

Worry

by Harmon A. Baldwin

True holiness is not the absence of worry and anxiety, but the presence of faith and trust in God's love and care.

Scripture: Psalm 55:22, Psalm 94:19, Proverbs 12:25, Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 6:34, Matthew 11:28, John 14:27, 2 Corinthians 1:3, Philippians 4:6, 1 Peter 5:7

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Christian Holiness"

Description

Harmon A. Baldwin delves into the topic of worry and holiness, exploring the ambiguity of whether worry is consistent with the experience of holiness. He discusses the different meanings of 'consistent' and 'worry,' emphasizing that while some holy individuals may experience worry at times, it is not ideal for a person of holiness to worry. Baldwin examines the definition of worry, highlighting that certain worries may stem from physical or mental conditions rather than a lack of holiness. He ultimately stresses the importance of faith and trust in God amidst life's burdens and challenges.

Transcript

One of the favorite questions asked at holiness conventions is, "Is worry consistent with the experience of holiness?" This question is extremely ambiguous from the fact that it is hard to tell what is meant by the two words, "consistent" and "worry." As to the word "consistent:" In this place it may have either of two meanings. First, can worry and holiness "consist" together, i. e., "exist in conjunction, or stand together" (Standard Dictionary,) in the same person at the same time? Does a holy person ever worry? Or does he immediately forfeit his experience when he does worry ever so little? The other sense of the word may be, while a holy man may retain his experience even though he may worry yet is it "consistent" for him, being a holy man, to worry?

From all our observation we would answer the former interpretation of the word in the affirmative, i. e., some holy men do sometimes worry some; and the latter interpretation in the negative, for no holy man should worry, and a thing he should not do is, in some sense, inconsistent, no matter what he may or may not profess. But does every inconsistent act denote a lack of experience? If it does then neither you nor I ever saw a holy person. "Inconsistency" is a synonym for "humanity."

We now turn to the word "worry." Is worry always a carnal principle? Before we would answer such a question as this by a simple yes or no we would first demand a clear statement of the questioner's idea of what constitutes worry. Some men who have never professed religion are so happily constituted that they never worry, while some sanctified folks are so constituted that under certain circumstances they seem, at

least, to worry. From all this we would conclude that worry, or the disposition thereto, is in some sense a constitutional disorder. In such a case it is no more a sure sign of carnal conditions than is dyspepsia or liver complaint, and the fact is that the tendency to worry may be an outward manifestation of a bad stomach or liver and not of a bad heart.

But as to the definition of "worry:" When used as an intransitive verb it is defined, "To be uneasy ill mind by reason of care or solicitude; be troubled or anxious; chafe; as, she always worries when he is absent" (Standard Dictionary.) When used as a noun, "A state of perplexing care, anxiety, or annoyance; distracting or disturbing care or occasion of anxiety; vexation; fret; as, worry over a delayed letter; household worries; the worry of business" (Ibid.)

If the reader will carefully analyze these definitions he will be surprised at the breadth of meaning which the word "worry" contains. Before we go any further we wish to give our own definition of that "worry" which can not exist in connection with a clean heart. That spirit of chafing at divine providence which causes me to doubt God, or inwardly complain at His dealings with me, is carnal; that spirit which meets the rebuffs and insults of sinners, or, it may be, the slights and misunderstandings of my brethren, with a complaining and resentful heart, is carnal; that spirit which meets circumstances with grumbling, or which becomes carnally fretful and peevish under physical disability, is carnal; and that spirit which meets the temptations of the devil with an inward complaint, which involves the integrity and veracity of the Almighty, is carnal. Thus we see that carnal worry involves my integrity as a holy man, it disconnects me from God by my doubtfulness and complaints.

But, beyond this, there may be a "worry" which comes from physical or mental conditions which none but God can truly diagnose; or from my surroundings and obligations, which none but myself can appreciate; or from the devil himself whose suggestions to me, for the time being, may be beyond my clouded apprehension, and they surely are beyond the comprehension of others; this "worry," if it must be called by that name, no more separates me from God than does my involuntary physical or mental conditions or my perplexing surroundings or temptations. Wesley says that the infirmities which necessarily flow from the corruptible state of body are not contrary to love, nor, in the Scriptural sense, sin. Perhaps the best way to get at the subject is to analyze the above dictionary definitions.

1. "To be uneasy in mind by reason of care or solicitude." That man who can truthfully say, "I never have a care," is, perhaps, to be congratulated. But the great majority of mortals can not thus testify, and sometimes, in spite of ourselves, these cares heap up until our minds are almost distracted, and we cry,

"I can not bear these burdens alone."

Peter tells us to cast all our cares on the Lord, thus intimating that we have cares or we could not thus throw them on God. Paul groaned under the "care of all the churches;" the Lord cautions us to be watchful lest the "cares of this world" choke out the good work of life. "Solicitude" refers to one's earnest desire for the welfare of others, especially those who are entrusted to our care. The parent who lacks the proper solicitude for his child, and the minister who lacks a deep, divinely-given solicitude for his people, are in a bad state. In various ways and places Paul expressed his solicitude for the church, and even Jesus wept over Jerusalem. We will leave it to the reader to decide whether this condition of care and solicitude will always leave the mind easy and serene.

2. "To be troubled or anxious." The Psalmist declares that the Lord is his refuge and that He will hide him in time of trouble (Psa. 9:9; 27:5;) and again he complains that God hides Himself from him in his trouble

(10:1.) God comforts us in tribulation that we may in turn comfort those who are in trouble (2 Cor. 1:4.) In Asia Paul was in such trouble that he was "pressed out of measure" and "despaired even of life" (2. Cor. 1:8;) again, "I am troubled on every side" (2 Cor. 4:8; 7:5). His anxiety for the churches is seen in many places. See 2 Cor. 2:1-5; 7: 12-15. There is no Stoicism here. Paul felt deeply, and, with the Master, often groaned in spirit.

3. To chafe is to become irritated or sore in spirit. The horse chafes under the restraint of the harness. Bad sinners chafe under the restraint of the law. Unsanctified Christians chafe because of the constant friction and war of good and bad principles in the soul. In the sense of "uneasiness" a holy man may chafe when a preacher is attempting to make a display of his own wisdom instead of the cross of Christ. He may chafe under the burden of a cross which the machinations of men hinder him of relieving himself of-he feels that he must exhort, but the "powers that be" put up another. The resultant feeling that the wrong thing has been done may not always be conquered without an effort, more or less intense, according to the weight of the disappointment.

4. "A state of perplexing care, anxiety or annoyance." We are aware that Wesley makes freedom from "anxious care" a test of holiness, but we can not help wondering if Paul does. We quote from an article by Rev. F. D. Brooke. It will bear repeating.

We will never in this world reach an experience where we do not feel life's heavy burdens, and will not be distressed by its many disappointments; and we will doubtless have occasion as we press our way toward the home of the saints to repeat the sentiments of Saint Paul at times, 'For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even life * * * For when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless, God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us * * * We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.'

Think of a man raising a standard of life for mortal beings where there is no disappointment or trouble, where we will expect nothing, wonder at nothing that is done to us, and feel nothing done against us! Well, I have known of a few instances where men and women have reached such an experience in this world, but when they appeared in society they did not care whether they were naked or clothed, and their friends went weeping from the cemetery and left them alone, in their caskets and in their graves. All may obtain the same experience by doing as they did -- DYING.

5. "Distracting or disturbing cure or occasion of anxiety." We read some beautiful stories about holy men who trusted God so implicitly when goods and money were all gone that their needs were supplied by miraculous intervention, and we should, and we do honor them for their shining examples of faith; but needs are not always supplied in that way as far as we can see, and the rule is so common that we hear very little of those other holy men who wept and prayed while they toiled and sweat; who through toil and pain, want and weakness, the opposition of men and devils, worked their way to a place in God's hall of fame. Very few men can sit quietly and wait for ravens when they have a strong right arm.

My friend, if you can truthfully say that, even though your family is sick, your provisions gone, your money used up, your means of support taken away, your own physical condition so low that you are unable to "put your hand to the plow;" I say, if you can truthfully say that even under such circumstances you never have an anxious care, you are made of better stuff than most mortals. "But," you say, I never ran against

such a combination of circumstances." But some have, and, like Job, in the midst of their, for the time being, unalleviated sorrows, they have cried, "Though He slay me yet will I trust Him." What sort of spiritual timber are you made of? Such crushing calamities will tell.

6. Vexation is the state of being annoyed or vexed. To be vexed, in the sense in which we here use it is to be "grieved, afflicted, troubled or distressed." Jesus was grieved, Paul was afflicted, troubled and distressed.

7. Fret is a petty word and refers to the restlessness and uneasiness which are manifested by some, and which are the result of nervousness, excitability or instability of disposition. It may be a constitutional indisposition and not necessarily carnal. Perhaps we can illustrate what we mean: Four thirty and Johnny should have been home from school half an hour ago. His mother has looked out the window, gone to the door, called, gone to the gate and looked up the street; no Johnny. What can be the matter? Johnny never stays away like this. "Here, Jim, go and see if you can find Johnny; may be he has been run over by an automobile." Some mothers "worry" more if Johnny is gone half an hour than others do if he is out till nine o'clock.

Now, we are fully aware that the various component parts of the above "dictionary definition" may be referred to a deep-laid and carnal principle, but this phase of the definition we ruled out in our preliminary definition, as well as in all our explanations. Thus, commonly speaking, to "chafe" is to become impatient under restraint; to "fret" is to fuss and fume impatiently when disappointed or under delay; to become "vexed" is to get angry, either in outward appearance or inwardly; and thus through all the various shades of the definition. When sin, carnality, hatred of God, fretting at God's ways of dealing, or any other spirit that departs from God, does not enter into our manifested or inner dispositions our hearts are clean.

To be sure we have heard all those wonderful things about God numbering the hairs of our heads, about the beautiful clothing of the grass of the field, about caring for the sparrows; and we have read that beautiful lesson of truth, "Take no thought for the morrow;" but men are human, and sometimes while some good men are walking "o'er life's tempestuous sea," like Peter they see the dashing waves and are likely to sink, and cry, "Lord, save, or I perish." Does the Lord rebuke them? Yes. But, oh, His rebukes are so gentle. "Wherefore didst thou doubt, O ye of little faith." He does not, as He did with the cities of Judea, upbraid them for their unbelief, neither does He upbraid them for their lack of wisdom, but His reproofs are like ointment that melts the heart but does not break the head.

Oh, that God would give us faith, me faith, in the midst of the surging troubles and heartbreaking anguish of this sin-cursed world to peer through the darkness and keep a vision of my gentle, loving, forgiving Christ walking the heaving billows of my sorrows! I know if I can but touch His hand He will say to my heart, "Peace be still," and through all my being will descend a great calm.

"Child of my love, lean hard,

And let me feel the pressure of thy care,

I know thy burden, child. I shaped it;

Poised it in mine own hand; made no proportion

In its weight to thine unaided strength.

For even as I laid it on, I said,
I shall be near, and while she leans on me,
This burden shall be mine, not hers:
So shall I keep my child within the circling arms
Of my own love. Here lay it down, nor fear
To impose it on a shoulder which uphold.
The government of worlds. Yet closer come:
Thou art not near enough. I would embrace thy care;
So I might feel my child reposing on my breast.
Thou lovest me? I knew it. Doubt not then:
But, loving me, lean hard."

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