

## **2CH Sunday at 7.30**

# Living under pressure

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'I just can't cope any more'. Do you ever feel like that? Many people do. They feel they are cracking under the strain and are afraid of the future. The pressure of modern life is one cause of illness. What is the answer? Well, doctors can do much at the physical level. But if the cause is emotional and spiritual there can be no answer to the problem unless we seek it at these levels.

This morning let us consider the Christian answer to the problem of pressure. Many people have found help in eight statements from the Bible. I'll run through them fairly quickly and you can choose those you think may be helpful in your situation.

### **1. Get away for a break**

There was a day when Jesus said to His disciples. "Come away to a quiet place by yourselves and rest awhile." [Mark 6:31] Jesus knew all about pressure and even he, the Son of God, had to escape from it when he could. Like many, Jesus found it difficult to break away from his work. Once he even left Palestine altogether and went up the coast of Tyre and Sidon. But they heard of him even there and a woman came pleading with him to heal her daughter.

On another occasion Jesus was seeking a break not only from the daily pressure of his work, but also from the pain of personal sorrow.

John the Baptist had been executed. But Jesus was not allowed to escape. He faced the daunting task of feeding five thousand people. However, late that night he did manage to slip away for a while and rest and pray. Don't you think that would help?

### **2. Reduce your workload**

Of course some could benefit by doing more but many today are overloaded. The classic example of an overworked and hard pressed housewife was Martha. Thirteen or more unexpected guests had arrived and Martha was flat out in the kitchen trying to do a dozen things at once. But what was her sister Mary doing? Do you blame Martha for feeling angry? I can't say I do. Yet what did Jesus say to her? "Martha, Martha you are fretting and fussing about so many things, but few things are necessary." [Luke 10:41]

How many of us allow more and more tasks to overwhelm us without asking if they are really necessary? We can carry on only by remembering what Jesus said to Martha and restricting the tasks to those which time and strength reasonably permit.

### **3. Live one day at a time**

When people begin to feel they can no longer cope with life, too often it is because they are worrying about the future as well as the present. But God breaks life up into days and nights and he expects us to live one day at a time, trusting the future to him.

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, as J B Phillips puts it, "Don't worry at all then about tomorrow. Tomorrow can take care of itself. One day's trouble is enough for one day." [Matthew 6:34].

Sir William Osler, who did his medical course in Montreal, organized the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and became Regis Professor of Medicine at Oxford. What was the secret of his success? As a student in Montreal he read some words written by Thomas Carlyle which led him to concentrate on doing the duty that was nearest and putting out of his mind those that lay ahead. At the age of 63 he sailed to America to lecture the students at Yale. He urged them to live in "day-tight compartments". Our lives are more secure if we live one day at a time.

The best way to prepare for the future is to stop worrying about it, doing each day's work as it comes trusting God to supply strength for that day. "As your days so shall your strength be." [Deuteronomy 33:25]

#### **4. Rest one day every week**

Thousands of people think they know better than God. They end up working seven days a week. God didn't make us that way and sooner or later the pressure beats us.

'Rest' does not mean, of course doing nothing, for no active person can be happy and relaxed doing nothing. It means doing something different, something you want to do, or something relaxing and renewing, without pressure.

That is the value of spending part of one day in seven in worship. The Bible reminds us, "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." [Isaiah 30:15] While we are quiet in God's presence and worship Him we are set free from the tension and strains which result from the pressures of life. Not only that, but we take in spiritual power that assists us to be "more than conquerors through Him who loves us." [Romans 8:37]

#### **5. Get your mind off yourself - on to God**

Many of us, when we become tired and nervy through the pressures of life, feel sorry for ourselves. The more we think about ourselves the more tired we become and the greater our fear of being able to cope with the future.

Norman Vincent Peale tells how a young business man asked him to talk with his father, the head of their business. He said, "I'm very worried about Dad. He is so nervous and tense. There are so many pressures and problems in the business and my dad is giving way under them." They went into his office and he looked nervous and tense. "Glad to see you Norman. There's always so much to do," he commented.

Dr. Peale encouraged him to relax and talk over his problem of pressure in the business. After a time Dr. Peale said to him, "I don't suppose you ever read the Scriptures do you?"

"Certainly I do" the man replied.

Dr. Peale said, "You read them but you don't practise them."

"Of course I practice them. I'm a moral and ethical man"

"I wasn't talking morals and ethics. I was talking about the healing power of God. Have you ever read the 26<sup>th</sup> chapter of Isaiah the 3<sup>rd</sup> verse, "*You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you.*"?

Peale then went on to explain that the father had not been keeping his mind on God, he'd let it dwell too much on his problems. He urged him to repeat the text three times a day to get it fixed in his mind and heart. Faith in God more than anything else helps us to keep things in perspective and cuts our pressures down to size.

## 6. Seek forgiveness

“We have all sinned and fallen short of God’s glory.” [Romans 3:23]

We may deny that, but once we start thinking about God and try to keep our minds on Him we soon become conscious of the gap between ourselves and the holiness of God. It is useless to try to suppress our guilt; that only makes our condition worse.

We need to recall the words of the 1st letter of John 1:9 - *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* If you are paralysed with the fear that you cannot cope with life, accept the forgiveness God offers through Christ and his offering of himself on a cross and the burden of guilt will be taken from you.

## 7. Learn to enjoy what you do

When the pressures of life get us down we tend to hate what we do and we wish could get free of it altogether. Often the answer is to develop a new attitude to our work.

Paul urged Christians to *“not be careless in business, to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”* [Romans 12:11] Remember, with the right attitude you can get to enjoy what you do but of course sometimes we have to make changes even in our work situation so that we can feel a sense of fulfilment and enjoyment. It is a big part of life and with God’s help we have to work at it. Remember those famous words of the Serenity Prayer, ‘God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and wisdom to know the difference.’

## 7. Serve God and be glad for pressure

Finally we can lift our sights and seek a new motive for all that we do.

The mother of a new baby does not think of it as work though she may spend sixteen hours a day, seven days a week caring for the child. Love makes the difference.

John Wesley many years ago wrote, “Love of God and all mankind is the centre of our existence with God. This love we believe to be the medicine of life, the never failing remedy for all the evils of a disordered world.” Years before, Paul had put it this way, *“Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”* [1 Corinthians 13:7] and before that Jesus took pity on all those suffering under the burden of life’s pressures. He said, *“Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me and I will give rest to your souls.”* [Matthew 11:28]

United to him in faith we will find the strength to meet the pressures of life that come our way. He invites us to trust him and that will not only help us overcome what ever life brings our way but will give us peace of mind and the power to overcome and real joy in fellowship with him.

It was the hymn writer who wrote:

“Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed –  
To do the will of Jesus, that is rest.”

Think about these eight suggestions – they are Bible based and can help us deal with the problem of pressure in whatever form it comes to us.