

Paul has been speaking of the sufferings that he and the other apostles endured for the sake of the gospel. He went so far as to show the contrast between their lives, which were fraught with death, and that of the life of Christ working through them. As they were "delivered to death for Jesus' sake" the result was "that the life of Jesus" therefore would be manifested in them.

This then explains his words to the Corinthians to us now. He says, "So death is working in us" which refers to their state as apostles. But for the Corinthians it meant. "...life in you." In other words, "You reap the spiritual benefits (spiritual life through the gospel) of our physical struggles (physical death because of the gospel)."

If still not understood, we could give a purely physical example from everyday life. Firemen are constantly exposed to "death" as they enter buildings which have become a blazing torrent of fire, and yet those inside reap the chance of continued life because of their exposure to death. Such was the life of the apostle. They constantly faced death in order to carry the message of life.

Life application: The word of God has come to us at a very high cost. Not only the apostles, but a string of other faithful people has been willing to put themselves at great risk, even death sentences, to ensure that the precious word continues to go forth. Today, people still risk death by taking the Bible to others in places where it is banned. Let us never fail to appreciate the high cost which has brought this precious word to the people of the world.

And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak,
2 Corinthians 4:13

Paul's words here, "And since we have the same spirit of faith" are speaking of the same type of faith as his readers. He has been showing that the position the apostles face because of their faith - such as being hard-pressed, yet not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; etc is one based on faith. Further, the purpose of such desperate straits was for the sake of instilling faith in their Christian converts.

It is this "same spirit of faith" that Paul is referring to. Whether it is faith in distress or faith resulting from that distress, they shared in a unity of faith in the same message. Therefore, because the faith of the apostles was for the same end-goal as for that of those they shared it with, Paul cites the reason (remembering that the reason is what resulted in their many distresses). That reason is found in the Old Testament psalms. Paul says, "...according to what is written, 'I believed and therefore I spoke.'"

This is a line from the 116th Psalm. It speaks of a person who was in great trials and afflictions, just as the apostles were. And yet, he knew that God would hear his supplications despite those afflictions; he had not been abandoned by the Lord, but rather the trials were simply allowed by the Lord for His purposes. Likewise, the trials and afflictions of the apostles were not something which demonstrated that the Lord didn't care about them or their message. Rather, it demonstrated exactly the opposite. These hardships were ordained by the Lord. And because of this he says, "...we also believe and therefore speak."

Knowing that these difficulties were a part of the Lord's purposes for them, they were all the more emboldened to speak. Their faith in Christ was unshaken by them. Read these first ten verses of the 116th Psalm and mentally put the apostles in place of the author and you will see what Paul is proclaiming -

I love the LORD, because He has heard
My voice *and* my supplications.
² Because He has inclined His ear to me,
Therefore I will call *upon Him* as long as I live.

³ The pains of death surrounded me,
And the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me;
I found trouble and sorrow.

⁴ Then I called upon the name of the LORD:
“O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!”

⁵ Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous;
Yes, our God *is* merciful.

⁶ The LORD preserves the simple;
I was brought low, and He saved me.

⁷ Return to your rest, O my soul,
For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.

⁸ For You have delivered my soul from death,
My eyes from tears,
And my feet from falling.

⁹ I will walk before the LORD
In the land of the living.

¹⁰ I believed, therefore I spoke,
“I am greatly afflicted.” Psalm 116:1-10

Life application: Like Job's friends, people in the world tend to look at hardships, difficulties, trials, and losses as meaning a person is not in God's favor. The reciprocal is then believed to be true. When things are going well and all is peachy, it is perceived that God must really favor that person. This is shallow at best and hardly conveys the message of the Bible. Often, hardships are used by the Lord for His purposes and they have nothing to do with His disfavor. Through good times and bad, be sure to praise the Lord and look for His hand in what is resulting from the situation as it unfolds.