

What Does the Bible Teach About Disabilities?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

I. IS GOD RESPONSIBLE FOR DISABILITIES?

- A. Ex. 4:10-12
- B. We often demand explanations for how the world works and why phenomena happen within it.
 - 1. It is not enough that things happen randomly; most are curious as to why they happen. Three year olds asking: "Why?"
 - 2. John 9:1-3 - The disciples made a common assumption.
 - 3. No one wants to be blind, so it must be a punishment from God. For them, the only question was who was being punished?
 - 4. Jesus said that their assumption is mistaken. The blindness was not the consequence of a sin, but happened so that God's glory could be seen.
- C. When tragedies happen to good people, or the young or innocent, people ask, "Why do they deserve such a fate?" - Acts 28:4
 - 1. To Calvinists, nothing happens that God did not plan and approve.
 - 2. This leads many to the conclusion that God is the cause of evil
 - a. James 1:13.
 - 3. We make the assumption and assign the judgment that disabilities are evil. Our judgment is subjective and flawed.
- D. I submit to you that we are completely mistaken in our view of disability. At the risk of sounding politically correct, but for a more noble reason, I believe we should describe such persons as "otherwise abled."
 - 1. "Aerodynamically the bumblebee shouldn't be able to fly, but the bumblebee doesn't know that so it goes on flying anyway." (Mary Ash)
 - 2. "Disability is a matter of perception. If you can do just one thing well, you're needed by someone." (Martina Navratilova)
 - 3. "When you hear the word 'disabled,' people immediately think about people who can't walk or talk or do everything that people take for granted. ...I find the real disability is in people who can't find joy in life and are bitter." (Teri Garr)

I. FROM WHENCE DO DISABILITIES COME?

- A. Some physical trials come because this is not a perfect world.
 - 1. When God made the world, it was perfect - Gen. 1:31
 - 2. Adam and Eve sinned, and the world became fallen - Gen. 3:17-19
- B. Sometimes it is a punishment for sin - 2Chron. 26:16-21
 - 1. Sometimes it is the result of someone else's sin - Lam. 5:7

2. Some self-destructive sins bring a high risk of disease in consequence - Rom. 1:26-27
- C. Sometimes the Adversary tempts people to abandon God - Job 1:6-12
 1. When Job did not curse God, Satan attacked his health - Job 2:7-10
 2. Some suffering is due to Satan trying to turn people away from God.
- D. Sometimes trials come to test or to increase our character or usefulness in the Kingdom of God.
 1. James 1:2-4; 2Cor. 12:7-10; Heb. 12:11
 2. God limits the severity of the trial - 1Cor. 10:13
- E. Sometimes afflictions come "just because"
 1. We cannot know what the future holds - Ecc. 9:1-2
 2. Some events have no relationship to the moral condition or choices of the victim - Ecc. 9:11-12
 3. Some things happen randomly or by chance; God expects us to do our best regardless of our lot in life - Luke 13:2-5
- F. Some are afflicted to highlight God's glory and power.
 1. The man was born blind so that Christ could heal him.
 2. Sarah was barren so God could perform the miracle of Isaac's birth.
 3. Lazarus died so Jesus could show His power over death - John 11:4
 4. In other words, some are afflicted to serve a Divine purpose.
 5. It is no more our role to determine that purpose than it is for us to explain the Providence of God; just glorify God.
 - a. Are you a man or a woman? Glorify God in that role.
 - b. Are you gifted with public speaking or skilled in private conversation? Glorify God in that role.
 - c. Can you contribute two talents of gold or just two mites? Glorify God with your offering.
 - d. Do you have the physical ability to walk easily into worship services or must you have assistance getting into the building? Just come in and glorify God in worship.

II. WE ARE NOT GOD

- A. God has always held the afflicted in a special place in His love, and He expects His children to do the same.
 1. Lev. 19:14; Deut. 27:18; James 1:27
- B. When tragedy occurs, when a baby is born disabled, or an accident leaves a person paralyzed, do we know why it happened?
 1. For humankind, the answer is no.

2. God is God; He is Creator and Lord over all; His wisdom directs this universe. We are not given insight as to why matters turn out the way they do, unless God specifically reveals it; and, He is not revealing it.
- C. We must trust God and just do our best with what we are given.
1. When Moses did not want to lead the Israelites, he offered the excuse that he was a poor speaker - Ex. 4:10-11
 2. God made Moses as he was and chose Moses in that condition. Therefore, Moses with his disability was just what God needed for the task assigned to him.
 - a. God knew what Moses could and could not do better than Moses knew. God had already figured out how to make it work for His glory and for Moses' salvation.
 3. God made us as we are. Before we were born, he had already figured out how to make us so that we can glorify Him and be saved, regardless of how we view our limitations.
 4. In 1996 in Austintown, I baptized a woman with ALS. In 2007, I returned to Youngstown to present her funeral service. Afterward, a couple came to me and said that they were faithful Christians because of her example and teaching. She glorified God, saved her soul, helped to save the souls of others... from a wheelchair.
 5. One thing of which I am certain today: that she is not sitting in a wheelchair at this moment as she rests in Abraham's bosom in Paradise, nor will she approach the throne of God in the Judgment with braces and Langstrand canes.

Conclusion:

- A. "Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible." (Francis of Assisi)
- B. "My advice to other disabled people would be, concentrate on things your disability doesn't prevent you doing well, and don't regret the things it interferes with. Don't be disabled in spirit as well as physically."
(Stephen Hawking)
- A. Moses, God made your mouth. Use it to praise Him and challenge Pharaoh.
- B. Christians, God made us. Use what we have been given to glorify Him and save our souls and to lead others to salvation.