

# My Recent Stroke – Challenges and Gifts

Some of you are personal friends, others of you I only know through comments you've posted on my BibleGrapes website or on various social media platforms that display my posts. However well we know each other, you may have noticed in recent weeks that my posts have not come out regularly or have repeated past posts. I thought you might want to know what's been going on.

At the beginning of 2018, I had a series of micro-hemorrhages in my brain which resulted in damaged brain tissue. On March 7, 2018, as I was driving home from leading a group, I had a more damaging blood-clot-related stroke. I got confused about the route home, felt dizzy, and the lanes on the freeway seemed to blend into each other. When I miraculously got to my house, though I wasn't paralyzed and had no trouble speaking, my confusion and visual problems increased. My family became increasingly worried, called our doctor, and a neighbor drove me to the emergency room where doctors diagnosed a stroke.

I thought strokes usually cause paralysis, and frequently they do. I also thought strokes typically cause speech and language difficulties, and that often happens. But not *my* stroke. My stroke affected the part of my brain that handles visual tasks. I no longer have a field of vision on my left side from either eye (a condition called hemianopsia). While my stroke did not damage either cognition or memory, my visual field loss and other visual difficulties continue.\

## Changes and Challenges

The visual challenges have been and continue to be considerable. I find it difficult to read or to use a smartphone or computer. It can take hours to do a task that used to take minutes. While these visual difficulties are gradually improving, my visual field loss is more problematic because I am no longer able to drive. Improvement at this point is unpredictable.

I've experienced the usual post-stroke confusion as my brain tries to figure out how to communicate within itself. I've also experienced the typical post-stroke mood swings (which are gradually becoming less intense.) Additionally, my husband Steve and I are now attending my frequent medical appointments as a variety of specialists try to figure out both why the stroke happened and what can be done to prevent a repeat event.

We are spending many hours each day reconciling varying medical input and researching not only what visual rehabilitation might be possible but also where or if such services exist.

Friends, neighbors and a nearby sister drive us to appointments since my husband and I are unable to drive. Taxi services like Uber and Lyft aren't an option as their cars are heavily fragranced and trigger my allergies. I remind Steve now and then that I'm simply keeping up my half of our "in sickness and in health" marriage vow!

Blessedly, Steve and I are learning much about what it means to love each other well. We also find ourselves surrounded by friends and family who lovingly care for us and for whom we are deeply thankful.

## Post-Stroke Gifts from God

[Romans 8:28](#) starts with the promise that, for all who belong to Him, God ensures that all things work together for good. "All" is a hard word to step around. "All" means All. "All" includes my stroke.

The words "work together" have a future ring to them. God is telling believers that our "now," however hard, is moving towards something of value. Our "now" has a purpose.

While *present* experience is visible, we all remain unaware in the present of what God's *future* good will look like. Not all of God's promised good is currently perceivable. Sometimes, like in this stroke experience, we get to sample wonderful hors d'oeuvres long before we see the feast that awaits us. Here are some samples I've recently tasted. Morning by morning as I wake, and by night as I go to sleep, the Lord brings to my mind truths from His word that startle me with their richness and deep comfort. They stay vivid for a while; then, just as I start to lose touch with their solidness, God gifts me again with other rich and comforting truths. I am so thankful for the Scriptures I have memorized.

## **The Hardest Part of All**

Hard as they have been, the challenges I've described have not been the hardest part. The hardest part has been recognizing how closely my post-stroke experience resembles my childhood home. Chaos, fear, feeling trapped by a situation over which I have no control, being unable to predict what awful thing might happen next. Yet awareness of this similarity has brought me the best gift of all.

## **The Best Gift of All**

God is steadily and increasingly distinguishing my past from my present, my current experience from my childhood experience. He is gifting me with a gradually deepening and increasingly vivid awareness that my recent stroke, though it *feels* like my past, is *not* a repetition of my past. Now I have choices neither possible nor perceivable when I was a child. God is using my stroke to convince me with growing clarity that He is *through this stroke* lovingly working to restore what was so severely damaged when I was a very little girl.

The Lord promised in [Joel 2:25-26](#) that He would restore the years when locusts ate away and destroyed Israel's bounty. What is my best gift of all? Evening by evening, morning by morning, day after day, week after week, the Lord is steadily restoring the many childhood years that were eaten away by others.

What's my best gift of all? It's the privilege of seeing God's promised restoration emerge and develop. I'm getting to taste God's exquisite hors d'oeuvres *before* I take my reserved seat at His heavenly banquet table.

Is my stroke an integral part of all things working together for good? Absolutely. Whether or how much my brain damage heals, and that's not promised, God always keeps His promises. And sometimes, like with my post-stroke gifts, we don't have to wait for the future to see His promised good appear.

What *are* these tears that now fill my eyes? Ah. They're tears of relief and joy.

## **Prayers**

I pray that this description of my post-stroke life will deepen your intimacy with our Lord, bring you clarity as you deal with the challenges in your own life, and fruitfully guide your interactions with others where your understanding and support would be of great value to them.

If the Lord prompts you to pray, here are some specific requests. Please pray:

- That I'll find ways to respond well to the agitation and impatience that periodically invade my heart.
- That I'll sense more and more vividly God's nearness, goodness, and His powerful restraint of evil
- That the next series of medical tests will reveal what caused my strokes and yield useful answers about how to prevent future strokes.
- That the brain damage that has occurred will heal.
- That the Lord make clear to me how to use what I'm experiencing in a way that will benefit others.  
(I pray that one of them is *you*.)
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