

Bad things do happen to good people

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BIG SANDY, Texas—On Feb. 26, 2005, I gave two short sermons as a two-part series titled "Bad Things Happen to Good People."

It has become one of my goals in life to debunk the popular health-and-wealth gospel, which permeates the thinking of people inside and outside the Church of God movement.

I enjoy planting and watering these good seeds and then watching God give the increase.

Laying the foundation

In the first sermon I mentioned three facts.

- Fact No. 1 was that behavior has consequences.

Consequences are a part of life. They are sometimes a part of life even when people are seeking God's forgiveness. There are examples in the Bible that show both God's forgiveness and some continuing consequences.

- Fact No. 2 was that God does not oftentimes give us what we deserve.

Isn't it great to consider God's tremendous mercy? God's grace is overwhelming.

- Fact No. 3 was that bad things happen to good people.

The biggest reason people cite for embracing the health-and-wealth gospel is Deuteronomy 28:1-68.

This chapter does indeed talk about obedience leading to blessings and disobedience leading to curses. But people take this principle way too far.

When good things happen, is it always because you were good? When bad things happen, is it always because you were bad?

In the first round of Job's trials, he suffered the loss of his family, business and possessions. In the second round of Job's trials, he suffered the loss of his health.

Did Job lose these things because he was bad? Not according to Job 1:1 and 2:3.

The apostle Peter explained that believers must be partakers of Christ's sufferings. Then he showed the difference between suffering for our own foolishness and suffering for Christ.

In 1 Peter 4:15 Peter said: Do not suffer as a murderer, thief, evildoer or busybody.

In verse 16 he said: If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed.

Two examples

In the second sermon I covered two well-known examples.

First I talked about the trials in the life of Joseph in the Old Testament.

When Joseph was talking to his brothers at the end of the book of Genesis (Genesis 50:20), he said something to the effect: "Although you thought to do evil against me, God had a good purpose in mind. He was saving many people."

Next I talked about Jesus of Nazareth.

When Peter gave a sermon on Pentecost at the beginning of the book of Acts (Acts 2:22-24), he said something like: "Although you killed Jesus of Nazareth, God had a remarkable purpose in mind. He was saving many people."