

In Theory: GOD'S PUNISHMENT?

Despite a 10.9-million jury award against him this week for picketing at a funeral of a soldier who died in Iraq, Pastor Fred Phelps and his church in Kansas will reportedly not be deterred from picketing military funerals with anti-gay slogans -- claiming that deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan are God's punishment for homosexuality. They reportedly hold up signs that say things like "God hates fags." Phelps says it is a way to continue his struggle against what he and his followers say is an immoral lifestyle. Others say Phelps is practicing a "hateful ideology."

What do you think? And what kind of message do you think Phelps' actions sends to the faith community?

Pastor Phelps does great damage to the gospel message of love. It would be interesting to get into his head to see the dragons which push him to these hateful demonstrations and slogans. I guess he thinks this is Christian action but he is not imitating Christ or his Twelve Apostles or the Sacred Writings that flowed from their teaching.

God loves all his creation and sees that it is very good. He loves each of his children but not their sinful choices. In every heresy there is some element of truth. It is true that homosexual activity is sinful as is every deliberate sexual activity outside of legitimate marriage.

You might make a case for "God's punishment" in this life for man's sinfulness in that God does allow man to use his free-will even to offend God. Man can indeed choose to follow a suicidal way of life leading to his own self-destruction. However God is very patient and continuously tries to bring him to repentance. He awaits the prodigal son with open arms ready to forgive.

In the Old Testament the prophets claimed that God allowed Israel because of infidelity to be taken into captivity by the Babylonians. Some fifty years later God used King Cyrus to return them to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Perhaps in the last century God used atheistic communism to bring us to our senses. Now in this century is he using Islamic terrorism to give us another chance to come to our senses?

REV. GENE FRILOT
Pastor Emeritus
Incarnation Catholic Church
Glendale