

Is Suffering Always Punishment?

When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.

Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied:

"Consider now: Who, being innocent,
has ever perished?
Where were the upright ever destroyed?
As I have observed, those who plow evil
and those who sow trouble reap it.
At the breath of God they are destroyed;
at the blast of his anger they perish.

"But if it were I, I would appeal to God;
I would lay my cause before him.

"Blessed is the man whom God
corrects;
so do not despise the discipline of
the Almighty.
For he wounds, but he also binds up;
he injures, but his hands also
heal.

"We have examined this, and it is
true.
So hear it and apply it to yourself."

Job 2:11-13; 4:1, 7-9; 5:8, 17-18, 27