Suffering for Godliness Sake

Designed to make you willing to be a partaker of the sufferings

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

Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Series

These are Lessons 1 and 2 of Suffering for Godliness Sake. Both deal with I Corinthians 4:8–17, which is called here "the foundational doctrine to the overall body of doctrine about the sufferings of Christ" — verses designed to make you willing to be a partaker of the sufferings. The study first sets out three sources of sufferings in your Christian life found in our epistles, Romans through Philemon: the sufferings of this present time, the sufferings from your own stupidity, and the sufferings of Christ. I Corinthians 4 is the doctrine designed to make you willing to experience the sufferings of Christ. The body of doctrine for the sufferings of Christ comes in two parts: the first makes you willing to experience them; the second teaches you how to handle them as they occur. I Corinthians 4:8–17 is the willing doctrine; II Corinthians teaches you how to endure them. The passage is outlined: the ungodly thinking identified (8a), reproved (8b), corrected (9–13), and instruction in righteousness (14–17). Lesson 1 reaches the ungodly thinking of verse 8; Lesson 2 takes up the correction and the instruction in righteousness. The study closes with the body of truth now packaged with the sufferings so you can endure them; everything that morning had been dealing with "the willing aspect," and once you are willing, your volition is tested again.

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Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Core Focus
L1	Three Sources of Sufferings in Your Christian Life — I Corinthians 4:8–17: the Doctrine Designed to Make You Willing
L2	Made a Spectacle: Be Ye Followers of Me — I Corinthians 4:9–17; the Body of Truth Packaged with the Sufferings

Lesson Summaries

L1 **Three Sources of Sufferings in Your Christian Life** *I Corinthians 4:8–17: the Doctrine Designed to Make You Willing*

The Second Hallmark Feature

- The subject is called here "the second of the hallmark features to this world's value system": if we truly follow the pattern for godly living set before us in Paul, we are not going to be popular people in this world
- "More times than not, you're gonna make a negative impact upon people"; not liking or wanting that is operating on the world's value system — "And that's ungodly thinking."
- The Corinthians soft-pedaled the gospel of God's grace and embraced the wisdom of this world; verses 8–17 are the foundational doctrine to the overall body of doctrine about the sufferings of Christ

Three Sources of Sufferings

- Going through our epistles, Romans through Philemon, there are three sources of sufferings in your Christian life: the sufferings of this present time, the sufferings from your own stupidity, and the sufferings of Christ
- The second doesn't really have a name or an expression God uses in connection with it, so it is given one here; the third, the sufferings of Christ, begins to be described in I Corinthians 4 and is dealt with in great detail in II Corinthians
- "Sufferings of this present time, you can't avoid. Sufferings from your own stupidity, you can avoid and should avoid. Sufferings of Christ, you can avoid, but you shouldn't avoid them."

A Body of Doctrine for Each Category

- In connection with each of the three categories, whenever they're dealt with, you're given a body of doctrine designed to handle them. You cannot avoid the sufferings of this present time: the world and your body are in the bondage of corruption; Romans 8:18–39 is the doctrine God designed to produce tranquility for your soul — "your tranquilizer"
- The lesson's examples of suffering from your own stupidity: ignoring Paul's advice in I Corinthians 7 — "you have ignored my advice" — and I Timothy 6: "it's your own stupidity. Don't blame God."
- The body of doctrine for the sufferings of Christ comes in two parts: first to make you willing to experience them, then to teach you how to handle them as they are occurring

Both to Will and to Do (Philippians 2:12–13)

- God's Word effectually works within you in two phases — make you willing, then teach you how to do it: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure."
- The salvation of Philippians 2:12 is, as the lesson puts it, "a salvation from phase two of the policy of evil"; God's good pleasure there is suffering for Christ's sake in this extreme form, even to loss of life
- I Corinthians 4:8–17 is designed to make you willing; if you're not willing, II Corinthians and Philippians aren't for you yet. The consolation doctrine won't mean anything to you until you are a partaker of the sufferings
- There is really no value in dealing with a body of doctrine unless you know what it is designed to do; God wants you to take this realm of sufferings, though every fiber of your flesh says "Leave it."

The Ungodly Thinking Identified (Verse 8)

- The outline: "First part of verse eight, ungodly thinking is identified. Last part of verse eight, Paul reproves it. Verses nine through 13 corrects it. 14 through 17 instructs them in righteousness."

- Take special note of the two words “without us” at the end of verse 8; full, rich and reigning as a king don’t necessarily have to be good: Paul has the godly thinking; the Corinthians have the ungodly thinking
- Following Paul’s ways up to a certain point kept them safe; going further would bring the same things that happened to him. “They didn’t want to follow the pattern anymore.”

L2

Made a Spectacle: Be Ye Followers of Me *I Corinthians 4:9–17; the Body of Truth Packaged with the Sufferings*

Set Forth Last, Appointed to Death (Verse 9)

- In “For I think,” Paul has the godly thinking — he thinks of the situation as God thinks of it; being set forth last, appointed to death, is like the last gladiators in the arena after the crowd had become drunken
- God has not put members of the church, the body of Christ, in this world to be popular — “The head of the body isn’t popular.”

Made a Spectacle in the Arena of This World

- A spectacle has two facets: a sight for the morbid amusement of a crowd, and an object of wonder and amazement if it survives; Paul is going to deal with both of them
- Members of the body of Christ in this dispensation of grace are in the arena of this world; the mystery of Christ sent the adversary into an outrage with his angelic realm, and they have a morbid amusement in seeing us suffer
- It is God’s good pleasure you endure it: you are a member of the body of Christ, and God has packaged with the experience a body of doctrine that puts on display the excellency of the power of his word

The Body of the Corrective Doctrine (Verses 10–13)

- Verses 10–13 are taken here as a package — “the body of the corrective doctrine” — in which Paul does four things; the first, in verse 10, is a contrast, in the lesson’s words: “We’re experiencing things in accordance with what God’s doing. You’re experiencing things in accordance with avoiding it.”
- Of verses 11–12a: “all that was the result of being a spectacle”; being a spectacle is an ongoing thing, not just a bump on the road
- With “being reviled, we bless” Paul deals with the other aspect of the spectacle — a spectacle of marvel and wonder in the eyes of the ones who are persecuting him. The passage isn’t designed to explain the mechanics, only to make you willing

The Critical Juncture; Instructors in Christ and a Father

- Before the instruction in righteousness comes a critical juncture: “It’s up to you to believe that and be willing to enter the arena and be the spectacle.”
- A pastor continually going over Romans is only an instructor in Christ; Paul is our father and we are his sons in a very special sense — “a son, an adult son, are expected to enter into our father’s business”

“be ye followers of me” (Verse 16)

- Verse 16 is the final appeal regarding willingness: follow Paul in the pattern of what godly living and its consequences amount to; Paul’s our father example when it comes to God’s business in this dispensation of grace
- “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (II Timothy 3:12): “If you are not suffering persecution, you are not living godly in

Christ Jesus."

- "I can't get away from the fact that judgment seat of Christ, I'll be reproved, rebuked, and blamed." "I'm eternally secure. But I haven't entered into my father's business. And that is a shame."

The Body of Truth Packaged with the Sufferings

- The aim is for you to understand the body of truth now packaged with the sufferings so you can endure them: the first part of II Corinthians is doctrine designed to produce endurance; in II Corinthians 12:7–10 the doctrine takes you beyond just endurance to take pleasure
- The Philippians wanted to be treated just like the Lord Jesus Christ; in Colossians, the final aspect of the sufferings the satanic policy of evil can bring against you — being delivered to death
- Once you are willing and partaking of the sufferings, your volition is tested again: you must commit the well-being of your soul to the effectual working of that doctrine

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

Three Sources of Sufferings

Any suffering you experience comes from one of three categories: the sufferings of this present time, the sufferings from your own stupidity, and the sufferings of Christ; the second doesn't really have a name or an expression God uses, so it is given one here. The three differ in whether they can or should be avoided: "you can't avoid," "you can avoid and should avoid," and "you can avoid, but you shouldn't avoid them." In connection with each of the three categories, whenever they're dealt with, you're given a body of doctrine designed to handle them; I Corinthians 4:8–17 is "the foundational doctrine to the overall body of doctrine about the sufferings of Christ."

Willing Doctrine vs. Enduring Doctrine

I Corinthians 4 is the doctrine designed to make you willing to experience the sufferings of Christ; II Corinthians teaches you how to endure them. You won't get the willing doctrine out of II Corinthians and Philippians. Your volition is tested twice: "make you first willing and then to do it."

Godly Thinking vs. Ungodly Thinking

"Paul's got the godly thinking. They got the ungodly thinking." Paul thinks of the situation as God thinks of it. If we truly follow the pattern for godly living set before us in Paul, we are not going to be popular people in this world; not liking or wanting that is operating on the world's value system. God has not placed us in this world to be popular.

Instructors in Christ vs. a Father

An instructor in Christ instructs you who you are in Christ; with ten thousand of them "all you're doing is standing on the foundation and you're going no place." Paul is our father example when it comes to God's business in this dispensation of grace.

Living Godly in Christ Jesus vs. in Israel's Program

You can live godly but not in Christ Jesus: you can think, live and labor with God in what he is doing in Israel's program and not suffer much persecution at all today. As the lesson puts it, "that kind of takes place in Israel's program also": they didn't want to follow the pattern of their apostles in the sufferings of the day of the Lord's wrath.

Endurance Before Taking Pleasure

You never get to "I take pleasure in them" until first you know how to endure them; you don't know what God's grace being sufficient is all about until you know that God's grace produces endurance. Committing the well-being of your soul here is "not talking about the eternal aspect of it" but peace and tranquility while you endure; the epistles are in a proper order — "Don't mix them up."

Key Scripture References

Psalm 23	Not designed by God to handle problems for you when they start occurring in your life
Acts 18	Even Paul had been overcome by the fearful situation in Corinth because of the persecutions, and he stopped speaking; the Corinthian saints saw all that
Romans	The foundation you build upon and launch off of; Romans' doctrine tells you what your identity is
Romans 8	If this dispensation of grace continues on, the sufferings of this present time are going to increase; makes you more than a conqueror (as Alex pointed out)
Romans 8:18–39	The body of doctrine to endure the sufferings of this present time you cannot avoid — "your tranquilizer"
I Corinthians 4:8	Full, rich, reigning as kings "without us" — the ungodly thinking identified and reproved
I Corinthians 4:8–17	Designed to make you willing; the foundational doctrine about the sufferings of Christ
I Corinthians 4:9	"For I think" — Paul's godly thinking; appointed to death, made a spectacle
I Corinthians 4:10	A spectacle will be a fool for Christ's sake if he is doing his job
I Corinthians 4:11–13	Hunger, thirst, nakedness, buffeting — the result of being a spectacle; then the other aspect of the spectacle

I Corinthians 4:14–15	Shame is the first impact; just going over the foundational doctrines an instructor in Christ gives is not co-laboring with God
I Corinthians 4:16–17	Follow Paul in the pattern of what godly living and its consequences amount to; Timothy sent to bring into remembrance what they had been avoiding
I Corinthians 7	"you have ignored my advice" — a perfect example of suffering from your own stupidity
II Corinthians 1	Enduring the sufferings of Christ you're willing to endure; the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort; verse 6, doctrine designed to produce endurance
II Corinthians 4	The overall pattern of the policy of evil, from a fool for Christ to being delivered unto death
II Corinthians 5	Not designed to teach you that when you die, that's what takes place — that is assumed; "You're willing to do it. That's what 2 Corinthians 5 is all about."
II Corinthians 12:7–10	Taking pleasure — not handled until the endurance issue is handled first
Philippians 2:12–13	A salvation from phase two of the policy of evil; God works in you first to will, then to do
Philippians 2:17	Could only be said to members of the body of Christ doctrinally on par with Paul
Philippians 3:10	The three aspects of your identity in Christ put into effect in godly living to the hilt
Colossians 1:24	The final aspect of the sufferings the satanic policy of evil can bring against you — being delivered to death
I Thessalonians 4	The words designed to be a comfort when death takes place — not Psalm 23
I Timothy 6	If that happens to you, "it's your own stupidity. Don't blame God."
II Timothy 1:11–12	"against that day" — the end result of a satanic policy when you are delivered to death
II Timothy 3:12	"Yea" — an affirmative: no other alternative to what the verse says