

Merging into Greatness

In his book *The Quest for Character*, Dr. Charles Swindoll, author, pastor and chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary, shared a list (variously attributed to columnist *Dear Abbey*) of “some of the world’s greatest men and women who have been saddled with disabilities and adversities but have managed to overcome them.” The list includes:

- Cripple him, and you have a Sir Walter Scott.
- Lock him in a prison cell, and you have a John Bunyan.
- Bury him in the snows of Valley Forge, and you have a George Washington.
- Raise him in abject poverty, and you have an Abraham Lincoln.
- Subject him to bitter religious prejudice, and you have a Benjamin Disraeli.
- Strike him down with infantile paralysis, and he becomes a Franklin D. Roosevelt.
- Burn him so severely in a schoolhouse fire that the doctors say he will never walk again, and you have a Glenn Cunningham, who set a world’s record in 1934 for running a mile in 4 minutes, 6.7 seconds.
- Deafen a genius composer, and you have a Ludwig van Beethoven.
- Have him or her born black in a society filled with racial discrimination, and you have a Booker T. Washington, a Harriet Tubman, a Marian Anderson or a George Washington Carver.
- Make him the first child to survive in a poor Italian family of 18 children, and you have an Enrico Caruso.
- Have him born of parents who survived a Nazi concentration camp, paralyze him from the waist down when he is 4, and you have an incomparable concert violinist, Itzhak Perlman.
- Call him a slow learner, “retarded,” and write him off as uneducable, and you have an Albert Einstein.

Of their efforts, Dr. Swindoll said: “Some have merged into greatness despite adversity. They refuse to listen to their fears. Nothing anyone says or does holds them back. Disabilities and disappointments need not disqualify.”

Recalling what these men and women have overcome to achieve great and mighty things removes any excuse I may have for not fulfilling God’s plan for my life.

What about you? Anything holding you back?

The Apostle Paul advised his young protégé, Timothy, about reaching his potential:

This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:6-7 NLT).

– Beecher Hunter