

Suffering and the Wicked

Job 18

suffering

2 true statements that can be misapplied in suffering...

I. God establishes _____ in the universe. (1-4)

II. The unrighteous get _____. (5-21)

A) a place of darkness –

B) a place of punishment –

C) a place with terrors –

D) a place of separation –



The point: If you're suffering, you must be headed to hell.

But...

Jesus – Mark 15:33; Matthew 20:23

Believers – Romans 8:23



So, how do we speak?

1) Do not blame the sufferer.

2) Just as suffering comes in different kinds, so we need to speak to it in different ways. Sometimes we suffer for sins and need to be encouraged to repent; sometimes we need encouragement to persist in the hard training God is putting us through to grow us.

3) Do not blame.

4) We can speak to friends suffering in Job-like ways with the best of intentions, with pastoral tact, invoking true theological statements supported by Scripture, and get it completely wrong in such a way that provokes God's terrible anger at us (Job 42:7-8), tortures someone of whom God is incredibly happy, and advances the devil's agenda for them.

5) You should be very suspicious of yourself—unceasingly so. The temptation to comfort ourselves is so sneaky that we must never stop asking ourselves, when talking to a suffering friend, "The thing I'm about to say—who am I trying to make feel better? My friend or myself?"

6) No blame!

7) It is not until God speaks to Job that Job is satisfied, comforted, and reconciled to God and God's way of running the world. In the same way, God will meet with your brother or sister who is living out Job's story and comfort him or her as only he can. This means your role is not to fix or solve your friends or silence their protests or resolve their trauma. Only God can do that.

8) Resist the temptation to lecture your friends and correct some of the crazy things they say. God will see to that in his own time and gentle way.

9) Find ways to speak to your friends about how God does not hate them (no matter how much it might look like it) and that the ordeal they are going through will not last forever. However nightmarish their lives have become, God will restore them. Even if their wounds are so profound that they feel no possible turn of events will ever compensate their losses, God is an expert at restoring permanent tragedy. He has done so with His own Son. However long it takes, he will act. This means that the best thing you can say is, "Let me wait with you for God to restore you."

(taken from *Suffering Wisely and Well: The Grief of Job and the Grace of God* by Eric Ortland. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022. Pp.86-88)