

“Gordon, how do you deal with so much suffering?”

“As your day so shall your strength be.”

Deuteronomy 33:25

I have often been asked how I manage to hear of so much sorrow on a daily basis and not lose my mind or end up quitting my work as a crisis counsellor and pastor to people in pain. I am not terribly self-conscious. That is, I do not think a lot about myself and how I manage things in my life. I don't do self-analysis concerning the issues I see in others. I have been told by others I show a considerable degree of compassion and at times I actually weep with those who weep as Jesus did.

However, my job is to help people organize their thoughts. They are rarely thinking clearly when I get involved with their crisis so I seek to do their thinking for them. Therefore I feel that I must show gentle composure to those I work with to address their issues. It is really helpful to them if I show the kindness of Jesus but I need to be the rock or stabilizing factor in the equation. I am looked to for a calm and peaceful spirit in the situation.

When I am asked how I can hear about so much suffering and not get depressed I sometimes stop and seek to determine why I can remain in this vocation. First, I have to admit that at times I do get caught up in the situations to the level of getting very discouraged and feeling it may be too much. I do not suggest I always cope well with the issues I see in the lives of others.

It is fascinating that when we study the Gospels we can discern that even our Lord sought isolation at critical times in His life. When His beloved older cousin John the Baptist was brutally and wickedly murdered and Jesus heard the news we are told in Matthew 14:13 “he

withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.” (NIV) Jesus desired to be alone in the pain of His grieving the loss of such a wonderful family member who had done so much for Him.

In Mark 6:31-32 is another instance of Jesus seeking to get away from it all for a brief period of respite. Jesus told the disciples, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest. So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.” (NIV) Here we have a clear recognition by Jesus that solitude in the midst of a busy life is very important.

Once more we see Jesus seeking solitude when we look at Mark 7:24 “Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it;” (NIV). Circumstances did indeed become so great that Jesus sought to get away from it all and be alone for a time.

Sadly for Jesus in all the cases above and more recorded in the Gospels the Saviour did not have the sought after privacy. People found out where He was on every occasion and came seeking teaching and help. Gloriously, magnificently, our dear Lord immediately turned from His desired rest and healed the sick, taught the eternal truths He came to proclaim and met the needs of the people.

Do you see how the Lord Jesus put the needs of others before His own? Can you not marvel at this One who can be so touched with our suffering that He allows us to come any time anywhere and call on Him for mercy and grace. Never, never, think that the Lord Jesus is too busy

for you. When He was among us He never turned anyone away who came to Him seeking grace to help in times of need. Jesus said on one occasion, “...whoever comes to me I will never drive away.” John 6:37 (NIV)

Whatever your burden, whatever is frustrating you today you are invited to come to Him and seek His grace, His unmerited favour. He always has the time of day for any truly repentant sinner who will seek Him. I can at times be too weary to make another visit some days. At times I insure that I get away and rest from my ministry. But be sure of this, Jesus does not take holidays. His appointment book is never too full that He cannot book you in immediately. Mere mortals such as we are can overbook and get into trouble trying to do all we can for others. The God who made us is never overbooked.

Yes, I stumble at times trying to meet peoples' needs. I am a frail repentant sinner who tries to meet the needs as best I can but inevitably I sometimes fail. I let people down sometimes in my ministry, and some of those I seek to help do not get from me all they should. I am limited in so many ways, but not Jesus. He is God and does all things well.

Remember that Jesus truly desires your presence. He calls for you to come and shift your burden off your own shoulders and onto His. Will you come? You have nothing to lose but the guilt of your sins and you have everything to gain. Jesus is waiting. Come and come today.