A walk with Mr O (38)

Sudden bouts of discouragement

Mr O, you seem such a steady person, so I don't know if you can help me. But I often get sudden bouts of discouragement. I don't know why. They just come out of the blue and knock all the fight out of me. I feel really down and wonder whether anything I do is really worth doing.

I know very well what you are talking about.

You do?

Yes, all through the years I have often had the same experience. And it's terrible. I feel exhausted and completely unable to function. To be honest, I often come to the point where I don't even *want* to function. And then I am left wondering if this is an attack of Satan or whether something else is behind it, such as a health problem.

But, despite that, you've kept going, haven't you? You haven't caved in. And you still seem to be going strong. So, what's the secret?

There's no secret! When I was a teenager an older Christian said to me, 'Don't forget that you are a psychosomatic entity.' I hadn't a clue what they meant! But I've never forgotten it – for which I now thank the Lord.

So, what were they trying to tell you?

They were telling me that body and soul are so intimately connected that the state of one affects the other. If your body is unwell, you can easily become dispirited. If your soul is happy your body will benefit. So, when we talk about things like discouragement we must consider our physical condition as much as our spiritual condition.

Wow! I've never thought about things like that before.

When I'm discouraged I need to ask myself questions about my diet, my weight, my workload and my sleep. But it may interest you to know that on my study wall I have a little note which says this: 'Move! Drink water! Get outside!'

Except for when we are listening to sermons we should never sit still for longer than 25 minutes. Never! Whatever else you do today, *move!* It was God who invented endorphins! And don't forget that dehydration will play havoc with your head – so drink and drink, not energy drinks or fizzy drinks, but plain old-fashioned water. Lots of it. On top of that, rain or shine, get out in the open air and stay there. It'll do wonders for you!

Mr O, I didn't expect to hear such things from you. I thought you would come up with a spiritual answer to my problem.

That is a spiritual answer! If you don't believe me, see how the Lord dealt with Elijah in 1 Kings chapter 19. But it is not the whole answer, as that chapter also clearly shows. In the depths of your soul, you have got to hear again the 'still small voice', or, as I would prefer to translate it, 'the voice of a gentle silence'. The final answer to discouragement lies in a new and soul-searching encounter with the Lord.

Please tell me, then, how in practice that can happen.

Get alone with the Lord. Why not pack a water bottle or a thermos ('Drink!') and go for a long walk ('Move!' 'Get outside!'), talking to the Lord as you go? Worship Him – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Thank Him for every blessing that you can think of. Tell Him everything that you have on your heart at the moment. Everything! Leave nothing out. Pray yourself empty - until there's nothing left in you except silence.

And then what?

You will see. Each occasion you do this will be different. However, what I can tell you is that the Lord will come to meet you and your heart will break with awe, comfort and love.

How wonderful is that? Your soul will soar like an eagle. An indefinable peace will fill you. Your mind will be taken up with Jesus. And you will at last understand the kind instruction that is found in Psalm 27:14 : 'Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!'