

# Essential Doctrines

## Part 5 — Sufferings

A 4-Lesson Study by Keith Blades | © Enjoy the Bible Ministries®  
Expanded Study Guide & Lesson Summaries

### About This Part

Part 5 of Essential Doctrines examines the fifth of the six essential doctrines: the doctrine of Sufferings. Spanning four lessons, this section establishes why sufferings in the Dispensation of Grace must be understood entirely differently from how they were handled in God's program with Israel. Keith identifies two primary categories of suffering — the sufferings of this present time arising from the bondage of corruption, and the sufferings of Christ arising from the satanic policy of evil — and shows why God's provision in this dispensation is endurance and inner transformation rather than deliverance. The goal of the doctrine is for believers to be 'more than conquerors' and ultimately, like Paul, to take pleasure in infirmities for Christ's sake.



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### Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Core Focus
<b>Lesson 23</b>	Introducing the fifth essential doctrine from 2 Corinthians 1 — why sufferings are essential doctrine, how God's purpose in them differs from Israel's program, and the foundational distinction between the sufferings of this present time and the sufferings of Christ
<b>Lesson 24</b>	Identifying and defining the two categories of sufferings; examining Israel's Deuteronomy 28 covenant as the basis for avoiding both categories; and why the dispensational difference matters for believers today
<b>Lesson 25</b>	Israel's prophetic program promises complete removal of both suffering categories in the Kingdom (Isaiah 11; 25; 33; 65; Revelation 21); this present time is not that program — God's provision is endurance through the excellency of His word
<b>Lesson 26</b>	Being more than conquerors through Him that loved us (Romans 8:37); God's love is not measured by circumstances; the treasure in earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7–18); and the climax: 'My grace is sufficient for thee' (2 Corinthians 12:9)

## Lesson Summaries

### L23

#### Lesson 23 — Introduction to the Doctrine of Sufferings

2 Corinthians 1:1–10; 4:7–18; 12:7–10; Philippians 3:8–11; Colossians 1:24; Romans 8:18–28

*Lesson 23 introduces the fifth essential doctrine — Sufferings — beginning in 2 Corinthians 1. Keith establishes why Paul's 'I would not have you ignorant' signals essential doctrine, how God's purpose in sufferings is fundamentally different from Israel's program, and what the two categories of suffering are and why God's provision is endurance rather than deliverance.*

#### The Fifth Essential Doctrine Introduced (2 Cor. 1; Rom. 8)

- Paul introduces this doctrine with 'I would not have you ignorant, brethren' — the same signal used for each of the six essential doctrines — here in the context of 2 Corinthians 1 and his extreme trouble in Asia
- The doctrine is essential for two reasons: (1) the natural aversion to suffering makes it easy to misunderstand; (2) the satanic policy of evil specifically targets this doctrine to keep believers from responding to suffering as God desires
- Satan's primary tactic: use the Bible — specifically Israel's program with its promises of deliverance from suffering — to produce wrong expectations in members of the Body of Christ
- Paul's mind was completely changed by this doctrine: from 'I besought the Lord thrice' to 'most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities' — this transformation is the goal of the doctrine
  - This change is not natural or fleshly — it is the product of the effectual working of God's word within the believer

#### The Sufferings of Christ (2 Cor. 1:5; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24)

- Paul describes sufferings arising from the satanic policy of evil against the gospel as 'the sufferings of Christ' — distinct from common suffering due to the bondage of corruption
- 'For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.' (2 Cor. 1:5) — the sufferings and the consolation are inseparably linked
- 'That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.' (Phil. 3:10) — Paul desires the fellowship of Christ's sufferings as part of knowing Christ
- 'Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake.' (Col. 1:24) — rejoicing in these sufferings is the attained result of doctrinal working
- These are sufferings produced by men operating under the influence of the Adversary, persecuting and opposing the truth of the gospel — they are for Christ's sake and produce Christ's glory

#### God's Provision: Endurance, Not Deliverance (2 Cor. 4:16–18; Rom. 8:24–25)

- 'For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the

inward man is renewed day by day.' (2 Cor. 4:16) — the outward man is not stopped from perishing; the inner man is renewed

- 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' (2 Cor. 4:17) — what appears to human eyes as devastating is producing something eternal
- 'We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' (2 Cor. 4:18)
- 'We with patience wait for it.' (Rom. 8:25) — patience (patient endurance) is the operative principle for handling the sufferings of this present time
- Endurance is not passive resignation — it is active, doctrinally-produced faithfulness that keeps the inner man renewed while the outward man is under pressure

#### Examples of Endurance: Paul, Timothy, Thessalonians

- 2 Thessalonians 1:4 — the Thessalonians are commended as an example 'for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure' — they emulated Paul
- 'For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.' (2 Tim. 1:7) — God has equipped the inner man to face suffering without fear
- 'Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.' (2 Tim. 2:3) — the consistent exhortation throughout Paul's epistles is endure, endure, endure
- Paul is the pattern: 2 Corinthians is the epistle where the doctrine effectually worked within him and produced the capacity to write 'I take pleasure in infirmities' (2 Cor. 12:10)
  - The Thessalonians demonstrate that this doctrine successfully produces the desired response when received and believed — they are not seeking deliverance but patiently enduring

## L24

### Lesson 24 — Two Categories of Sufferings & Israel's Covenant

*Romans 8:18–23, 35–37; 2 Corinthians 1:5; 4:8–11; Deuteronomy 28:1–25; Leviticus 26*

*Lesson 24 identifies and defines the two primary categories of suffering for believers today, then examines Israel's Deuteronomy 28 covenant to show how both categories could be avoided in Israel's program through compliance — and why that same provision is not God's design in the Dispensation of Grace.*

#### Category 1 — Sufferings of This Present Time (Rom. 8:18–23)

- 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.' (Rom. 8:18) — the foundational statement of this category
- The expression 'this present time' carries a dispensational meaning: distinct from Israel's past program and from the future kingdom; this is the current age of grace
- 'The creature was made subject to vanity... shall be delivered from the

bondage of corruption.' (Rom. 8:20–21) — all creation groans under the effects of the curse

- These sufferings are universal — sickness, physical decay, death, loss, natural hardship — the common lot of all members of a sin-cursed world
- Working definition: 'The sufferings of this present time are the sufferings you experience and expect to experience because you're a member of a sin-cursed world, with a body still in the bondage of corruption'
  - God does not promise deliverance from these in this dispensation — His provision is capacity to endure and an eternal perspective that relativizes them

### Category 2 — Sufferings of Christ (2 Cor. 1:5; 4:8–11; Rom. 8:35–37)

- 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?' (Rom. 8:35) — a 'who' is behind these, operating through men
- Paul has the Adversary in mind — one who would want believers to think they have been separated from the love of Christ through these circumstances
- 'As it is written, FOR THY SAKE WE ARE KILLED ALL THE DAY LONG; WE ARE ACCOUNTED AS SHEEP FOR THE SLAUGHTER.' (Rom. 8:36) — Psalm 44, applied from Israel's remnant to the Body of Christ for Christ's sake
- 'We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.' (2 Cor. 4:8–9) — the doctrine at work
- 'Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.' (2 Cor. 4:10) — a unique privilege of this dispensation

### Israel's Covenant: Both Categories Could Be Avoided (Deut. 28; Lev. 26)

- Deuteronomy 28 is a performance contract: 'If thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God... all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee.' (Deut. 28:1–2)
- The blessings of Deuteronomy 28 directly counteracted both categories of suffering — no birth defects, abundant harvests, enemies defeated, enemies could not penetrate Israel's borders
- Leviticus 26 outlines five progressive courses of punishment when Israel failed to comply — the curses intensified as a disciplinary mechanism to bring the nation back to compliance
- The key distinction: in Israel's program, sufferings from both categories could be AVOIDED through covenant obedience — and were REMOVED when they repented; this is not God's program for the Body of Christ
  - Understanding why God's program is different today is essential — without this distinction, believers expect deliverance, and the Adversary exploits that expectation

### The Dispensational Difference and Satan's Tactic

- 'Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field.' (Deut. 28:3) — complete material and physical prosperity; the two categories of suffering counteracted throughout
- 'The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face.' (Deut. 28:7) — satanic opposition actively counteracted under the covenant

- Satan's strategy: because the Bible contains Israel's program with its blessings and deliverances, he uses it to produce expectations of deliverance that God has not promised the Body of Christ today
- When believers expect deliverance and do not receive it, the Adversary can exploit grief, doubt, and discouragement — 'see, God doesn't love you; see, your prayers aren't being answered'
- Paul's consistent response to both categories: God's grace is sufficient; the inner man is renewed; what works for us is far greater than what temporary deliverance could accomplish

## L25

### Lesson 25 — Israel's Future Deliverance vs. Our Present Endurance

*Isaiah 11:1–9; 25:6–8; 33:20–24; 65:16–25; Revelation 20–21; Romans 8:18–28; 1 Thessalonians 2:13*

*Lesson 25 establishes from the prophetic Scriptures that both categories of suffering will be completely removed in Israel's kingdom — but that this present time is not Israel's kingdom. God's purpose in this dispensation is different: the excellency of His power through His word working within believers to produce endurance, not deliverance.*

#### Israel's Kingdom: Complete Removal of Suffering (Isa. 11; 25; 33; 65)

- 'The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid... and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.' (Isa. 11:6–7) — the two-fold curse on creation removed
- 'And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.' (Isa. 33:24) — the bondage of corruption banished in the kingdom
- 'The former troubles are forgotten... the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.' (Isa. 65:16–19) — all suffering gone when kingdom established
- 'He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.' (Isa. 25:8) — fulfilled in Revelation 21:4
- Isaiah 27:1 — Satan (Leviathan) is slain; his entire policy of evil demolished — the source of the sufferings of Christ removed at the kingdom's establishment

#### Fulfillment in Revelation 20–21: Satan Bound, Sufferings Ended

- 'And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.' (Rev. 20:2) — fulfilling Isaiah 14:15 and 27:1
- 'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.' (Rev. 21:4)
- Both categories of suffering are ended when Israel's program is completed — but this is still future; it belongs to Israel's prophetic program, not to this present dispensation
- Israel's history shows the reality of both categories operating when the nation was under judgment — the five courses of punishment of Leviticus 26

intensified them progressively

- The signs, wonders, and miracles of the Lord's earthly ministry and the early Acts period were 'tasting the powers of the world to come' (Heb. 6:5) — a foretaste of kingdom conditions

### **This Present Time: A Gap in Israel's Program — No Deliverance**

- God has suspended His program with Israel — this present time is not seeing the fulfillment of Israel's kingdom promises; it is a parenthetical gap in which a secret purpose is being accomplished
- The bondage of corruption continues — 'you're going to die, the bondage of corruption is going to get you' — no physical deliverance promised regardless of how faithfully a believer lives
- The satanic policy of evil continues against the Body of Christ — the sufferings of Christ will be experienced by those who take a stand for the truth of this dispensation
- God's response is not deliverance but a privilege of His grace: the capacity to endure and to display the excellency of His power — described as a privilege Israel never had offered to them
  - Philippians 1:29 — 'For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake' — suffering for Christ is a GIFT of grace in this dispensation

### **The Excellency of God's Power Through His Word (1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Cor. 4:7)**

- 'The word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe.' (1 Thess. 2:13) — God's word accomplishes something specific within the believer who receives it by faith
- 'But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.' (2 Cor. 4:7) — the power is displayed IN the weak vessel, not by removing the vessel's weakness
- In Israel's program, God's power was displayed OUTWARDLY through signs, wonders, and miracles — visible to the outside world; in this dispensation it is displayed INWARDLY
- The Adversary has not seen this dimension of God's power — it is an aspect he never anticipated and cannot counter; it confounds him when a weak believer responds to suffering with peace and even joy
- The specific doctrines for handling both categories of suffering are concentrated in Romans 8 (sufferings of this present time) and 2 Corinthians in its entirety (sufferings of Christ)

## **L26**

### **Lesson 26 — More Than Conquerors: God's Purpose and Provision**

*Romans 8:35–37; 2 Corinthians 1:3–10; 4:7–18; 12:7–10; Psalm 116:10*

*Lesson 26 — the final lesson in the doctrine of sufferings — establishes that the Body of Christ is 'more than conquerors' through Christ, that God's love is not measured by life's circumstances, and that the entire doctrine climaxes in 2 Corinthians 12 with God's answer to Paul's thorn: 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.'*

### More Than Conquerors Through Him That Loved Us (Rom. 8:37)

- 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.' (Rom. 8:37) — God's absolute answer to every attempt to separate believers from His love through suffering
- More than a conqueror is GREATER than simply having no battle — something is produced through engaging in battle that cannot be produced any other way
- God has provided: the capacity to engage in the battle, the capacity to stand successfully in it, and the capacity to come out MORE than a conqueror — to His honor and glory
- Understanding this before studying the specific doctrines of 2 Corinthians is essential — it is the foundational perspective from which all suffering doctrine is received
  - 'Nothing shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' (Rom. 8:39) — this is the unshakeable certainty that undergirds all endurance

### God's Love Is Not Tied to Circumstances

- 'Greater love hath no man than this, than he lay down his life.' (John 15:13) — the cross is the ultimate and complete demonstration of God's love; nothing else can add to it
- The Adversary's tactic: convince believers that bad circumstances mean God does not love them or has abandoned them — exploiting this daily among the Christian population
- If a believer asks for circumstances to prove God's love beyond the cross, they are insulting the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice and giving the Adversary exactly what he wants
- God's love toward every believer is constant, unconditional, and entirely unaffected by the details of life — sickness, poverty, persecution, or loss prove nothing about God's love
- 'Learn a lesson: God's love towards you is not tied to the circumstances of your life. God is not proving he loves you by what happens to you in the details of your life.'

### The Treasure in Earthen Vessels (2 Cor. 4:7–18)

- 'But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.' (2 Cor. 4:7) — the contrast is deliberate: weak vessel, powerful word
- 'We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.' (2 Cor. 4:8–9) — doctrine produces these responses
- 'Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.' (2 Cor. 4:10) — the life of Jesus made manifest in mortal flesh
- 'For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' (2 Cor. 4:16) — no stopping the outward man from perishing; inner man renewed daily
- 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' (2 Cor. 4:17) — Paul's perspective on everything he suffered
  - 'While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not

seen.' (2 Cor. 4:18) — the operating principle: faith in unseen realities rather than visible circumstances

### **My Grace Is Sufficient: 2 Corinthians 12 (2 Cor. 12:7–10)**

- 'There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.' (2 Cor. 12:7) — a satanic instrument used by God for a higher purpose
- Paul asked the Lord three times to remove it — at that point he was NOT taking pleasure in it; his natural man resisted it just as any believer would
- 'And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' (2 Cor. 12:9) — God's answer: not removal, but sufficiency
- 'Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.' (2 Cor. 12:9) — the doctrine worked; Paul's attitude was transformed
- 'Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.' (2 Cor. 12:10)
  - This transformation — from asking for removal to glorying in infirmity — is impossible by human effort; it is the exclusive product of the effectual working of God's word within

## **Key Doctrinal Distinctions**

### **Two Categories of Sufferings for Believers Today**

Paul identifies two primary categories: (1) Sufferings of This Present Time — arising from the bondage of corruption common to all creation (Rom. 8:18–23); and (2) Sufferings of Christ — tribulation, persecution, and opposition brought against the Body of Christ by the satanic policy of evil for Christ's sake (2 Cor. 1:5; Rom. 8:35–37). A third category — suffering from our own foolishness, 'opposing ourselves' — is also noted (2 Tim. 2:25). Understanding which category of suffering one is experiencing is essential for applying the right doctrinal response.

### **Israel's Program vs. The Dispensation of Grace: Deliverance vs. Endurance**

In Israel's program, both categories of suffering could be AVOIDED through covenant compliance (Deut. 28), and will be REMOVED at the establishment of the Kingdom (Isa. 11; 25; Rev. 21). In this Dispensation of Grace, neither category is promised to be removed or avoided — but God provides the capacity to ENDURE both through the effectual working of His word (2 Cor. 4:7; 1 Thess. 2:13). Expecting deliverance from suffering today, based on Israel's program, is one of the most effective errors the satanic policy of evil produces in believers.

## More Than Conquerors vs. Absence of Battle

Being 'more than conquerors through him that loved us' (Rom. 8:37) is greater than simply having no battle to fight. Something is produced through engaging in battle and standing victoriously that cannot be produced any other way. God has provided the capacity to engage, to stand, and to come out victorious — to His honor and glory, and to the shame of the Adversary. This is a unique privilege of God's grace in this dispensation — one that Israel's program never offered, and that the Adversary's policy of evil is designed to prevent believers from appreciating.

## God's Love Is Not Measured by Circumstances

The Adversary's most effective tactic in connection with suffering is to make believers interpret difficult circumstances as evidence that God does not love them. Paul refutes this absolutely: the cross of Christ is the full and complete demonstration of God's love (Rom. 5:8). Asking for further proof beyond Calvary insults the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. God's love toward believers is constant, unconditional, and unaffected by any circumstance (Rom. 8:38–39). Suffering does not indicate God's displeasure — in this dispensation it is often a privilege He grants to those taking a stand for truth.

## The Excellency of God's Power in This Dispensation

In Israel's program, God's power was displayed outwardly through signs, wonders, and healings — visible to the external world and designed to demonstrate the covenant blessings. In this dispensation, God's power is displayed in an entirely different dimension: the excellency of inner transformation through His word (2 Cor. 4:7). The inner man is renewed day by day even while the outward man perishes (2 Cor. 4:16). This is the dimension of God's power the Adversary never anticipated and cannot counter — when a weak believer endures suffering with peace, joy, and even glorying, the excellency of the power is manifestly of God and not of man.

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## Key Scripture References

<b>Romans 8:18</b>	'The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.' — foundational statement of Category 1
<b>Romans 8:35–37</b>	'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.'
<b>2 Corinthians 1:5</b>	'For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.' — the link between suffering and consolation
<b>2 Corinthians 4:7</b>	'We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.'
<b>2 Corinthians 4:17</b>	'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'
<b>2 Corinthians 12:9</b>	'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' — God's answer to Paul's thorn in the flesh

<b>2 Corinthians 12:10</b>	'Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities... for when I am weak, then am I strong.' — the attained result of the doctrine's effectual working
<b>Philippians 1:29</b>	'For unto you it is given... not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.' — suffering for Christ is a gift of grace
<b>Philippians 3:10</b>	'That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.' — Paul's desire for the fellowship of Christ's sufferings
<b>Colossians 1:24</b>	'Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you... fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake.'
<b>1 Thessalonians 2:13</b>	'The word of God... which effectually worketh in you that believe.' — the mechanism of inner transformation
<b>2 Timothy 1:7</b>	'For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.'
<b>2 Timothy 2:3</b>	'Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.' — the consistent exhortation throughout Paul's letters
<b>Isaiah 11:6</b>	'The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb... the lion shall eat straw like the ox.' — kingdom removal of both suffering categories (still future)
<b>Revelation 21:4</b>	'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.'
<b>Deuteronomy 28:1–2</b>	'If thou shalt hearken diligently... all these blessings shall come on thee.' — Israel's covenant provision for avoiding both suffering categories

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