

# 2 Corinthians 2:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

## Analysis

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**To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life**—The doubled phrases *ek thanatou eis thanaton* (ἐκ θανάτου εἰς θάνατον, "from death unto death") and *ek zōēs eis zōēn* (ἐκ ζωῆς εἰς ζωήν, "from life unto life") suggest movement and intensification. For those rejecting the Gospel, spiritual death deepens into eternal death; for believers, spiritual life progresses toward eternal life. The same message accelerates both trajectories.

**And who is sufficient for these things?**—Paul's question *kai pros tauta tis hikanos* (καὶ πρὸς ταῦτα τίς ἱκανός, "and for these things who is adequate?") expresses the weight of ministry. The rhetorical answer is "no one"—apart from divine enabling (3:5-6). Preaching that determines eternal destinies creates crushing responsibility. Only false ministers approach this casually. Paul's question invites verses 17 and 3:1-6's answer: sufficiency comes from God, not human adequacy. Recognizing insufficiency paradoxically qualifies for ministry, while self-confidence disqualifies.

## Historical Context

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Ancient rhetoric prized the orator's skill in persuasion. Paul's confession of inadequacy contradicted rhetorical culture's confidence. He rejects both sophistic manipulation (peddling God's word, v. 17) and self-sufficient eloquence. True

ministry acknowledges dependence on God's Spirit, not human technique or charisma.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. How does recognizing the Gospel's life-or-death stakes affect preaching and evangelism?
2. Why is feeling inadequate for ministry actually a qualification rather than disqualification?
3. How does the Gospel's inherent power differ from persuasive human rhetoric?

## Interlinear Text

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οἷς	μὲν	ὁσμή	θάνατον	εἰς	θάνατον	οἷς	δὲ	ὁσμή
<b>To</b>	<b>the one</b>	<b>the savour</b>	<b>death</b>	<b>unto</b>	<b>death</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>the savour</b>
G3739	G3303	G3744	G2288	G1519	G2288	G3739	G1161	G3744

ζωήν	εἰς	ζωήν	καὶ	πρὸς	ταῦτα	τίς	ἰκανός
<b>life</b>	<b>unto</b>	<b>life</b>	<b>And</b>	<b>for</b>	<b>these things</b>	<b>who</b>	<b>is sufficient</b>
G2222	G1519	G2222	G2532	G4314	G5023	G5101	G2425

## Additional Cross-References

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**John 9:39** (Parallel theme): And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

**Luke 2:34** (Parallel theme): And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

**1 Corinthians 15:10** (Parallel theme): But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

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