

The Pity of Self Pity

by Kurt Weaver

Where do you find comfort when times are tough? Where do we run when feelings are hurt? What do we grab hold of when life presses in? What protects us when we are denied our “rights”?

If you are like me, the answer to the previous questions is Self-Pity. Self-Pity, in the purest form, is self-worship. Instead of putting God in his rightful place we put ourselves on the pedestal. We focus all of our attention on what we think we deserve but aren't getting. We end up “feeling sorry” for ourselves which affects all areas of our lives and those around us.

William Farley writes, “Although it's ugly and obvious to everyone except the person sipping this poison (of self-pity), the sinner himself has difficulty detecting it. Those snared in self-pity are often completely unaware.” There are a few alerting symptoms that Farley points out:

- Depression (reclusiveness)
 - It feels so good to feel so bad. Many of us find perverse joy in the gloominess of feeling sorry for ourselves. “Maybe others will finally see how bad I have it”, “Fine! I'll just be by myself where at least I can be myself.”
- Envy and Jealousy
 - We want what others have and we don't want others to have what we don't have. Cain and Abel are a good example of what envy and jealous looks like. “If I can't have it then why should you have it?” “If only I had what she or he had.” “Life would be easier if I had what they have.”
- Anger
 - Anger gives voice to self-pity – we want something but aren't getting it
 - Anger erupts and rains down its ugly debris on all those close by – family members, friends and associates.
 - We can tend to use our anger in manipulative ways. “If you mistreat me, then watch out I'll mistreat you.”
- Bitterness
 - In all of our bitterness God is the target. “If God was really good... my spouse would treat me different, my parents would treat me better, I would have a more fulfilling job, I would be able to overcome gluttony, lust, gossip, deceitfulness etc.”
 - William Farley writes “A heart saturated in self-pity expresses itself through constant complaints, negative speech, critical speech and malicious gossip. These are self-pity's calling cards.”

How do we fight and by God's grace move away from the poison of self-pity? William Farley again states, “To the person wallowing in self-pity the cross says, “You have it upside down and backwards. Because of your sin, you don't deserve good. You deserve death by slow torture. Anything short of crucifixion is infinite grace bestowed by a loving God on someone utterly unworthy.” “The cross not only removes just punishment, it brings all joy.”

“Our slight, momentary afflictions - life’s most painful trials and losses – cannot compare with what we have been given, what cannot be taken away. Gratitude will overflow. Joy will permeate your heart. You will become more than a conqueror of self-pity through him who loves you.”

Let’s allow the gospel of Christ to permeate our souls breaking the corrupted soil of self-pity deep within our souls. Christ has forgiven us of our self-worship and gives us the hope of change through his gospel.