

- (10) For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness.
- (11) All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

In examining this passage we note the following points for consideration:

- (a) The idea of discipline is found in every verse (twice in some verses).
- (b) Associated ideas in the passage include reproof (vs. 5) and scourging (vs. 6). These suggest correction of faults and some kind of pain-producing action!
- (c) In verse 11 this corrective discipline is said not to be joyful but sorrowful (at least while it is being administered!). This again sounds as though it involves some sort of pain!
- (d) This corrective discipline is said to be an evidence that we are really God's children, and that He loves us enough to train us in righteousness, because He knows that in the long run, doing the right thing will bring Him honor and enable us to realize our own highest well-being.
- (e) The purpose of God's corrective discipline is our good, so that we might walk in righteousness and share His holiness (vss. 10-11).

Now let us pause and attempt to sort this all out. God, acting as a righteous Judge, has inflicted the eternal punishment for our sin on His own Son. For those who are savingly joined to Christ by faith, there is no more condemnation or punishment. Thus God inflicts no suffering on believers viewed as condemned sinners!

But God, acting as a loving Father, wishes to train His children in righteousness, and has chosen to correctively discipline them when they live and behave in ways that do not honor or please Him. And Hebrews 12:5-11 tells us that God reproves His children and scourges them for their sins, and states that this corrective discipline is not a joyful experience, but a sorrowful one. This sounds very much as though it involves some sort of pain, some sort of suffering! How do we account for this?

Can we say that the difference between the way God uses suffering in the lives of believers and nonbelievers is that He employs suffering to correctively discipline His children, but that He employs suffering to punish those who are not His children? Can we also say that He permits suffering in believers' lives and uses it to correctively discipline them, and that He inflicts suffering on nonbelievers and uses it to punish them?

If we can, then we can say that God does not cause suffering in believers' lives, or inflict suffering on them, but rather permits suffering to come to them by not preventing it. And we can say that God does not punish His children as a judge inflicting a penalty, but rather chastises them as a father