

Nerves

by Harmon A. Baldwin

Harmon A. Baldwin explores the complex relationship between nerves, mental health, and holiness, emphasizing the importance of understanding and managing nervous conditions in a spiritual context.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:32, Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 6:19, Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 4:26, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 3:12, James 1:19, 1 Peter 5:7

Topics: "Mental Health", "Spiritual Strength"

Description

Harmon A. Baldwin delves into the intricate relationship between nerves and holiness, emphasizing the physical and mental aspects of nervous conditions. He challenges the misconception that all nervous people are controlled by mental hallucinations, highlighting the physical nature of nerves and their susceptibility to disease. Baldwin explores how irritability and sensitivity of nerves do not necessarily reflect one's holiness, but rather are natural responses that can be managed through spiritual strength and self-control.

Transcript

This brings us to the question of nerves. But, some one says, "If you have holiness you will not know you have any nerves." If I were Job I would say, "who knoweth not such things as these?" Such theories have been spun up and down, warped and woven, preached and argued, until they might be put to a long meter tune, but the song would only be sounding brass or tinkling cymbals, and holy men's nerves would continue to tingle, and peculiar sensations would still surge through their bodies which the Psalmist insists are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Let us examine the question from a common sense point of view and see what conclusions we can reach. But some person insists that grace is supernatural, and, hence not explainable by the rules of common sense. Possibly common sense can not thus explain grace (although we are not entirely willing to admit that, even in the realm of grace, God ignores the highest faculty of man, his intellect,) but nerves are not grace, and, to some extent, at least, are governed by natural laws.

Nerves are spread throughout the bodies of all except the lowest form of animals. They are like delicate electric wires scattered throughout the body, with the receiving and dispatching center located in the brain. Nerves are primarily physical organs, and, hence, subject to disease, the same as other organs of the body; but their peculiar nature, which in some ways approaches the mental, their relation to both the brain and body, like connecting links between mind and matter, makes them strange in their operations. It is a

mistake to suppose that all so-called nervous people are controlled by some mental hallucination. The nerves can become diseased (authorities differ widely on this subject,) and at such times they are subject to unpleasant sensations the same as are the muscles or other organs, and the fact is that the sensations of the muscles and other organs are dependent on the nervous system for their distress messages to the brain; under such diseased conditions over these delicate wires are sent clicking, rasping, harrowing messages from head to foot, producing all sorts and tones of feelings, ranging all the way from a depression that carries the whole being with it, to a jerky, hysterical mirth which is painful even to the one in whom it is manifested. In their extreme manifestation nervous diseases cause spasms, prostrations, hysterics, insomnia, etc.

When the nerves are diseased or in any way disturbed, unpleasant feelings may be caused by various circumstances and things, mental, physical, external and internal, according to the peculiar make-up of the person concerned. It is a mistake, as is often done, to confuse nervousness with carnality, and to accuse the person whose nerves are extremely sensitive with being carnal, or on the other hand to excuse the person who gives away to carnality by saying he is nervous.

Thus far we have dealt almost entirely with the physico-mental manifestation of nerves, let us now see if we can join the thing up and discover what connection nerves and holiness have with each other, as that is the point at issue. In discussing this question we must often bring in the mental and physical, for they are really inseparable.

We are living in a nervous age, and especially in a nervous country. We say Americans are full of ginger," "pep," that they are "nervy," etc. These are only slang methods of expressing the extremely wrought up condition of the nerves of the average American citizen. He can not be still. When he starts a job he is not content until it is finished. If things do not move fast enough to suit him, he will try to invent some method to hurry matters along. Hurry, hurry, rush, rush, till there is no rest, and the head becomes sick with the mighty strain! Yes, holiness will, to some extent, calm this person down; but if he becomes too calm the devil will get ahead of him and when he reaches the vineyard he will find nothing but leaves; the devil will have plucked all the fruit.

We have heard of some persons who could get there and back again, while some other person was making up his mind to go. Action, action, do, do, -- we would say to this hair trigger person: Take time to wait on the Lord, be calm, and if you can not be as calm as some would have you, be as calm as you can, but keep clean.

Irritability is another manifestation of nerves. The Standard Dictionary speaks of "irritable nerves." The writer once visited a physician to inquire about some ailment. Among other questions the doctor asked if he felt irritable, to which he replied: "Well, doctor, I have just the same feelings as others do when they become irritable, but I have religion." The doctor replied, "Well there is something in that." And there is. In other words, the same rasping, disagreeable sensations chase each other up and down the nerves, but the spirit is steady. Thank God! If we may be allowed to testify further: Several years ago we were in bed with nervous prostration. Do you know what that is? In the community in which we lived there was a great deal of opposition to the old-fashioned way. In the adjoining house was a young lady who despised the preaching of the cross and delighted in persecuting those who were saved. One day she came out in the back yard and set up a very disagreeable noise. Our nurse went out and asked her to please stop. But instead of obeying she yelled all the louder, saying, "I'll try his religion." When the nurse told us of her reply, we said, "She did not try our religion very much, but the noise was rather severe on these poor

nerves."

We have known people who would be horrified to acknowledge that they were ever "annoyed" by untoward circumstances, to become quite "annoyed," or something akin to it, by a barking dog, a crawling bed bug, a buzzing fly, a cackling hen, or any other thing that disturbed their rest. It rasped over their nerves like sand paper, and set them so wild that rest was impossible.

Why don't those persons in the next tent who talk so loudly and so harshly love their neighbor as themselves, and stop? Why does that cricket get under my bed and insist on singing his shrill song all night long? Oh, that the mother of that boisterous child would make him stop his everlasting clatter! I just begin to feel sleep stealing over me, when one of those noisy street cars comes slam-banging by the house and with every turn of the wheels it goes crashing through my screeching nerves!

Do persons who are thus annoyed have holiness? They may or they may not, but one thing is sure, these things are not a test of experience. We have known of the lifting of a latch or the breaking of a straw to almost throw a super-nervous person into spasms. Did you ever "enjoy" the toothache? Is it "delightful" to listen to that dry, long-winded preacher? Does it "please" you, Mr. Preacher, when your congregation sits listless or goes to sleep on your hands? Of course you can sing, Praise God, etc., and keep saved when you are in a hurry and your horse or Ford balks, but do you really "enjoy" it?

The stirring of the carnal in the form of anger, or impatience, even under such circumstances, shows a lack of holiness, but the rasping of the nerves is a natural result that must inevitably follow when high-keyed nerves are rudely handled. The striking of a certain key of the piano will jar a loose window pane; and the striking of certain pleasant or unpleasant chords will cause a vibration in the sensory nerves, but this vibration has no more to do with your spiritual condition than does the pain a dentist produces when he touches an exposed nerve in your tooth. Carnality is in the soul, not in the nerves, be they diseased or healthy.

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