

“So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.”

— 2 Corinthians 4:12 (NIV)

The Apostle Paul presents a profound paradox in this verse — that while he and his fellow ministers endure suffering, hardship, and even the threat of death for the sake of the gospel, the fruit of their suffering is *life* for others.

To understand this, let us consider an illustration: picture a lamb being led to the slaughterhouse. Within that lamb, death is already at work — in a matter of moments, its life will end. Yet, for those who partake of its meat, the result is nourishment and sustenance — *life*.

We could then say: death is at work in the lamb, but life is at work in those who eat of it.

This illustration mirrors the very image Scripture uses to describe God’s servants — especially the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate example of a sacrificial Lamb.

“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.” — *Isaiah 53:7 (NIV)*

Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, willingly embraced death — not for His own sins (for He had none), but for ours. Through His suffering, death, and resurrection, He secured eternal life for all who would believe in Him.

“But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.” — *Isaiah 53:5 (NIV)*

Without His wounds, there would be no healing. Without His sacrifice, there would be no salvation. His death worked in Him, so that *life* might be at work in us.

In the same way, all who follow Christ are called to walk in His footsteps — not merely enjoying the benefits of His sacrifice, but also sharing in His sufferings, for the sake of others.

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” — *Romans 8:36*
(ESV)

Every time we endure rejection, opposition, persecution, or sacrifice for the sake of spreading the gospel, death is at work in us — but it is producing life in those who hear and believe.

Ministry, at its heart, is sacrificial. Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 4:12 is a declaration of pastoral love: “We suffer, so that you might live.” True gospel ministry will often cost the servant dearly — emotionally, physically, and even socially — yet the fruit is life, transformation, and salvation in others.

This truth calls every believer to a higher level of commitment. We must be willing to give of ourselves — our time, comfort, resources, and even our very lives — so that others may receive the eternal life that we

ourselves have received in Christ.

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.

And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.” —
1 John 3:16 (NIV)

This kind of sacrificial love is not just admirable — it is foundational to the Christian life. It is how the early church grew. It is how revival spreads. It is how Christ is glorified.

May we, therefore, embrace this divine paradox: that through our willingness to die to ourselves — to our comfort, our will, and even our safety — others may find eternal life.

Maranatha — the Lord is coming!

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How Does Death Work in Us, and Life in Others? (2 Corinthians 4:12)

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