Personal Tribulation

The Effectual Working of God's Word in Your Life with the Issue of Personal Tribulation

A 2-Lesson Study by Keith Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®

Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Series

This study covers two sessions on the effectual working of God's Word in your life with the issue of personal tribulation: particular doctrines in Romans through Philemon designed to directly and specifically handle any personal tribulation from whatever source it comes. We need to make sure we understand the fundamental dispensational distinction about God's operation in your life with circumstantial issues: in God's program with Israel they were expected to walk by sight; Paul says to us, "We walk by faith, not by sight," so the only way you can handle personal tribulation is to have the Word of God to have faith in. God expects you to handle any personal tribulation by words He has given you to operate within your soul and spirit. He has not promised to change your circumstances or to do anything about your body; He has promised to keep your inner man together. There are three main areas personal tribulation comes from: the sufferings of this present time, the sufferings of Christ, and your own plain stupidity. The study takes up two of them, following the order in which Paul deals with them. The second session gives a grasp upon how doctrine operates within you to produce peace and comfort, from Hebrews 4:12, written to the remnant of Israel, and then surveys Romans 8:18–39 for the sufferings of this present time and II Corinthians 4 for the sufferings of Christ.

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Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Core Focus
L1	Walk by Faith: Words Designed to Effectually Work — Exodus 34:10; II Corinthians 5:7; II Corinthians 1; Philippians 4; Romans 8:18 — Three Main Sources
L2	How Doctrine Operates Within You to Produce Comfort — Hebrews 4:12; Psalms 94 and 116; Romans 8:18–39; II Corinthians 4

Lesson Summaries

L1

Walk by Faith: Words Designed to Effectually Work *Exodus 34:10; II Corinthians 5:7; II Corinthians 1; Philippians 4; Romans 8:18 — Three Main Sources*

The Fundamental Dispensational Distinction

- In God's program with Israel, God was going to work in the circumstances of their individual and national life, and they were expected to walk by sight (Exodus 34:10); the psalmist says, "We see not our signs" (Psalm 74)
- Paul says to us, "We walk by faith, not by sight" (II Corinthians 5:7) — about as opposed to Exodus 34:10 as two verses can be, and critical for the whole issue of the circumstances of your life
- So the only way you can handle personal tribulation is to have the Word of God to have faith in; handle it on the base of your own judgment from what you see, and you'll "muff things up in a royal manner"

Words Designed to Effectually Work

- There are words on the page you're reading that God has designed to effectually work within you and produce the comfort and stability of your inner man in personal tribulation; effectually means successful to accomplish the designed goal — final, conclusive, and not to be substituted for
- I Thessalonians 4:13–18 is specifically designed by God to comfort you concerning a believer who has died; seek solace anywhere else and you short-change yourself. Philippians 4:8–9 tells you to think on the things He told you to think about

The Father of Mercies and the God of All Comfort

- You'd never get to know Him as the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort unless you needed mercy and comfort; when you're more than a conqueror, the thing that tried to conquer you got you closer to God the Father
- Paul wrote an epistle that gives you the very same doctrine that operated in him so it can operate in you; II Corinthians, from chapter 1 verse 1 to the end of chapter 13, is totally devoted to enabling you to get all the comfort that comforted him
- That consolation and salvation (II Corinthians 1:6) is effectual in allowing you to endure — not to get the problems magically taken out of the way; you can't endure the thing unless the problem's still there

Your Inner Man, Not Your Circumstances

- God has promised to hold your soul and spirit together so you don't have to collapse under the pressure — not to take the problem away or change your circumstances, but to keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:5–7)
- Nor has He promised anything about your body: Paul knew nothing was promised about stopping the perishing of his outward man, but something was about his inward man (II Corinthians 4:16); he availed himself of it daily, and you're expected to as well
- Luke was Paul's personal physician; for Timothy's bodily problems God held his soul and spirit together; a time came when not even medicine could help Trophimus. That's not because God didn't love you — your inner man can cope and even glorify God

Substitutes vs. Glorifying God

- Self-help books that teach you how to cope are one of the substitutes: there is an effectiveness to them, but no effectualness and no glory to God; the

doctrine equips you to endure personal tribulation and glorify God

Three Main Sources of Personal Tribulation

- Personal tribulation comes from three main areas: the sufferings of this present time (Romans 8), the sufferings of Christ (II Corinthians 1), and "your own plain stupidity"
- Two of them will be taken up; you don't know how to deal with the third properly until the other two are settled. Paul deals with them in that order, and the study follows Paul's pattern
- From Romans 8:18 Paul deals with the sufferings of this present time — the plain old sufferings of a sin-cursed world with a bondage of corruption: sicknesses, accidents, being a victim of crime; salvation lets your inner man patiently wait them out
- The sufferings of Christ are not those normal everyday sufferings. You can avoid them by refusing to act like who you are in Christ, but you should never want to — the one who gets glorified by that is the adversary

L2

How Doctrine Operates Within You to Produce Comfort

Hebrews 4:12; Psalms 94 and 116; Romans 8:18–39; II Corinthians 4

Dividing Asunder: Hebrews 4:12

- Hebrews 4:12 was very important to the members of the remnant of Israel being written to, who faced not just personal tribulation but the tribulation period; it describes God's Word as quick and powerful in two ways, and the dividing asunder is the aspect in view
- Not an anatomy lesson: the body is the one getting afflicted and affected, and it has an intimate interface attachment to the soul — the seat of your emotions, the receptor of and responder to all that
- The soul itself can't do anything about it but appeals to the spirit; a vicious circle develops and anxiety builds up. With the Word of God effectually working, the spirit can send back the message, "Calm down"

Hebrews 4:12 in Operation in a Tribulation Saint

- Psalm 94 is a psalm for the tribulation saint: in "the multitude of my thoughts within me" there is chaos in the man; he got his mind back on the doctrine taught him, and it divided his soul asunder from his spirit
- Psalm 116 — "I believed, therefore have I spoken" — is quoted by Paul in II Corinthians 4; the tribulation saint facing the sentence of death for his stand believed the doctrine, it worked effectually in his spirit, and his soul is at rest
- When Israel's program has resumed, fear becomes the big issue; in Israel's program God describes the bodily effect of fear — in Daniel 5, in extreme fear, the joints of his loins were loosed — which helps you understand joints and marrow in Hebrews 4:12

Us Today: The Only True Inner Man Comfort

- The remnant had some right to a provision for their body because that's their program; in the dispensation of grace God has made no promise regarding your body, but has made one regarding your inner man
- The same principle of God's Word dividing soul asunder from spirit works through the doctrines given the body of Christ; the only true inner man comfort comes when the soul is divided asunder from the spirit, and the only thing that can do that is the living words of the living God living in you

First Category: The Sufferings of This Present Time

- The doctrine God provided first and foremost for any of the sufferings of this present time is that of "the glory which shall be revealed in us"; to reckon is to count something to be true and operate upon it regardless of what anything else indicates
- It is designed to displace from your soul the sufferings you experience in your body; you still groan and travail, but preoccupation starts a downward spiral — misery, despondency, despair, and then depression
- The end result is "we are saved by hope." Verses 26–27 give the Holy Spirit's special ministry within you when you don't know what to pray for as you ought; prayer is a fruit of doctrine effectually working within you
- Verses 28–30 give the certainty of God's counsel: all things work together for good, though not all things are good. From verse 31, God's power, grace, justice and love are for you
- If you cannot say "I am persuaded," you haven't learned that doctrine enough; Romans 8:18–39 is sufficient for any suffering in the present time

The Sufferings of Christ: II Corinthians 4

- With the sufferings of Christ, the only way you can get to Christ is to get to his members; II Corinthians contains all the foundational doctrine for them, and God wants the excellency of the power of His Word in you on display
- Paul had words of God effectually working within him and a spirit of faith with them; the doctrine is not designed to keep you from trouble or perplexity, but you don't have to be distressed or in despair, think yourself forsaken, or be destroyed
- II Corinthians 4 is the general passage, with the particular doctrines interspersed throughout II Corinthians; Paul is your example — going through his handling of personal tribulation you doctrinally grow with him, making a doctrinal advance from being able to simply endure them to wanting them

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

Walking by Sight vs. Walking by Faith

Israel walks by sight: they would see the work of the Lord (Exodus 34:10), and God would give them a sign so they could see it and know it. Paul says to us, "We walk by faith, not by sight" (II Corinthians 5:7). Because you have to walk by faith and not by sight, the only way you can handle personal tribulation is to have the Word of God to have some faith in.

Your Circumstances and Body vs. Your Inner Man

God hasn't promised to change your circumstances, nor to do anything about your body; He has promised to work in your inner man and keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus. The remnant of Israel had some right to a provision for their body because that's their program; with us today in the dispensation of grace there is no promise regarding the body, but there is regarding the inner man.

Effectiveness vs. Effectualness

Self-help books that teach you how to cope are one of the substitutes: there is an effectiveness to them, but no effectualness and no glory given to God; the only true inner man comfort comes when the soul is divided asunder from the spirit. Both in God's program with Israel and in this dispensation of grace, God warns about using substitutes.

Three Main Sources of Personal Tribulation

There are three main areas personal tribulation comes from: the sufferings of this present time (Romans 8), the sufferings of Christ (II Corinthians 1), and, in the lesson's words, "your own plain stupidity." Paul deals with them in that order, and the study follows Paul's pattern. Of the three, as the lesson puts it, "We're gonna talk about two of them"; you don't know how to deal with the third properly until you've got the other two settled.

The Sufferings of This Present Time vs. the Sufferings of Christ

The sufferings of this present time are the plain old sufferings of living in a sin-cursed world with a bondage of corruption — sicknesses, accidents, being a victim of crime; the sufferings of Christ are not those normal everyday sufferings. There's not much you can do to avoid the sufferings of this present time; you can avoid the sufferings of Christ, but you should never want to — you'll only experience them if you conduct yourself like the Apostle Paul. Romans 8:18–39 is sufficient for any suffering in the present time; II Corinthians contains all the foundational doctrine for the sufferings of Christ.

Israel's Remnant vs. the Body of Christ Today

Hebrews 4:12 is written to the members of the remnant of Israel, who belong to the time after the dispensation of grace is over and Israel's program has resumed; the same principle of God's Word dividing soul asunder from spirit takes place through the doctrines given to members of the Church, the body of Christ. Israel runs to the wilderness and the hills; God says to get the doctrine that can stabilize you in the midst of any of them, and glorify Him even if you die in the course of doing it. In this dispensation of grace God wants the excellency of the power of His Word operating within you put on display, especially to the adversary and his cohorts in the heavenly places.

Key Scripture References

Exodus 34:10	Israel would see the work of the Lord — Israel walks by sight
Psalm 94:16–19	A psalm for the tribulation saint; the multitude of thoughts within him — Hebrews 4:12 in operation
Psalm 116	Quoted by Paul in II Corinthians 4; a tribulation saint facing the sentence of death for his stand, whose soul comes to rest
Proverbs 3:5 ff.	Trust in the Lord — Keith says that's very similar to what we're talking about here in the dispensation of grace

Daniel 5:5 ff.	Extreme fear loosed the joints of his loins — the bodily effect of fear in Israel's program
Romans 8:18–25	The sufferings of this present time; the doctrine of the glory which shall be revealed in us; we are saved by hope
Romans 8:26–27	Help when you don't know what to pray for as you ought
Romans 8:28–30	The certainty of God's counsel
Romans 8:31–39	Every aspect of God's character and essence is for you; "I am persuaded"
II Corinthians 1	Paul calls the things he deals with in II Corinthians the sufferings of Christ
II Corinthians 1:3–4	Paul talking about any tribulation — it leaves no one out
II Corinthians 1:6	Consolation and salvation effectual in enduring, not in taking the problems away
II Corinthians 4:7	The excellency of the power of His Word in you on display
II Corinthians 4:8–9	Trouble and perplexion, but the normal outcome does not take place with Paul
II Corinthians 4:13 ff.	The spirit of faith; the only way you can look at something that's not seen is by the eyes of faith and the Word of God
II Corinthians 4:16	Nothing promised about the outward man perishing; something promised for the inward man
II Corinthians 5:7	We walk by faith, not by sight — opposed to Exodus 34:10
II Corinthians 12	Pleasure in afflictions and in infirmities
Philippians 4:5–7	God keeps your heart and mind through Christ Jesus; He hasn't promised to change your circumstances
Philippians 4:8–9	Think on the things He told you to think about
Colossians 4:14	Luke, Paul's personal physician
I Thessalonians 4:13–18	Words specifically designed by God to comfort you concerning a believer who has died
I Timothy 5:23	For Timothy's bodily problems, God held his soul and spirit together
II Timothy 4:20	A time came when not even medicine could help Trophimus; Paul had to leave him sick
Hebrews 4:12	Written to the remnant of Israel facing the tribulation period; God's Word dividing asunder soul and spirit