

Nerve Damage

by Dene Ward

The past few years have seen a lot of damage to my optic nerves, especially the one in my left eye. The nerve is measured by superimposing in your mind a set of ten equally sized vertical bars over it. A hole sits in the center of the nerve and its diameter should cover no more than two of those bars. That would be classified a "point two" nerve-- perfect.

Nerve endings are destroyed from the center outward, so the hole becomes larger. By the time you reach your 70s or 80s, a "point three" nerve would not be unusual, and if you have the standard open angle glaucoma of ten percent of the senior population, even a "point four." Even though still in my 60s, my right eye is already at "point five" and the left, the one that has seen the most procedures and the highest pressures, sits at "point five to point six." Point nine is as high as you go before the nerve is totally gone.

Fluctuating pressures do the majority of the harm. It's odd though. I cannot feel anything, and most times I cannot tell much difference in vision day to day. It's a silent process. Usually you don't know it's happening, unless you stop to think how well you could see a few years ago.

Sometimes we lose our faith that way. Things seem fine. I still attend services as often as possible. I still read my Bible and pray. I still don't do those "big bad sins." My faith is the same as it was last year. But if you examine yourself closely, like a doctor who uses a special lens to see into the back of the eye, you would notice a difference between your faith now and your faith ten years ago.

It is so easy to become satisfied with ourselves, so satisfied that we cannot see the problem until it is much too late. Malachi talked to the returning Jews about this complacency in Mal 1:6-14. "You despise the name of God," he tells them. "You pollute his table and consider service to him a burden."

They were astonished. "How do we do this?" they asked at least twice, and Malachi told them in detail. When you read what they were doing, offering polluted food, and blind, lame and sick animals in sacrifice, it seems obvious. Yet they had become so smug in their position as "the people of God," they could not see it. Years before they would have, but the attitude had come upon them so gradually they hadn't even noticed where they were headed.

This morning examine your service to God. Examine the attitude with which you greet

every opportunity as a disciple of Christ, every chance you have to serve him by serving others, every occasion to show your faith in your own circumstances of life, and the appreciation you have for your salvation. Have you experienced some nerve damage? My optic nerve endings cannot be regenerated, but my spiritual nerve endings can, and that hole in my service to God and devotion to his Son can once again become the size it should be, and my spiritual vision normal. So can yours.

How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light. Oh, continue your steadfast love to those who know you and your righteousness to the upright of heart! Let not the foot of arrogance come upon me, nor the hand of the wicked drive me away, Psa 36:7-11.