

HOW TO RECOGNIZE TORMENTING SPIRITS

(These are excerpts from *Freedom From Fear Worry and Your Case of the Nerves*) - A. A. Allen

Many people today are like the woman who had spent all her living on many physicians, neither could be healed of any. (Luke 8:43.) From the medical point of view, this woman was a hopeless case. But she received perfect and instant healing when she came to Jesus. It is interesting to note that this case history is recorded from the writings of Luke, elsewhere in the New Testament referred to as the "beloved physician." Very seldom do we find a medical man who is willing to make such a confession as Luke made here, for he tells us frankly that she had spent all her living—all that she had—upon medical treatment, yet none of the many physicians whom she had paid for their services had been able to heal her. Yet when she came to Jesus, she was healed with a word, and without any consideration of her inability to pay.

Luke does not make his statement for the purpose of injuring the prestige of the physicians. He makes it simply because it is the truth. He saw it as a reality, and he boldly faced the reality. The woman herself had faced the reality that all her money was gone, and that even if she had another million dollars, still there was little chance that the doctors would be able to heal her. She faced the reality that her sickness was caused by the presence and operation of an infirm spirit, and she turned to the one who was able to do something about it, Jesus.

Oh, that people today would face the truth, would acknowledge the truth! That people would face reality!

As long as this woman continued to make her daily visits to the physicians, and turn over her income to them, she was getting nowhere. Why? Because her sickness and her disease was not one that could be cured by physicians and surgeons. Hers was a disease that could only be cured by the power of God, which means that the woman was bound by an infirm spirit. When she faced the grim reality that only death awaited her if she continued in the way she was going, and that her case was a case for Jesus alone, it was then and then only that she was released from the infirm spirit that had her bound. It was then that she received glorious healing.

We have no quarrel with professional men, or with medical science. We praise God for trained men who are doing what they can to relieve the suffering of humanity. Yet they cannot help in every case, nor do they claim to do so. Although many have received definite help from physicians and

psychiatrists, others, like the woman of Luke 8:43, continually get worse.

A number of years ago, while acting as pastor of a local church, I, myself, experienced what is known to the medical profession as a nervous breakdown (or a collapse of nerves.)

True, this thing happened to me at a time when I was worn and weary in body, had been under a load mentally, and undergoing considerable nervous strain, as we were nearing the completion of an extended building program in the church, in addition to the constant daily demands of a busy pastor's life. The struggle had been a long and hard one. It had been nerve wrecking, I might say. And when this thing, (for I call it a thing) attacked me, I was on the very verge of physical exhaustion. This was the reason members and leaders of my church called it a nervous breakdown, and insisted that all I needed was a rest and a change of scene. (Could it be that just as the suicide demon preys upon people who have had financial reverses, people who are sick, diseased, deformed, unhappy, or without funds, the tormenting demon seeks out people who are weary and worn, and near exhaustion? This thought would be worth considering. This one thing I know. My attack—and it wasn't a battle with nerves, nor with myself--came when I was so nearly exhausted that I could hardly continue to drive myself, physically.)

I had retired for the night, and was lying upon my bed, weary and tired, but I was restless and seemingly couldn't get to sleep. Suddenly the thing seemed to attack me in the very pit of my stomach. From there it seemed to follow certain courses down to the very tips of my toes and fingers. At first, it was just sort of an uneasy feeling. Gradually, its intensity increased until it became a tormenting thing. As it went down into my fingers and toes, it seemed to me that some force was snapping my toes off at the joints, and my fingers as well. I could find no position for my body which would even for a moment ease the horrible strain and torment. Then, the thing seemed to retrack, and follow the same courses from my fingers and toes back through my body to the original starting point, the pit of my stomach. And as it progressed, it seemed that every part of my body was caught with horrible agonizing pain. The tormenting pain became so intense that it seemed to me if it became any worse, my body would absolutely literally fly into a million pieces. I was in agony. I was being tormented. But at the time I did not know what was tormenting me. My church friends told me that I was suffering a nervous collapse, and I believed them. Leaders in the church prayed for me, but their prayers seemed to help only for a few moments. As soon as they were gone, the agony was as severe as ever. I felt sure that

should it become any worse, I could not restrain myself from tearing my hair. Many times I buried my face in my pillow to smother the screams I could not repress. This condition lasted for two solid weeks, day and night, night and day, without relief. Long, agonizing, sleepless nights! The days didn't seem quite so bad, as then I would get up and walk the floor at times, although I was so weak from pain that I staggered and could scarcely move.

And then, at the suggestion of some of my close friends in the church, I was persuaded to go for a much needed vacation and rest. Due to my nervous condition, I was not able to drive. So my wife took the wheel, and with me reclining on a bed of pillows in the back seat, we started to Arizona, where we planned to rent a cabin high in the mountains, where we could be alone, and rest until my nerves quieted. This seemed to be the natural course to be followed. Others, when suffering from exhaustion, and nervous fatigue, claimed to have been helped by such a period of rest. A change, they said, was what I needed. A complete rest from the strenuous labor involved in building a church, and from the routine grind of the hundreds of necessary things which constitute a busy pastor's life. For three days, my wife had driven. At night, we rested in a motel. But even though I was now miles away from the labors and activities of my pastorate, yet I found no relief from this thing that tormented me. High in the mountains of Arizona, we rented a beautiful little cabin. For a week I spent my days climbing mountains, trying to wear myself out sufficiently that when night came I would be forced to go to sleep. But when night came, I spent the dark hours lying there in bed, suffering torment worse than death, wondering why I couldn't sleep. I knew that my condition was not improving, but rather growing worse. Fear began to get hold of me. I wondered, was I going insane? Was I losing my mind? Was I going to "crack up." Would I snap under the strain, as others I knew had done? Surely, a man couldn't stand much more of this! I felt sure at any moment my mind would snap under the terrible strain and torment. The nights were the worst. My wife gave her full time to doing everything in her power to help me, even remaining awake at night when I knew she was so weary that it was a great trial to her. I knew she was worried, too, over my condition. Was I having a nervous breakdown? A thousand times a day I wondered what would happen to me if there should be an actual break. Would I die? Would I go insane? Would I be committed to a psychopathic ward? Surely, no human being could continue on like this much longer without literally going to pieces.

After a week in the mountains, I finally made up my mind that if I were going to be sick, either mentally or physically, I would be sick where I had friends, and not alone high in some mountain cabin. So I informed my wife we were going back—back to our people, back to our church, and back to the parsonage.

Although my wife insisted that I was unable to drive, and although I myself knew it was not wise for me to try to drive, I determined to drive the car myself. I thought that driving would surely bring on drowsiness. Surely, if I should stay at the wheel all day, I would be sufficiently exhausted when we stopped for the night, that I would certainly fall asleep. But I found that when one is being tormented, one cannot exhaust himself to the point of bringing about natural, restful sleep. After driving all day long, I stopped at another cabin, only to spend another sleepless night, rolling and tossing on a bed, wondering if the next minute would not be the end—the time when my nerves would no longer endure the strain.

You may ask, "Didn't you pray?" Yes! But it seemed my prayers got no higher than my head. The terrible torment continued. It grew worse—may times worse. Surely, I couldn't stand up under the strain much longer. At any moment, I'd go to pieces. I knew it!

The second day, I drove again, all day long, my body aching with weariness, and the second night faced again the same restless, agonizing hours of pain, pain in every nerve of my entire body.

In the afternoon of the third day, having just driven through San Antonio, Texas, I was driving along the highway, when God began to reveal to me exactly what was tormenting me. The Lord spoke to me in such a way as to let me know that although my condition had something to do with my nerves, and my nerves had something to do with my condition, yet there was something more involved. I was being tormented by a tormenting demon, which had attacked me through my nerves, just as an infirm spirit attacks a person's eyes, causing blindness, attacks one's ears and causes deafness, or attacking through the joints causing one to become a helpless cripple.

The truth suddenly dawned upon me as though Christ himself had preached me an enlightening sermon. No wonder I couldn't sleep at night! No wonder I was unable to wear myself out sufficiently to bring about sleep.

Then my thoughts turned to the thousands of other people who, in like circumstances, had resorted to cures, treatments, etc., but to no avail. How happy I was that God had let me know my true condition, so that I could face facts, and win the victory. I began to actually rejoice,

So it was not with myself that I was at war. Nor was it my nerves. I was at war with an unseen force, the very force of the devil himself. And realizing these facts, I knew what to do to win the battle, and I did it. As quickly as I

could, I applied the brakes, pulled the car over on the shoulder of the highway, and brought it to a stop. I turned to my wife, and in a few words explained to her the thing which God had made real to me. I said to her, "Right here and now, we are going to get victory over this tormenting devil that has nearly tormented the life out of me." I simply asked her to lay her hands upon my forehead in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and rebuke that foul, tormenting devil and command it to go. As my wife began to pray, I could feel something, apparently in the pit of my stomach, begin to flutter wildly, like a bird in a cage trying to find a way out. But it seemed the cage was closed, and the bird couldn't get out. But when my wife demanded, "In Jesus name, I command you GO!" it seemed suddenly the door to the cage was opened, and in a split second's time the thing that had 'tormented me was GONE! Gone forever! Gone, because he had been cast out. We both rejoiced together there in the front seat of the car, for we knew God had given us victory. I turned back to the wheel and pulled the automobile back onto the highway. But I had only driven a short distance when I began to get drowsy. For the first time in weeks, I was overwhelmingly sleepy. I stopped and told my wife she would have to do the driving, for I was too sleepy to drive. As she took the wheel, I got into the back seat, where I could lie down. She hardly had the car back on the pavement before I had dropped off to sleep. I did not know when she drove into the city where I was pastor. I did not know when she drove the car into the garage at home. I didn't even realize that she had covered me with blankets. I had no knowledge of the passing of time, until when I awakened, three days later, I discovered that I had been sleeping as peacefully as a baby all that time.

My friend, perhaps you do need rest. Perhaps you are overwrought, tired. Perhaps you are nervous, and near the breaking point. But perhaps, too, you are being tormented, and need to be set free from the same kind of a tormenting spirit which nearly drove me insane. Perhaps what you need to do is simply to face realities. The thing which is tormenting you is real!

The horrible fear that grips you is real. The voice which you hear is real. That overwhelming compulsion is real. Not only are the voices which you hear are real, but the forms which appear before your eyes are real. Trying to make yourself believe they are not real will never drive them from you.

Inasmuch as these things are real, you must face them as realities, and in a manner suited to facing such realities, if you are ever again to enjoy perfect health, mentally, physically, and spiritually, if you are ever again to have peace of mind.