



Genetic
Issues

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

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(Exodus 4:11)

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any people have thought, "If only I could change this one thing, my life would be so different, so much more useful."

Not long ago, a man came for help after his father was admitted to the hospital for a psychosis. His problem? He feared becoming like his father and devastating his family. Depressed about the future, he believed that he had his father's genes and, therefore, the same fate. Another man came, worried about his father's Alzheimer's disease. He wondered if he should marry or have children because of his probability for contracting the disease.

Both of these patients felt despair over these genetic issues. They were ready to give up on life. A sense of stigma colored their ability to see beyond what they believed were predetermined genetic problems.

Every person can identify something that they wish could be different in their family, personality, or physical or emotional makeup. Many people wrestle with congenital or genetic problems about which they have no choice. They may have a physical disability such as cerebral palsy, paralysis, or blindness. Others may suffer with a cognitive disability such as dyslexia or a neurological problem like Huntington's disease. Still others recognize that an issue with a parent, such as alcoholism or a manic-depressive illness, may also affect them.

People commonly wish to change something in their genetic makeup or inherent abilities. Even some of the most influential Bible characters struggled with this concern. For example, Moses wished for more eloquent speech; the apostle Paul struggled with a thorn in the flesh. In both

cases, God took these men in their weakness and used them to do great things.

When God chose Moses to carry His message to Pharaoh, Moses was aware of a disability. He focused on his slowness of speech and decided that his disability would eliminate him from carrying out God's plan (Ex. 4:10). God promised that He would help Moses to speak and would teach him what to say. When Moses still felt inadequate to do what God was asking, God provided more help through Moses' brother Aaron. God promised, "I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do" (Ex. 4:15).

Paul's thorn in the flesh was a disability that caused him pain and distress (2 Cor. 12:7-10). He pleaded with God repeatedly to take it away, but God chose not to. Paul was certainly engaged in doing the Lord's will and could have benefited from having his thorn removed. But God chose otherwise. Paul could have been bitter. Instead, he learned that because of Christ, "when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10). Paul learned that it took faith to believe God was in control and to trust Him in spite of the infirmity. God restores and renews (2 Cor. 5:17); at times, however, He gives more grace for endurance. "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). What appears to be defeat becomes victory: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us" (2 Cor. 4:7).

God chose to use both Paul and Mo-

... for His purposes. He also chose not to change or heal them; instead, He asked them to serve Him in their weaknesses for His glory!

Everyone has at least one major challenge to deal with in life, something that cannot be changed. We can choose to focus on the problem and our powerlessness, or we can focus on who God is and what He wants for our lives. Although we are painfully aware of our weakness, we often forget that others also struggle. One patient complained about her best friend whom she thought was perfect. This friend always looked perfect and seemed to live the perfect life. As this woman left the office, she met the next patient in the waiting room—her best friend.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. We are not alone, no matter what the problem. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man" (1 Cor. 10:13).
2. God loves us and promises to be with us. He cares about our situation, even if He doesn't change it. "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).
3. God desires that we know Him. As we remember who He is and His love for us, we can avoid living in despair. "Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When You said, 'Seek My face,' my heart said to You, 'Your face, LORD, I will seek'" (Ps. 27:7, 8).
4. When we come to the end of our own resources, God's work of grace in our lives will be more clearly evident. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).
5. Instead of focusing on weaknesses, focus on what God has given us in Christ.

God knows our circumstances and gives us His strength. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6).

Remember, God is always at work. He wants to work in and through us—just as we are.

FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about genetic issues include:

- > Psalm 139
- > Isaiah 35
- > Matthew 11:4, 5
- > 1 Corinthians 15:50-57
- > James 5:13-18

To Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on genetic issues at Isaiah 35:1-6 on page 914. See also the personality profile of the blind man on page 1388.

They shall see the glory of the LORD,
The excellency of our God.

³ Strengthen the weak hands,
And make firm the feeble knees.
⁴ Say to those *who are* fearful-hearted,
“Be strong, do not fear!
Behold, your God will come *with*
vengeance,
With the recompense of God;
He will come and save you.”

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be
opened,
And the ears of the deaf shall be
unstopped.

⁶ Then the lame shall leap like a deer,
And the tongue of the dumb sing
For waters shall burst forth in the
wilderness,
And streams in the desert.
The parched ground shall become a
pool,
And the thirsty land springs of water;
In the habitation of jackals, where each
lay,
There shall be grass with reeds and
rushes.

A highway shall be there, and a road,
And it shall be called the Highway of
Holiness.
The unclean shall not pass over it,
But it *shall be* for others.

Whoever walks the road, although a
fool,
Shall not go astray.

⁹ No lion shall be there,
Nor shall *any* ravenous beast go up on
it;

It shall not be found there.

But the redeemed shall walk *there*,

¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall
return,

And come to Zion with singing,

With everlasting joy on their heads.

They shall obtain joy and gladness,

And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

SENNACHERIB BOASTS AGAINST THE LORD

36 Now it came to pass in the fourteenth
year of King Hezekiah *that* Sennacher-
ib king of Assyria came up against all the forti-
fied cities of Judah and took them. ²Then the
king of Assyria sent *the* Rabshakeh^a with a
great army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at
Jerusalem. And he stood by the aqueduct
from the upper pool, on the highway to the
Fuller's Field. ³And Eliakim the son of Hilkiah,
who was over the household, Shebna the
scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the record-
er, came out to him.

⁴Then *the* Rabshakeh said to them, “Say
now to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the great king,
the king of Assyria: “What confidence is this
in which you trust? ⁵I say you speak of having

^{36:2} ^aA title, probably *Chief of Staff or Governor*

KEY PASSAGE

PROMISES OF HEALING

(35:1-6)



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Isaiah 35 contrasts the world that exists with the one that God's people will inherit in the future. The prophet promised that the desert would blossom like a rose, that feeble hands, knees, and hearts would be strengthened, and that the sick would be healed. Further, Isaiah promised that God's compassion would touch the blind, the deaf, the mute, and the lame. These promises were fulfilled both physically and spiritually in Jesus Christ and His earthly ministry. In the age to come, God will bring healing to His people's bodies, and refreshment to their souls. Instead of being discouraged by the physical and genetic limitations of life, we can learn to rejoice in His certain promises of complete healing when we see Him: “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:53).

To Learn More: Turn to the article about genetic issues on pages 84, 85. See also the personal-
ity profile of the blind man on page 1388.

²⁰His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; ²¹but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself." ²²His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. ²³Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

²⁴So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner."

²⁵He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see."

²⁶Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?"

²⁷He answered them, "I told you already,

and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?"

²⁸Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. ²⁹We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from."

³⁰The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! ³¹Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. ³²Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. ³³If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing."

³⁴They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out.

PERSONALITY PROFILE



Genetic Issues

THE BLIND MAN: REVEALING GOD'S GLORY

(JOHN 9:1-7)

"Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" the disciples asked Jesus upon passing a man on the road who had been blind from birth. When people believe that problems are always the result of sin, then a person born blind must have sinned—or at least his parents must have sinned. That is not the case, however, as Jesus showed.

Genetic difficulties are hard to understand. Why does God allow some people to be born blind, deaf, or mentally disabled? While evil and imperfection were instigated by Satan, the presence of a genetic difficulty does not represent Satan specifically in the life of that person or that family. Instead, imperfection has touched all of creation. Actually, no one is perfect—we all are susceptible to illness, disability, and eventually death. Yet the all-powerful Creator is able to overrule imperfection and glorify Himself through it.

When questioned about the blind man, Jesus answered that it wasn't about either him or his parents sinning, "but that the works of God should be revealed in him." Jesus responded to this blind man by healing him and glorifying Himself in the process.

Jesus is the great Healer. Whether He heals miraculously through prayer, or by the hands of doctors, or by the effects of medication, He still heals. Sometimes He chooses not to heal. Either way, Jesus can always glorify Himself in the life of that person. Part of that glory is revealed in the way other people react to those with disabilities, showing Jesus' love through their actions.

Someday all evil and impairment will be reversed after Christ returns and all believers are given perfect, glorified bodies. The ultimate glory will come when the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, and all other disabilities are cast aside. All of us, however imperfect we may be now, can look forward to that great day.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about genetic issues on pages 84, 85. See also the key passage note at Isaiah 35:1-6 on page 914.

I will worship toward Your holy temple,
And praise Your name
For Your lovingkindness and Your truth;
For You have magnified Your word above
all Your name.
In the day when I cried out, You
answered me,
And made me bold *with* strength in my
soul.

All the kings of the earth shall praise
You, O LORD,
When they hear the words of Your
mouth.
Yes, they shall sing of the ways of the
LORD,
For great *is* the glory of the LORD.
Though the LORD *is* on high,
Yet He regards the lowly;
But the proud He knows from afar.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
You will revive me;
You will stretch out Your hand
Against the wrath of my enemies,
And Your right hand will save me.
The LORD will perfect *that which*
concerns me;
Your mercy, O LORD, *endures* forever;
Do not forsake the works of Your hands.

PSALM 139

GOD'S PERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF MAN

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

O LORD, You have searched me and
known *me*.
You know my sitting down and my rising
up;
You understand my thought afar off.

3 You comprehend my path and my lying
down,
And are acquainted with all my ways.
4 For *there is* not a word on my tongue,
But behold, O LORD, You know it
altogether.
5 You have hedged me behind and before,
And laid Your hand upon me.
6 *Such knowledge is* too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot *attain* it.

7 Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
8 If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there;
If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are*
there.
9 If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the
sea,
10 Even there Your hand shall lead me,
And Your right hand shall hold me.
11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall^a
on me,"
Even the night shall be light about me;
12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from
You,
But the night shines as the day;
The darkness and the light *are* both alike
to You.

13 For You formed my inward parts;
You covered me in my mother's womb.
14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and*
wonderfully made;^a
Marvelous are Your works,
And *that* my soul knows very well.
15 My frame was not hidden from You,

139:11 ^aVulgate and Symmachus read *cover*.
139:14 ^aFollowing Masoretic Text and Targum;
Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *You are*
fearfully wonderful.

SOUL NOTE



In God's Image (139:14) The Bible clearly states that all people are "fearfully and wonderfully made" by God from the moment of conception. God determines each person's physical being. His people should accept any genetic limitations as part of His sovereignty over their lives. We are made in the image of God, and we know that He does not make mistakes. When we face physical or emotional difficulties because of our genetics, we must remember that we are no less important or perfect in God's eyes than someone else. God works through all kinds of people to accomplish His will. **Topic: Genetic Issues**

Father.” ¹⁶The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

FROM SUFFERING TO GLORY

¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. ¹⁹For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; ²¹because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. ²⁴For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? ²⁵But if we

hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

²⁶Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us^a with groanings which cannot be uttered. ²⁷Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

²⁸And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. ²⁹For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

GOD'S EVERLASTING LOVE

³¹What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He

^a8:26 ^aNU-Text omits for us.

SOUL NOTE



Count On It (8:18) Suffering was very real for the early believers. Persecution was part of the package when someone became a Christian. Jews who became believers faced persecution from fellow Jews who did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Gentiles who became believers faced charges of treason for refusing to worship the emperor. Persecution has continued throughout the centuries, and today's believers are not immune. Our suffering may seem to have a stranglehold on us, but in eternity's perspective, it loses its grip. God promises glory—we can count on it!

Topic: Suffering

SOUL NOTE



Groaning Bodies (8:20–23) In heaven, God will make everything perfect. He promises believers new and perfect bodies that will never get sick and never die (1 Cor. 15:35–49; Rev. 21:4). Our earthly bodies face genetic problems that sometimes cannot be reversed or cured. Many people live in darkness, in silence, or bound to a wheelchair. Yet many love Christ and serve Him faithfully even through difficult life challenges. How wonderful will be that day, especially for those who now face physical burdens, when Christ returns and all believers will be given brand new bodies—seeing, hearing, running, jumping—in “the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

Topic: Genetic Issues