

(1) Does God cause suffering?

In an ultimate sense, the answer is no. Human sin, not God, is the ultimate cause of suffering. Yet in another sense God brings suffering on violators of His laws, but only in response to human sin.

(2) Does God inflict suffering?

The answer is yes. He justly inflicts suffering on violators of His standards, but He does not do so arbitrarily or without reason.

(3) Does God permit suffering?

The answer is yes. He permits events that cause suffering by not preventing or hindering them. Yet He does not condone or approve of those events.

(4) Does God prevent suffering?

The answer is yes and no. Some events that cause suffering He prevents by His general and special grace; others He does not prevent, but justly permits to occur.

But now we must ask a further question: How do believers fit into this scheme of things?

Does God cause their suffering? Does He inflict suffering on them? Does He permit suffering to come into their lives? Does He prevent suffering from falling on them?

When His redeemed children sin, does He treat them any differently than He does nonbelievers when they sin? Do His redeemed children ever suffer because of their sins? If so, do they suffer merely as a natural consequence of their actions, or is God more directly involved? In either case, would the suffering be by God's appointment?

Hebrews 12:5-11 appears to bear on this question:

(5) and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as my sons,

**"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him;**

**(6) For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines,
And He scourges every son whom He receives."**

(7) It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

(8) But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

(9) Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?