

IV. GOD'S ROLE IN HUMAN SUFFERING

What is God's role in suffering? Are there Scriptures that appear to make God the author of suffering? What is God's relationship to suffering?

A. Scriptures that Appear to Make God the Author of Suffering

There are a number of Scriptures that appear to make God the author of suffering. Ten such Scriptures frequently mentioned include the following:

Exodus 4:11 – "The Lord said to him (Moses), 'Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or dumb? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? (italics added) Is it not I, the Lord?'"

Deuteronomy 32:39 – "See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver from my hand."

II Chronicles 7:13 – "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land, or send a plague among my people,"

Job 2:10 – "He (Job) replied, 'You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?' In all this, Job did not sin in what he said."

Isaiah 24:1 – "See, the Lord is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; he will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants."

Lamentations 3:38 – "Is it not from the mouth of the Most High, that both calamities and good things come?"

Amos 3:6 – "When a trumpet sounds in a city, do not the people tremble? When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?"

Philippians 1:29 – "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him."

I Peter 4:19 – "So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good."

These Scriptures (and others that could be added) seem to indicate that, in some sense, God is the author or cause or source of many things that involve or produce suffering. But is this actually the case? Or do we need to press back to some previous questions? This leads to a second consideration.