



Why Bad Things
Happen to Good
People

Why Bad Things Happen to Good People

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Why Bad Things Happen to Good People

1. Background

Everyone knows someone who feels life is unfair. Maybe it's you. Sure, you're not perfect, but then who is? Other less-than-perfect people seem to get away with so much. But, not you. Maybe God is against you. After all, people say he's "in control".

You're an honest person. You wouldn't hurt a fly. But, as soon as you get some money, it

seems to vanish for stupid reasons. Accidents always occur at the wrong time. Friends always seem to be taking advantage of you, and in the same way every time. When you're on a roll, then you get real sick, which ruins everything. And what about that jail time you did? You know you were framed, and totally innocent of any wrongdoing. Stop this train. I wanna get off.

There are actually a number of reasons why bad things happen to good people. Some may apply to you; others may not. We will explore this age-old question and offer explanations you may never have thought of before. We will also offer some helpful advice on how such a situation could be improved or remedied.

In the final analysis, rest assured that nothing happens for no reason. That does not mean it is somehow pre-destined to happen. It

just means there is a reason for everything. Getting a better idea of what that reason might be could make a big difference in your life. Have hope. The principles offered in this booklet are tried and proven. They have worked for people like you. Let's explore these ideas together....

2. Don't Blame God

First of all, let's take a look at the notion that "God's in-control". Some well-meaning faithful people, in an effort to understand and even define who God is, have come to think that God is both all loving and compassionate, merciful and totally virtuous in every way, and also responsible for all the misfortune, evil, tragedy, suffering and misery in the world. No one thinks

that is what they believe, but that is what they are proclaiming when they say that “God’s in control.”



If God’s in-control, that means that he is not only aware of, but either *allows* any and everything that happens in our life to happen, OR he *makes* everything happen. That’s what is usually going through people’s minds when they say “God’s in-control.” In other words, my cat

wouldn't have been run over by that truck yesterday if God didn't allow it to happen, or make it happen. Is there any justification for such thinking?

Well, not rationally, and not even Biblically. Obviously, from a rational point of view, you just can't have it both ways. In other words, God can't be both all loving, and also allowing or even making all hurtful and unfortunately things happen to people. You may say, *“Well, he's just testing people, or giving them hardships and challenges to overcome which help them be qualified for heaven.”* It may sound good on the surface, but a closer examination reveals far more serious consequences of such a belief. What it really means for God to be “in-control” is that his strategy and actions would be responsible for 99.9% of people going to an eternal suffering life in hell, while a submissive

0.1% enjoy happiness with him in heaven. An all-compassionate, all-loving, merciful and virtuous God cannot possibly fit into that mold. Any business or organization with such a high failure rate could never be considered a success, nor even exist.

How about the Bible? Maybe the justification is there in scripture. We just have to believe it, even if it sounds illogical. Well, again, that would be nice but, the fact is, there is no scriptural evidence whatsoever to justify this notion of God. The closest evidence we can point to is Jesus' words about the bird in the nest and the hair on our head. He said, "*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's knowledge (or care). And even the very hairs of*

your head are all numbered.”¹

As we can see by this passage, it is telling us that God is “aware” of every detail of our lives. That’s quite different than saying God is “in-control.” God will not comb your hair if he sees it is out of place, nor will he save the baby bird when it falls from the nest. It seems that God has assigned a portion of responsibility to human beings and that God insists that we do our part. That is why he continually pleads with man to listen to him and follow. Perhaps that is the biggest reason humanity has always been in such a wretched state of affairs. We haven’t always done a very good job, on our end.

The bottom line is, we need to resist the temptation to blame or attribute our misfortunes

¹ The Holy Bible NIV, Matthew 10:29-30

to God. There really is no reason to think that he is behind them. Nine times out of ten, there is surely a more reasonable explanation than to blame him. Some of those explanations may be less obvious than others. Let's explore some of them.

3. Spiritual Debts

Things happen to us for a variety of reasons. It might be genes, the environment, habits, chemistry, luck, ancestry, or other causes. God is not in the business of punishing human beings for their mistakes, contrary to what one might think reading parts of the Old Testament. However, there are definitely consequences for

unprincipled thoughts, feelings and actions. Jesus warned us that even if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has “*already committed adultery with her in his heart.*”²

There are spiritual principles upon which human design is based. To make a long story short, all forms and expressions of self-centered and selfish thinking, feeling and action are poisonous and cause damage. They will account for 99% of all human wrong-doing. Lying, stealing, hating, racism, sexism, bigotry, greed, arrogance, rape, and so many other problems are just various expressions of self-centeredness and selfishness. When we violate the principles upon which we were designed and created, we *will* suffer consequences. What consequences?

² Matthew 5:28

Again, God will not punish us. But, we may punish ourselves in any of a number of ways. An obvious example is poor eating habits. We may violate the principles upon which our body was designed by consuming all kinds of unhealthy foods and drinks. As a result, we may find that we develop health problems, diabetes, cancers, etc. That is not God's doing. That is our own doing.

Other examples are not so physical. For instance, interpersonal trust is a natural and wonderful thing that everyone wants to experience. However, once trust is betrayed, it is very hard to restore. Mistrust breeds more mistrust, which can cascade into other problems in our life. We have no one to blame but ourselves. In terms of lying, one lie can often lead to another until the world comes crashing down upon us. The examples are endless. We

need not devote more time to listing them all. The point is, we need to be objective and honest with ourselves. We need to be open to seeing our own shortcomings and taking responsibility for them.

The bigger problem is, the expressions of our self-centeredness or selfishness can be so subtle and commonplace in our life that we don't even recognize that we have done anything wrong. Not only that, but our personal definitions of "right" and "wrong" might be out of alignment with God's definitions. We might think a little shoplifting now and then is perfectly fine. But, stealing is stealing, and a spiritual debt *will* be incurred, no matter how minor it may seem. Then, when consequences arise in our life, we may think they are undue and unfair.... bad things happening to good people. "What did I do?"

Every time we violate a principle upon which God designed and created us, we incur a spiritual “debt”. Spiritual debts can be small or big. They can be light or heavy, commensurate with what we have done wrong. They will not go away by themselves. Time alone will not resolve them. If we do not resolve our spiritual debts in this lifetime, then our descendants may very well inherit them. The Bible confirms this in the book of Exodus.³

Spiritual debts accumulate. They cannot be consolidated into a single debt, like credit card balances at a bank. Accumulated spiritual debt can weigh a person down and make life miserable. When these spiritual debts pile up – especially debts from subtle and unrecognized

³ Exodus 20;5

self-centered or selfish deeds - it again often results in the perception that bad things happen to good people (for no reason).



a) Spiritual Debts and Karma

Spiritual debts have sometimes been referred to as Karma. Very generally, Karma

means that if you do good or evil to others, the same will return to you. It sounds like St. Paul's words, "*whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*"⁴ Karma can look like a similar principle on the surface, but regardless of what you call it, care must be taken to make sure self-centeredness and ego is cleansed out of it.

The important point here is to note that self-centeredness and selfishness poisons any effort to resolve one's spiritual debts. You cannot resolve a spiritual debt incurred for self-centered or selfish actions if your motivation and purpose for resolving it are also self-centered. Someone was wronged in whatever you did, if not God, himself. Therefore, thinking "*I'd better treat other people nicely so I will be treated nicely by them*" will not work. It is all self-centered. It has

⁴ Galatians 6:7

to be sincere. It has to be heartfelt. It has to be done just because you care about those who were wronged and want to help them. No other motivation will work. No resolution can be made when you are thinking about yourself. So, how can spiritual debts be resolved?

4. Resolving Spiritual Debts

Spiritual debts can either be resolved through restoration or restitution. Profound insights about this were given by the late Dr. Sun Myung Moon (1920-2012). Restoration means correcting the mistake and the effects of the mistake as much as possible, resulting in a return to the original condition or situation.

You can compare this to a car accident. Restoration after a car accident would entail repairing the damaged vehicles completely to their original working order and appearance, and also healing any wounds incurred. Any financial losses would also have to be taken care of. In other words, there should be no evidence of the accident after restoration is completed.

A somewhat similar process can be applied to human relationships. The hurt caused someone by your wrong actions can be somewhat restored through kind and sincere repentance, service, and compassion given to that person. Certainly, a murdered person cannot be brought back to life, but simple everyday wrongs that we commit can usually be restored, to some extent.

Restitution can help resolve spiritual debts when the mistake and the damage from the mistake cannot easily be restored. In restitution, some kind of compensation is given as a replacement for the damage incurred. A bouquet of roses can sometimes compensate for a forgotten dinner date, etc. It all starts to sound kind of legal, but spiritual laws and principles are strict. Jesus echoed this on one occasion when he said, “*you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.*”⁵

When it comes to resolving spiritual debts, there are three levels to deal with. One is forgiveness, or grace. This means that sufficient restoration or restitution can be made symbolically. Sometimes just a simple apology,

⁵ Matthew 5:26

or repentance, is all that is needed.

The next level refers to “*an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.*”⁶ No explanation needed here. The third level refers to amplified debt. If you are a repeat offender, or have been avoiding taking responsibility for your mistake, you may find that your obligation is greater than the damage you originally created. When Abraham failed to complete an important offering to God by not cutting some birds, his descendants suffered for 400 years because of his mistake.⁷

⁶ Exodus 21:24

⁷ Genesis 15:13

5. The Spiritual Debts of Others

Spiritual debts don't always have to be your own. In some cases, a person close to you may cause spiritual damage to someone. They may persecute them, hate them, or hurt them, etc. It might be the case that your friend is not mature enough, spiritually, to take responsibility for their wrong actions and heart. In that case, to some extent, *you* can represent them and restore or make restitution for their mistake. You could reach out to that injured or wronged person(s) and embrace them with love, repent to them for your friend's actions, and take responsibility to restore the damage done. Sometimes a government may turn against a group or segment of society. In that case, righteous citizens sometimes organize and rise up to offer comfort and healing to those wronged, in place of their government. Parents sometimes have to take

responsibility for mistakes made by their children. We can offer prayers of repentance for others in an effort to help them resolve problems and issues in their life. Spiritual debts can be socially reconciled, to some extent.

6. Ancestral Debts

What if your great-grandfather robbed a bank and was never caught. No restoration or restitution was ever made. Is it forgotten? Is there a Statute of Limitations, such that after so many years, the crime is removed from the books and forgotten? Unfortunately, not. As unfair as many might think it to be, you or someone in his family line may very well find themselves in a position of restoration or

restitution without even knowing why. This is one of the least understood of the reasons why bad things happen to good people. Like it or not, someone must either restore or make restitution



for the crime of the great-grandfather.

You might say, “*Well the bank is no longer in business, and all the people who were affected died long ago.*” Yes, but they still live on in the eternal spirit world and they may still feel the pain and resentment of your great-grandfather’s crime against them. What if the stolen money represented people’s retirements, life savings, or children’s college money?

However, even if the bank’s insurance replaced the stolen money and no one was actually harmed by the robbery, your great-grandfather still incurred the spiritual debt from his selfish deed. That spiritual debt is at least weighing down your great-grandfather in the spirit world. If no one else, at least *he* is

suffering from it. Someone must make amends and liberate him from his debt.

If a conscientious descendant were somehow aware of the situation, having read his diary or otherwise, he could make a sincere effort to resolve the debt. If the bank no longer exists, a similar amount of money could be donated to charity, or some other form of restitution made. However, it is unlikely that any descendant would be aware of the crime. Therefore, a descendant will likely find himself making restitution unwillingly and unknowingly. A descendant may be robbed, lose a similar amount of money through gambling, business losses or illness, or even spend time in jail for no apparent reason. As you might have guessed, this is a major reason why bad things happen to good people.

7. Training from Above

Another reason bad things sometimes happen to good people is for the training of an earthly person who has a special calling in life. A Biblical example can be seen in the story of Jacob. He suffered repeated abuse and trickery at the hands of his Uncle Laban for 20 years. However, these experiences prepared him to later understand and empathize with his elder brother, Esau, whom Jacob had also deceived and cheated earlier in his life. This intense training under his Uncle Laban helped Jacob to later reconcile with his resentful elder brother, an important event in Jewish history.

In a similar way, there may be certain people who grow up in very difficult circumstances, i.e., in Harlem, and who later are called by God to serve a great social benefit on the foundation of the things they learned while growing up. Ex-convicts can sometimes be called to be very effective prison chaplains.

You may say that God was just calling them on the basis of their youthful experiences, after the fact. But, they may also have been given such difficulties in preparation for the future. If the person doesn't turn their struggles into positive learning experiences, or if they don't respond to God's later call to serve their fellow man, then those hardships and struggles can be interpreted as elements of an unjust life. This then serves as one more example of how bad things seem to happen to good people.

8. Change your Fortune

The final question must be, what can we do about this? The spiritual debts must be resolved, one way or another. The answer to how to do that might be much easier if we could know what kind of spiritual debts we carry. If you develop a clear idea of how you have been expressing self-centeredness and selfishness in your own life, you can formulate a plan to resolve your past mistakes and even learn valuable lessons from them. It will take time, but the payoff will be worth it. Your life will smooth out, and some bad things that kept reoccurring will stop doing so.

However, it goes deeper than that, as we have seen. What about the spiritual debts from past generations; from our ancestors? We usually don't know our ancestors. Who can guess who lived when, how many generations ago, and what mistakes they might have made? It would make resolution easier if we could gain any insights into that. Spiritually aware people can sometimes help us gain such insights. But, apart from that, we are usually flying blind, to some extent.

Well, it's actually not that hopeless. The lack of love in its many expressions was fundamentally the root cause of all spiritual ailments and debts, and the expression of sincere, heartfelt love is ultimately the medicine that will resolve them. If we can gain no insights into the kind of spiritual and ancestral debts that we may carry, then we can apply the general treatment

that is effective for all of them. That treatment is transforming myself into the most loving, considerate, altruistic, kind, caring and generous person I can be. Go out of your way, every day, to love and invest in people. Love your enemies. Live the kind of life all people were meant to live. It is simple, but not easy; at least at first.

We cannot know how much investment of love and kindness it will take to make a noticeable difference in our life. It depends on the spiritual debts we are carrying. Some are simple and light weight, while others may be like a lead ball and chain around our ankle or neck. Be patient. Enjoy the process. It is the way we should be living, anyway, and the way to utmost happiness in life. Do not look at it as a task or job which you must do for a while to get rid of your problems. If you think like that, it will not work. No healing or benefit will come.

Your motivation would be self-centered. It has to be purely sincere, from your heart. You genuinely have to transform yourself into a more loving person. There is no faking it. But, when you do that over a period of time (remember, your ancestral debts piled up over generations), then you will be amazed at the change you will see in your life. All the problematic spiritual debts will eventually be resolved. You will find yourself living a life you never thought you could have, filled with compassion and friendship. You will be excited to wake up each and every morning because you know it will be another good day.

You will find that you are no longer one of those many people who wonder why bad things happen to good people, like yourself. I have written this little book not only from spiritual principles I have learned, but from my personal

experience of applying them. I have applied the things I have written about here in my own life. They work. They have worked for me and countless other people. They can work for you, too. What do you have to lose? A happier life is waiting for you.