

Bad Stuff

You know how sometimes things go from bad to worse? I read about a guy recently, and he managed to trap his foot under a power lawn-mower – sliced his big toe off. That's bad enough, but the severed toe flew up and took his eye out. There can't be too many people – in the history of the world – who have been blinded by their own big toe. His problems went from bad to worse.

Another guy was a plumber. He was called in by a newly-wed husband, to fix the sink in the bathroom. So he's upstairs crouched under the sink, and the husband decides to go off and do a bit of shopping. Meanwhile, his new wife comes home. She hears noises from the bathroom and goes upstairs. Sure enough, crouched under the sink, is what she naturally assumes is her husband. Being somewhat playful, she creeps up behind him, and shall we say...tickles his fancy. The poor plumber is startled, probably not least because – as far as he knows – the only other person in the house is a man. He jumps with such force, that he fractures his skull on the sink.

The wife, of course, immediately realises her mistake, and calls an ambulance. She's telling the medics what transpired, as they cart the unconscious plumber downstairs. They laugh so much they drop him off the stretcher, *breaking his leg!*

It's a bit like the old joke about the doctor, who tells a patient he's got some bad news for him...and some worse news. "Oh no", says the patient, "well, tell me the bad news first". "You've got 24 hours to live", says the doctor. "What? Well what on earth is the *worse* news?" "The worse news is, I was meant to tell you that bad news *yesterday!*"

I guess many of us have our own experiences of things going from bad to worse....I know *I* have. Interestingly (and perhaps, significantly) mine have happened a lot less often since I've become a Christian. Things still go wrong, but there's rarely a string of related, unhappy events. Certainly, my response to mishap has changed: these days, I tend to think in terms of "what (if anything) am I getting wrong, what response is God looking for...and what does he want me to learn from this?"

Two things are certain in any given situation: The first is, God has either caused it - or (more often) he's allowed it. The second (which *only* applies to Christians) is that "in all things, God works for the good of those who love him..." That doesn't mean everything will be just peachy, but it does mean that whatever happens, God will use it to our ultimate benefit. Even suffering? *Absolutely* – the bible *and* Christian experience tell us that...suffering is so often the opportunity to become more like Jesus. Even death? *Of course* – that's the start of life as it's meant to be!

There's an awful lot of apparently random suffering in the world. Jesus was once asked to comment on some of it, when a wall had fallen and killed some people. He merely told his listeners that unless they repented, they'd die, too. What he was saying, was that they were no better off than those buried under the masonry – they were *spiritually* dead already. Perhaps he came over as a little uncaring, but I guess he was commenting on the supreme pointlessness of life, suffering and death outside of a relationship with God. "Bad to worse" - or even "good to worse" - sums up many people's time on this planet. But because of Christ's intervention (and with a meaningful response to that) things can be so much better, and one day they'll be, well... *perfect!*