

THE TRAP OF SELF-PITY

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When life becomes difficult and problematic, it is very common to withdraw into ourselves and wallow in the mire of self-pity. Feeling sorry for ourselves is one way that we try to soothe our troubled mind. Psychologists warn us that this is self-destructive behavior that will do more harm than good. The Bible taught this long before the psychologists figured it out. Filling the mind with self-pity over sad and traumatic events is not the way a spiritually minded person is to act. The Bible teaches us to patiently endure the trials of life while constantly thinking of how to benefit others and obtain eternal life.

When a person falls into the trap of self-pity, they think more of themselves than they ought to think. A Christian is someone who has denied himself, taken up his cross, and followed Jesus (Matthew 16:24). Life can, and will, bring hardships and heartaches to our lives, but we must endure and continue living one day at a time. We must not forsake our responsibilities to others just because things are not as we would like them. Satan will throw many obstacles in our way to hinder us from accomplishing our daily duties. We must not allow him to deceive us into thinking that we cannot do what needs to be done because we are feeling sorry for ourselves.

The trap of self-pity deceives one into thinking that he is the only one who must deal with that particular problem. No one else understands how bad it really is. Therefore, we pity ourselves on how much worse our problems are than those of others. This is selfish thinking. If we would open our eyes, we would see that many other people have just as serious, or greater, problems than ourselves (1 Peter 5:8-9). If everyone just shrank into his or her pit of self-pity, what kind of world would this be? The Christian is to continually shine his light, not his frown.

Self-pity hinders the good we can do for others. Spending all our time feeling sorry for ourselves leaves little time to be of assistance to those who need a helping hand, whether in the home, at work, at school, or wherever. We are to look out for the needs of others first: "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but for the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4). Our pity and concern are to be for the needs of others.

Think what would have happened if Moses had felt so sorry for himself that he had refused to lead the nation of Israel to the Promised Land? What if Joseph had just given up because terrible things were happening to him all the time? What if Jeremiah had quit prophesying because no one cared? What if Paul had quit preaching because he had endured too many hardships in preaching? What if Jesus had felt sorry for himself when people rejected Him and decided that He did not want to die for our salvation? Think what will happen if you feel so much self-pity that you give up and become useless to God and everyone else? Do not fall into this trap of the devil. Endure life's hardships and keep your eyes on the prize. Earthly things are only temporary, while heavenly things are

forever (2 Corinthians 4:17-18). Let us “strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees” and not grow weary in doing good (Hebrews 12:12; Galatians 6:9).