

Trials and Pain in our Life (Saint Paisios the Athonite)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



The way to deal with disability

Elder, can a disability create an inferiority complex?

That's just nonsense.

But this sometimes happens with the disabled.

It happens because they have the wrong take on things. When they realize that a disability's a blessing from God, they view it properly and are released from their sense of being disadvantaged. If a child's disabled and hasn't been helped to rejoice in its disability, then there's some excuse for feeling disadvantaged. But if it grows up and the sense of inferiority remains, this means that it hasn't grasped the deeper meaning of life.

There was a little girl, nine years old, who got a tumour in her eye and the doctors removed the eye. The other children mocked her at school and the poor little thing

was distressed. Her father came to my kelli and told me about his problem.



‘I’m thinking, Elder, that, if I get her whatever she wants, that’ll help her, because she’ll be happy and forget to worry about her disability. But how can I do this? I’ve got five other little children and they’re jealous because they don’t understand’.

‘What are you talking about?’, I told him. ‘That’s false comfort; it’s not a solution. If you get her that dress she wants now, in a few years she’ll be asking you for a Mercedes. How are you going to manage? Then she’ll find out that some people have an aeroplane on the roof, and she’ll ask for one of those, as well! Then what’ll you do? Try and get the child to be happy that she’s still got one eye. To feel she’s a martyr. Lots of martyrs had their eyes put out or their ears and nose cut off and people laughed at them. But although they suffered from the pain and the mockery of other people, they didn’t back down and they endured martyrdom unflinchingly. If the child understands and deals with its disability with hymns of praise, God will give it a place among the Confessors. Is it a small thing for God to arrange for the eye of the child to be removed in such a way that it doesn’t hurt, and then place the child among the Confessors? Because it won’t have any sins to pay off and will have a clear reward from the disability’.

The poor man thanked me and left, relieved. And he really did help his daughter to understand that her disability was a blessing from God, for which she should glorify Him. She grew up normally, went to university to study languages, now works as a teacher and is happier than other girls who have it all and are miserable because

they haven't understood the deeper meaning of life.

If you don't understand this deeper meaning of life, you're distressed even with the blessings and opportunities God gives you for your salvation. But if you view things properly, you rejoice over everything. If you're lame, you're happy; if you're not the brightest, you're happy; and if you're poor, you're happy'.

Of course, I realize how difficult it is for the disabled and I pray a lot for them, more so for the girls. A disability isn't so hard for a boy, but for a girl who wants to make her way in life, it's difficult.

It's especially difficult for the blind. The poor things can't see to their needs, when they walk they trip... In my prayers I ask God to give the blind even a little light, so that they can look after themselves a bit.

Elder, I'm also upset because I can't read even a chapter of the Gospel because of my poor eyesight. You've told us that, if we read a chapter a day, we'll be sanctified.

Why should you worry about that? If you read a few verses, or only one word, or even just kiss the Gospel, will you not be sanctified? In any case, you haven't just come to know Christ now. Why don't you study, in your mind, what you've read and heard so far? The whole basis is the right way of looking at things. Say to yourself: 'Now God wants me like this; a few years ago, He wanted me like that'. A devout lawyer, blind in his old age, once said to me: 'Say a prayer, holy Elder, so that I can read a little and recognize the faces of those dear to me'. I told him: 'You know those dear to you from their voice. As for reading, you've been reading for all these years. Now say the Jesus Prayer. It seems that this is what God wants from you now'. From then on the poor man felt greater joy than when he'd had his sight.

The heavenly reward for disability

If we have a disability and we're patient and don't complain, then we have a greater reward. Because the disabled are all putting into their savings. One's got an ear that's deaf, another's got an eye that's blind, another's got a leg that's lame. That's a great thing! If they also struggle a little against the passions in the soul, they'll be given crowns by God. You see, servicemen disabled in war get a pension and are also awarded medals.

If people are hale and hearty, as well as good-looking, but don't strive to deal with their shortcomings, God will say to them: 'In your life, you enjoyed your goods and your well-being. What do I owe you now? Nothing'. But if somebody has a disability-

either because they were born with it, or inherited it from their parents or suffered it later, they should be happy about what they'll receive in the next life. And if they're not to blame, they'll receive a full wage in heaven, without deductions. It's no small thing for people to be unable, for example, to stretch out a leg for the whole of their life, to be unable to sit, to be unable to do prostrations and so on. In the next life, God will say to them: 'Come, my children, and sit in this comfortable armchair for all eternity'. This is why I say I'd prefer a thousand times to have been born mentally retarded, blind or deaf, because then I'd have something coming to me from God.

As long as they don't grumble, but humbly glorify God and live close to Him, they'll have the best places in paradise. God will rank them with the Confessors and Martyrs, who gave their arms and legs for Christ and now, in paradise, continually kiss His arms and legs with devotion.

And if, Elder, someone's deaf, for example and a complainer?

Even little children whinge. There's a lot that God pays no attention to. You see, good parents love their children equally, but show special interest in the weak or disabled. The same's true of God, our good Father, as regards His children who are weak bodily or spiritually. As long as they're well-disposed and give Him the right to intervene in their life.

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