

administering corrective discipline, and that this corrective discipline may involve suffering.

But this raises another important question. If God permits other human beings or Satan and his demons to do things to believers that make them suffer, do believers then simply become victims of such sinful actions? Must believers resign themselves to being victimized all their lives until they are delivered from such suffering in heaven?

Three things (at least) should be said in response to this question:

First, as believers we should always remember that, as undeserving sinners saved by grace, we should not think or feel that God is under obligation to protect us from the consequences of the Fall. When we speak of suffering, we should remember that we are talking about the effects of mankind's sin, in which we were all involved! The question should not be, "Why is God permitting this to happen to me?" but rather, "Why should God prevent this from happening to me?" If God protects us from any of the results of our original sin, it is a matter of pure grace!

Second, we should remember that nothing happens except by God's permission. And here we need to recall that, by permitting mankind (in the persons of our first parents, Adam and Eve) to freely and deliberately go their own way, reject God's truth and God's law, and fall from their original condition of righteousness and blessing, God has already permitted much suffering to come into the world.

But with regard to individual actions of other human beings and of Satan that harm us and bring us suffering, we should recall the great truth that no creature moves a finger except by an omnipotent God's permission! And we should also recall the truth that God not only permits actions that cause suffering; He also prevents many actions that cause suffering!

Third, we should also remember that God not only rules in the universe; at times He overrules in the events of the world. And He especially does this at times in the lives of His redeemed children.

Thus believers can pillow their aching, suffering heads and hearts on such promises as that found in Romans 8:28, where we are assured that God takes all things, including evil things, and rules and overrules them so as to make them serve His purposes and bring them out for good in the lives of His redeemed children!