

WHEN YOU LAPSE INTO SELF-PITY

One of the greatest dangers that can befall us when we find ourselves overtaken by sorrow is to lapse into self-pity. Yet it is so easy to do this. Self-pity is the “Poor Me Syndrome”; it is pouring pity on ourselves in the hope that the pain we are experiencing may be assuaged.

Sensitive people are most prone to self-pity because they are easily hurt. Sensitivity is a capacity for sympathy and is God’s equipment for feeling deeply with others. Used in this way it is a wonderful thing. When it causes us to turn inwards on ourselves, however, it is a violation of God’s design for us and drags us down into the most miserable of moods.

The real problem with self-pity is that it replaces God in our lives by a self-centred attempt to deal with our pain. Instead of turning to God in the midst of our difficulties and bringing our pain to Him, we prefer the temporary anodyne of self-pity. We cringe, we whine, we sigh, we complain, we accuse God of forgetting to be gracious, and in this self-engrossed frame of mind we regard our small personal problems as more serious than some of the major tragedies in the lives of others. The pity we lavish upon ourselves eases the pain, but it does so in a way that ignores God.

Self-pity is sensitiveness turned to selfishness; we prefer our own way of dealing with our pain to God’s. The only real remedy for self-pity is repentance. We must repent of our stubborn commitment to independently dealing with life’s problems and assuaging our pain instead of turning in helpless abandonment to God. Then and only then can self-pity be expelled.

O God, forgive me that I prefer drawing on my own resources rather than Yours whenever I am in personal pain. I repent of this deeply ingrained tendency within me, and turn to You for comfort, healing and release. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

SCRIPTURES ON WHICH TO REFLECT

1. Our proneness to depend on sources other than God.

Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the Lord. (Isaiah 31: 1)

2. God alone is the source of our strength.

Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed. (Psalm 57: 1)

3. The divine invitation to trust.

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5: 7)

4. A decision all must make.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.
(Proverbs 3: 5)

5. Blessing comes from trust.

Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust. (Psalm 40: 4)

6. Where there is no repentance there is spiritual death.

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret,
but worldly sorrow brings death. (2 Corinthians 7: 10)

7. The way to repent.

Grieve, mourn, and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to
gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.
(James 4: 4)