

# Consider This ...

February 2012 – Bryan Bothwell

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It took a *Muslim* member of the British Cabinet to admit that religion has been “neglected, undermined, and, yes, even attacked” by recent British Governments and that “Europe needs to become more confident in its *Christianity*”. In the topsy turvy world we now live in, her remarks were immediately condemned by the British Humanist Association as “unnecessarily divisive”. The irony is that, as it is in Cayman also, most of the divisiveness in our societies on this issue is by the vocal minority who deride Christianity, with which the *majority* of the two populations identify. That aggressive minority demands instead, laws and policies that reflect the various practices of what the British Humanist Association termed the increasingly non-religious and diverse society of today. *Consider this*, history has shown what happens to societies where humans begin to see themselves as their own gods, a time when, as the Book of Judges puts it, “everyone did as he saw fit”. It is the results already of such ‘anything goes’ individualism that led the British Prime Minister to urge a *revival of traditional Christian values* to counter the slow-motion moral collapse that led to the August riots in England. We need to *understand and practice* the values of Jesus in what it means to love God and each other.

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God loves Justice. In fact, it is one of the few things He demands of us. To live justly; to be just to others. In God’s justice, people should get exactly what they deserve. But God in His love and generosity thinks we deserve a lot! As Jesus explained, He came to earth so that we could have life and have it *abundantly*. So why are so many people in Cayman and everywhere else crying out for that kind of justice, to share better in the abundance of God’s provision for life on earth as well as eternal life? One of the reasons is that we do not see well. *Consider this*, in Acts 3, in the first recording there of one human being miraculously healed through another, Peter healed a beggar who because of a disability was unable to enjoy an important aspect of the fullness of life. He was taken to the temple gates everyday; and Peter met at the temple each day. But *that* day Peter saw the man *and* his need. Do we fail to see certain people, their disabilities, their needs, how to help, and most importantly, the possibility and power of God to put things right for those who are crying out? In our next Consider This, we will look at this some more.

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In our last Consider This, we began to look at God’s type of justice where each person would get exactly what he or she deserves. And that God in the generosity of His love for us, thinks we deserve the fullness of life that Jesus came to bring in abundance – eternal life. But undoubtedly, God has demonstrated His passionate concern for us in our basic earthly needs too: the widow, the orphan, the hungry, the homeless, the prisoner of something. *Consider this*, people in these situations all have a disability of some sort. Something that is causing them to not have these basic necessities. Whether the disability is self inflicted or not is beside the point for the Christian, as we should see the possibility of Christ to heal even the self-inflicted disabilities, whether it be an addiction, irresponsibility or whatever we might think the reason is. Sometimes, if we look deeply enough, we might find that it is not so *self-inflicted* after all. Even if we are unable to heal someone with a physical disability the way Peter did, surely there are other disabilities that we can do something to counter if we take the time to truly see people, as Peter did that day - and as Christ always did.

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We have been looking at how disabilities in the widest sense of the word, not necessarily physical, where great strides have been made since our story in Acts, can inhibit a person's ability to enjoy the justice that God loves. And we looked at one reason many experience such injustice - because too often those who are in a position to help just do not see the people suffering, *the eyes of our hearts do not focus on them*. One day Peter saw the crippled beggar at the temple gate and healed him. We know from Acts 2 and 3 that both Peter and the beggar went to the temple each day, the beggar stationed at the gate. But we do not know how many days Peter was going before he saw the other man and recognized his real need. But *Consider This*, we do know what Peter was doing in the time leading up to this event that changed the life of the man. Acts 2 tells us that Peter and the other believers were devoting themselves each day to the teachings about Jesus and to prayer and Christian fellowship. Is it because we are not growing in Christ as Peter was doing why we do not see people as Jesus saw them? And therefore fail to help counter their disabilities?

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We have been looking at how the failure to help eliminate or at least counter, or compensate for, certain disabilities that others experience in life robs them of the justice that God demands for all people. And we considered that since our story in Acts 3, great strides have been made in helping people rise above the extreme limitations caused by *physical* disabilities in those days. But that there are many other kinds of disabilities from which our people still suffer, either directly or because of the havoc caused in the lives of those on whom they are dependent. As it was in Biblical times, children and women are often caught up in such lack of justice over which they have no control. We noted that most of us do not have the strength of faith in Christ that allowed Peter to *heal* the man with the disability, but that is no excuse for doing nothing. *Consider This*, before Peter healed the man, his friends faithfully brought him *day after day* to the temple gate where he could at least honestly help himself counter his inability to work for money. Those friends loved their neighbour to the best of their ability. What reason can any of us have to do less?

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In our last episode, we looked at how in the story in Acts 3, the friends of the crippled beggar faithfully did, every day, what they could do to help compensate for the affects his particular disability had on him. But *Consider This*, when Peter finally saw the man and recognized his real need, Peter realised that he could bring, indeed should, *must*, bring the power of Christ to bear on this problem. And by doing so, he was able to *eliminate* the disability that had prevented the man from participating fully in the sufficiency of life that God provides. Because Peter had been spending time in study about Christ and being devoted to prayer he realized that not only could the situation be partly compensated for, as the man's friends had been doing faithfully, but through Christ it could be *eliminated* and the situation put right. As Christians, we too must bring the power of Christ to bear on the situations that surround us too that can easily spawn disabilities, even by providing after school care so children can learn properly or to keep them from getting into trouble young, as well as introducing others to the miraculous power Christ can bring to their lives.