Essential Doctrines

Part 5 — Sufferings (Lessons 23–26)

A 4-Lesson Study by Keith Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®

Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Series

These are Lessons 23–26 of Keith Blades' Essential Doctrines. In Lesson 22 Keith announces "essential doctrine number five, the doctrine of the sufferings of Christ"; in Lesson 23 he calls it the fifth of the six essential doctrines, which has to do with sufferings, and in Lesson 26 he calls it "a four-hour introduction" to the doctrine of sufferings for this dispensation of grace. Its theme: sufferings are to be looked at differently in this dispensation of grace than in God's program with Israel — not deliverance from them, but capacity to endure them.

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Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Core Focus
L23	Not Deliverance, but Capacity to Endure — II Corinthians 1, 4, 12; Philippians 3; Colossians 1; II Thessalonians 1; II Timothy 1–2
L24	Two Categories of Suffering — and a Third — Romans 8; II Corinthians 1, 4; Deuteronomy 28; Leviticus 26; II Chronicles 7:14
L25	Sufferings Banished Only in Israel's Program — Isaiah 11, 33, 65; Hebrews 6; Revelation 20–21; Romans 8:18–39
L26	The Excellency of the Power — Romans 8:35–39; II Corinthians 1, 4, 12; Ephesians 3

Lesson Summaries

L23

Not Deliverance, but Capacity to Endure *II Corinthians 1, 4, 12; Philippians 3; Colossians 1; II Thessalonians 1; II Timothy 1–2*

The Fifth of the Six Essential Doctrines

- Lesson 23 begins the fifth of the six essential doctrines; the fifth one has to do with sufferings, introduced by Paul's "we would not, brethren, have you ignorant" of the trouble in Asia (II Corinthians 1:8)
- The trouble and tribulation of verse 4 Paul defines in verse 5 as the sufferings

of Christ

Why It Is an Essential Doctrine

- God wants us to look at sufferings differently in this dispensation of grace than Israel would have looked at them in God's program with them; and no one by nature wants to suffer
- It is one of the pet doctrines the satanic policy of evil likes to attack: Satan wants members of the Body of Christ to use their Bibles but put themselves back under Israel's program; there's a longing for us to look at sufferings and seek deliverance from them as Israel did

Not Deliverance, but Capacity to Endure

- In II Corinthians 1:8–10 there was an appreciation for the power of God, not in delivering Paul from the suffering; the issue today isn't deliverance from sufferings, it's capacity to endure them
- The effectual working of the doctrine (verse 6) gives you the capacity to endure the same sufferings Paul went through — fundamentally different from how sufferings were looked upon in God's program with Israel
- You don't expect deliverance from them or not to suffer; God provides the more excellent issue of the capacity to endure them, to His honor and glory

Sufferings Work for Us (II Corinthians 4, 12)

- II Corinthians 4 is a major passage on what God is putting on display by letting us suffer: the excellency of the power of His Word
- Paul calls his affliction light — it "worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory"; that is the more-than-a-conqueror concept: what would naturally be looked upon as your enemy ends up assisting and benefiting you
- Paul besought the Lord thrice to have the thorn removed; the lesson is you don't need those things removed, for "my strength is made perfect in weakness" cannot be fulfilled if you are not weak

Rejoicing in Them; Two Categories

- In Philippians and Colossians Paul is not just enduring sufferings but asking for them and rejoicing in them; he wants to know Christ and "the fellowship of his sufferings," and that same rejoicing is held out for us
- Look at sufferings as God does: two categories — the sufferings of this present time, which are common to man, and the sufferings of Christ
- From Romans 8:18 Paul holds out no deliverance from the sufferings of this present time; God equips you to patiently endure — fortification of your inner man
- The Thessalonians learned the doctrine of II Corinthians; Timothy had been shunning the afflictions of the gospel, and the issue is endure, endure, endure (II Timothy 2:3)

The Goal: "the God of all comfort"

- The goal is that, instead of murmuring and complaining, you can say II Corinthians 1:3 in the midst of both kinds of sufferings; the Lord's provided for consolation to abound where the sufferings abound
- The doctrine that teaches you how to look at sufferings in this dispensation of grace is Romans to Philemon, and in particular II Corinthians, an epistle dedicated to this issue

L24

Two Categories of Suffering — and a Third *Romans 8; II Corinthians 1, 4; Deuteronomy 28; Leviticus 26; II Chronicles 7:14*

Why Sufferings Must Be Seen as God Sees Them

- The sufferings of Christ is really a privilege of God's grace — described as a gift later in Philippians, but a gift of God very few Christians ever seem to want
- Not rightly dividing, Christians look at sufferings from the perspective of God's program with Israel; in this dispensation of grace Satan wants a Christian to be biblical but not dispensational
- What we are taught about sufferings in this dispensation of grace is for the most part contrary and foreign to how things were in God's program with Israel

Two Categories — and a Third

- There are two categories of suffering, two places from which sufferings can come; Keith adds that there is a third, which he will bring out later
- The sufferings of this present time (Romans 8:18) are common to the sin-cursed creation, produced by the bondage of corruption — sickness, disease, accident, crime; all creation experiences them
- The sufferings of Christ are a special category, produced by the satanic policy of evil and directed against the members of the church, the body of Christ — suffering for Jesus' sake (II Corinthians 1:5)
- Keith adds, "actually, there's a third category": "You can suffer because of your own stupidity" — dealt with in connection with both categories, "not dealt with by Paul so much as a separate category"
- That category is a byproduct of failing to appreciate what you're taught about both; members of the body of Christ stupid enough not to receive God's education won't get the comfort

The Doctrinal Order in Romans 8

- Paul introduces the sufferings of Christ in Romans 8 but doesn't deal with it in detail; you understand the sufferings of this present time and the equipment to handle them first, then you can handle the other
- In Romans 8:35 Paul has a "who" in mind that operates through a bunch of "whats"; there is more of a hatred for you as a member of the body of Christ because of the mystery of Christ
- "This present time" has a dispensational connotation — present time, not past, not future — a reference to this dispensation of grace

Israel's Program: Both Categories Avoidable

- Under the law contract — an if-then performance contract — comply and Israel avoids sufferings of both categories; don't comply and they get both categories and even more (Deuteronomy 28)
- The courses of curses in Leviticus 26 aim to get Israel reformed, so they could go back to avoiding sufferings from either category

No Promise of Avoidance Today

- God holds out no promise today that we can avoid them; you are not to expect or request deliverance from the sufferings of this present time, and He's made no promise to curse you for not performing
- II Chronicles 7:14 pertains only to God's program with Israel: "my people" there is members of the nation of Israel, not of the church, the body of Christ

L25

Sufferings Banished Only in Israel's Program *Isaiah 11, 33, 65; Hebrews 6; Revelation 20–21; Romans 8:18–39*

The Two Categories and Israel's Program

- The two categories — the sufferings of this present time, common to man from the bondage of corruption, and the sufferings of Christ, suffering for the Lord's sake — apply in God's program with Israel also; Israel had the opportunity to avoid both
- Only through the fulfillment of God's program with Israel are the two categories banished — not in this dispensation of grace; this present time has suspended God's program with Israel

Isaiah: When the King Reigns

- Isaiah 11 describes Israel and the world when the Messiah, Israel's King, is reigning; both parts of the curse, Genesis 3 and the flood, are removed when the Lord establishes His kingdom
- Isaiah 33 — "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick" — addresses sicknesses as part of the bondage of corruption
- What is new about the new heavens and new earth is no more bondage of corruption and no more policy of evil against God's people; Isaiah 27 shows why the Adversary's gone, and then the sufferings associated with the policy are gone

The Powers of the World to Come

- Hebrews 6, written to the remnant of Israel, speaks of the powers of the world to come; they put on display that the two categories would be banished — that is why the Lord healed the sick
- Revelation 20:1–3 shows the banishment of the sufferings caused by Satan's plan and policy of evil; in Revelation 21 the two categories are gone — still yet to come, when Israel's program is resumed and fulfilled

Our Situation in the Dispensation of Grace

- We live in the dispensation of Gentile grace; God is suspending His program with Israel, not replacing it — the gifts and calling of God to Israel are still without repentance
- The sufferings of the bondage of corruption continue as your natural lot, with no promised deliverance no matter how you live; the satanic policy of evil works against you with an even greater hatred than for the remnant of Israel
- God has provided the capacity to be more than a conqueror and, through weakness, to honor and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ — a privilege Israel never had offered to them

The Effectual Working of God's Word

- An aspect of the subject is contained in every one of our epistles, Romans through Philemon, and II Corinthians, with 13 chapters, is dedicated to it
- The excellent power is God's Word operating within the inner man; the doctrines are designed to produce endurance to the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then a desire for the fellowship of His sufferings and rejoicing in them

Romans 8:18–39

- Verses 18–34 are designed to handle the sufferings of this present time; verses 35–39 introduce the second category, the sufferings of Christ from the policy of evil
- The very first category of doctrine is the glory that is yours in view of who you are in Christ; "saved by hope" (verse 24) is being saved from being overcome

by the bondage of corruption, not salvation from the penalty of sin (Romans 1–5)

- A second category of doctrine — the tranquilizing ministry of the Holy Ghost (verses 26–27) — enables patient endurance when you don't know what to pray for as you ought
- Verses 28–30 give the certainty of God's counsel; in verses 31–35 God's power, grace, justice and love are each for you

L26

The Excellency of the Power *Romans 8:35–39; II Corinthians 1, 4, 12; Ephesians 3*

Not Deliverance, but the Excellency of the Power

- In this final lesson on the fifth essential doctrine, the issue is not deliverance but capacity to endure, to God's honor and glory — the excellency of the power of God's Word operating within our souls and spirits
- We have the privilege of putting on display to the Adversary the superiority of God's wisdom and power — an effectual working to God's Word he never perceived; the power of God is not absent in this dispensation of grace

The Sufferings of Christ (Romans 8:35–39)

- The things in verse 35 are not common to man as natural results of the bondage of corruption; usually there is hatred behind them, especially peril, sword and persecution
- Paul quotes Psalm 44, a psalm about the remnant and what they will experience in the day of the Lord; the adversary hates us with a vehement hatred because of what the mystery of Christ and the new creation mean
- God's love toward you is not tied to the circumstances of your life; God's love for you is in Christ Jesus our Lord
- Being more than a conqueror — taking what the adversary throws at you and having it work for your benefit — is far better than ever being delivered

The God of All Comfort (II Corinthians 1)

- The entire epistle of II Corinthians is dedicated to providing doctrine so that as the sufferings of Christ abound, consolation abounds
- In verse 4, "any trouble" includes the sufferings of this present time, and even "that third category, which is a natural byproduct of ignoring the doctrine, which is your stupidity"; II Corinthians gives examples of the Corinthians suffering trouble for their stupidity
- Paul is not delivered from his sufferings; no suffering of Christ from the policy of evil will exceed what he experienced, and the category of doctrine he used in that most extreme situation worked

Treasure in Earthen Vessels (II Corinthians 4)

- The earthen vessels can easily be dashed, easily be broken, so that the excellency of the power of God is on display — His power operating in the inner man, something the angelic beings never understood could take place
- Paul realized God is not going to stop it; day by day the effectual working of God's Word renews the inner man

My Strength Is Made Perfect in Weakness (II Corinthians 12)

- The thorn was not one of the sufferings of this present time but "the messenger of Satan to buffet me"; the Lord demonstrated He is not doing things on the basis of Israel's program

- The excellency of His strength can only be made perfect, fully developed and put on display in weakness; verse 9 — "my strength is made perfect in weakness" — is the message that's to go back
- Paul moves from simply enduring to taking pleasure in them: "I take pleasure in infirmities"

The Power That Worketh in Us (Ephesians 3)

- Paul prays that the Ephesians would not cave in under the satanic policy of evil; the greatest display of God's power is the effectual working of His word within the soul and spirit, far superior to God putting His hand between you and your problems
- Keith calls these four hours an introduction to the fundamentals of the doctrine of sufferings for this dispensation of grace; essential doctrine number six — physical death, the rapture, and the Lord's Day — follows

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

The Categories of Suffering as Keith Gives Them

Keith says looking at sufferings as God does is to break them down to two categories: "The sufferings of this present time, which are common to man, and the sufferings of Christ." The sufferings of this present time come from the bondage of corruption, in common with all men; the sufferings of Christ are produced by the satanic policy of evil — a category of sufferings you can experience because you're a member of the church, the body of Christ. In Lesson 24 he adds, "actually, there's a third category": "You can suffer because of your own stupidity" — "not dealt with by Paul so much as a separate category," but a byproduct of failing to appreciate what you're taught about both. In Lesson 26 he speaks of "that third category, which is a natural byproduct of ignoring the doctrine, which is your stupidity."

Israel's Program vs. This Dispensation of Grace

In God's program with Israel, provision was there for both categories to be avoided or greatly minimized under the law contract; God holds out no such promise to us today. Only through the fulfillment of Israel's program are the two categories banished; meanwhile God has put us in a position to be more than a conqueror — something Israel was never given the privilege of doing.

Deliverance vs. Capacity to Endure

The issue today in this dispensation isn't deliverance from sufferings; it's capacity to endure them — fortification of your inner man. Power operating within the inner man is far superior to God putting His hand between you and your problems.

Key Scripture References

Leviticus 26:14 ff.	The courses of curses map out Israel's history in advance; the goal was to get Israel reformed
Deuteronomy 28	The law contract: comply and avoid sufferings of both categories; don't comply and the curses overtake
II Chronicles 7:13–15	Pertains only to God's program with Israel; "my people" is the nation of Israel
Isaiah 33:20–24	Sickness, part of the bondage of corruption, banished in God's program with Israel
Romans 8:18–34	The sufferings of this present time, common to the sin-cursed creation; the doctrine designed to handle them
Romans 8:35–39	Paul introduces the second category, the sufferings of Christ; God has designed to make you more than a conqueror
II Corinthians 1:3–10	As the sufferings of Christ abound, consolation abounds; Paul not delivered from his sufferings, yet the doctrine he used in that most extreme situation worked
II Corinthians 4:7–18	Treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power be on display; the light affliction worketh for us
II Corinthians 12:7–10	"My grace is sufficient for thee"; strength made perfect in weakness; pleasure in infirmities
Ephesians 3:13–16, 20–21	Strengthening by His Spirit in the inner man; the power of God operative today, within us
Philippians 3:8–10	Paul wants to know Christ and the fellowship of His sufferings
Colossians 1:23–24	Paul rejoices in his sufferings — the sufferings of Christ once again
II Thessalonians 1:3–5	The Thessalonians' patience in persecutions; a calling to suffer for His sake
Revelation 20:1–3	Banishment of the sufferings caused by Satan's plan and policy of evil
Revelation 21:1–4	The two categories of sufferings gone — when Israel's program is resumed and fulfilled