

Balance

It dawned on me recently, that what I do as a vocation and even avocation is tantamount to the deliberate incitement of neurosis and imbalance. As I began to think about that, I was forced to think about the entire concept of balance and neurosis; how they are defined by the world; how they are defined by God. It occurs to me that it is possible that the very definitions of neurosis and imbalance, which definitions come from “worldly” sources, may indeed be geared toward assisting in the “successful” living of the godless life.

We may think of the godless life as the life of gross excess and indulgence; hot toward sin and cold toward God. But I would suggest that we begin to think about the godless life as neither hot nor cold, but the antithesis of both.

Imbalance can be described as *the state or condition of lacking balance, as in proportion or distribution*¹. Neurosis can be described by *excessive anxiety and obsessional thoughts that tend to dominate the personality*².

Does God really want to dominate my personality?

Am I really saying that God wants me to be imbalanced and wants to dominate my personality? Answering this question requires just a little examination of our assumptions about God.

Most of us assume that God wants us to be happy. Well really, this could be a rabbit trail, for now we have to define happy. So in the name of brevity, suffice it to say that there are certain minimum assumptions we have to have about God, without which there’s nothing to discuss. I will mention only two here; sovereignty and immanence.

Sovereignty: having no higher authority.

Immanent: dwelling with and present with.

If we do indeed have a sovereign and immanent God, then “happy” would be that which has passed His muster; for those things that might be labeled “unhealthy”, which things we may “want” in order to bring us presumed happiness, would not be approved by His immanence, nor granted by His sovereignty.

If we have a worldview of God that includes neither sovereignty nor immanence, then this article will be of little value to you. But if we can agree that those two things are necessary even to have a

¹ *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Random House, Inc. 14 May. 2014

² *Ibid*

conversation about these things, indeed even to have a conversation about God, then it is incumbent upon us to think these things through. For who prays to a god who is not immanent, and of what benefit is a god who is not sovereign over the things about which we pray?

But God has revealed Himself as Sovereign and Immanent. Ours is to respond to His sovereignty with joy and gladness, and to be thankful for His immanence.

The sound mind is the obsessive mind.

Balance is often touted as the key to the happy and successful life. But we must ask ourselves... "Does the balanced mind deliberately avoid *'too much God'*? Can there be too much God? Must we have God and *'not-God'* in proper proportion in our lives? Should there be areas of my life that neither include, nor involve, nor concern God? Am I imbalanced when I *'give Him my all'*?"

The ancient Hebrews, those people who were called to be the people through whom God would send His Messiah, those people who gave us the Scriptures *and* the Messiah, considered nothing in life secular. There was no secular. There was no area of life that was not to be given over wholly to God. There was no "God's domain" and "man's domain". All was God's, and every area of the human life was to be dedicated, consecrated and under total submission to God and His will and ways. That point is made abundantly clear in the Hebrew Scriptures... our Old Testament.

Jesus and His followers, those who wrote our New Testament Scriptures (all of whom followed the Old Testament Scriptures, by the way) all had and taught the same mindset; that there was nothing secular. God was to be in all (ALL).

In our society's contemporary culture however, and even in much of our society's Christian church culture, that level, that degree of consecration is considered imbalanced at best, and neurotically obsessive at worst.

Wow... it's scary to actually begin to think these things through, isn't it!?

But we who are *"sold out to God"* are not neurotic; neither are we imbalanced. Rather, we are doing what we are mandated to do by all writers of all Scriptural books, Old Testament and New. In the great apostle Paul's "swan song" to his protégé Timothy, Second Timothy, Paul tells Timothy that

"God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love and of a sound mind." 2 Tim 1:7 (NKJV)

The Greek word that is translated *sound mind* can just as accurately be translated *disciplined* or even *self-controlled*. We can conclude that the life that is sold out to God... the life that is disciplined to follow Him without worldly distraction... the life that is self-controlled to the point of following God's Spirit instead of one's own desires, is the life that is controlled by a **sound mind**, not a neurotic and imbalanced one.

Tied on as frontlets.

So intently focused on following God are His people to be, that we are encouraged to wear “blindings” of a sort. We know what blinders are. They are little devices put on the sides of horse’s heads in order to keep them from being distracted and/or “spooking” as they are pulling a load or carrying a rider. They have no choice but to focus on where they’re being steered. Scripture contains a similar mandate for us humans.

As the Lord was confirming to His people the way in which they were to behave, he gave them some very explicit action steps for being consistent - perhaps even neurotic - in this behavior. Once in the book of Exodus when God’s people first came out of Egypt, and then twice in the book of Deuteronomy (literally translated, the second giving of the law, from the words, *deutero*/second and *nomos*/law), the Children of Israel were commanded,

“Therefore you shall lay up these words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes” (Deut 11:18 NKJV)

A frontlet is a device that is placed on the forehead, between the eyes, and tied around the head so that it stays in place. Think about the significance of comparing God’s Words/Commands/Statutes to frontlets.

First off, everyone who sees you sees the frontlet first. Our allegiance and obedience to God must be conspicuous to all who get to see us (of course this “seeing” this is more than a mere glance).

As you go along, you can’t look at anything without seeing the frontlet. Superimposed upon all that we see is to be the Word(s) of our God. Nothing can be viewed without having been exposed to that frontlet.

Should one happen to be doing something, there is the Word tied to what your doing it with, your hand.

One can do nothing without having the Word there to remind and exhort... nothing.

OK then, what about when we’re doing nothing, eyes closed and alone? The Words have been laid up in the heart and in the soul.

There’s no getting away, is there?

Resistance is futile.

Wherever we go, whatever we do, with whomever we find ourselves at whatever time it might be, God will be the Sovereign over us and all that we do, say, see, think, etc, etc, etc. Our *great delight* is to be in this fact that this Sovereign of the Universe has deigned to be immanent with His Creation. He remains here with us; here, present, at hand. He is not distant, out there somewhere. He is not the Man Upstairs, but He is now our present and closest friend. Jesus told His followers, *“No longer do I call you servants... but I have called you friends”* John 15:15 (NKJV) ... and His is Sovereign.

I guess the ultimate Christian neurosis can be summed up in the words of the man who penned half of our New Testament Scripture, the great Apostle Paul. He gave in. He surrendered. He came to realize

(through the direct intervention of this loving Sovereign) that resistance to God is the ultimate exercise in futility, even if resisting in only part of one's life.

When God called Paul into His service, He said to him,

"Paul, it is hard for you to kick against the goads". Acts 26:14 (NKJV)

As you know, a goad is a prod, a stick, something that gets jabbed into an animal (or one of us!) in order to direct his goings. Our lovingly, immanent God is willing to condescend to our low estate in order to goad us in the right direction. It is the very picture of an involved, caring, all-knowing parent. Who would not want to follow such a one!?

When Paul finally gave up and gave His life to Jesus, his attitude ceased to be one of resistance and became one of blessed and glorious obsession. He wrote to the church in the city of Philippi,

"... in nothing shall I be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain". Phil 1:20, 21 (NKJV)

O Magnificent Obsession!

Pastor