

Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



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The Victim Mentality

Our first response to adversity usually is to feel sorry for ourselves as victims.

But that approach does nothing to improve our situation—and will likely make matters worse.

“What do you mean when you use this proverb, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? As I live,’ says the Lord, ‘you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel’” (Eze. 18:2-3).

Ezekiel’s fellow exiles in Babylon had an explanation for all the terrible things that had happened to them. The destruction of their nation, the forced captivity in a foreign land, the loss of their prosperity and freedom — all of it could be traced back to one obvious cause: previous generations had rebelled against God, and now their children were paying for it. This little proverb about sour grapes captured their philosophical response to their travails.

In their defense, the Jews were partly correct. Read the writings of the prophets from the preceding century and there is no doubt the nation had been storing up sins for a day of judgment for a long time. But blaming their parents and grandparents did not absolve them of their own complicity in the nation’s doom. As long as they viewed themselves as helpless victims of others’ sins,

they would remain blind to the need for changes in their own lives.

This tendency to cast ourselves as victims in dealing with problems in our lives is as old as the human race. Adam and Eve tried to use that defense in humanity’s very first sin (Gen. 3). Both sought to deflect blame for eating the forbidden fruit onto someone else. But in the end, each had to admit, “I ate” (v. 12-13). Whatever others may have done, each had made his/her own decision to disobey God. Trying to claim victim status was a clumsy dodge.

Even in those circumstances where we suffer through no fault of our own, dwelling on the unfairness only makes matters worse. The Israelites who came up out of Egypt had to deal with the hardships of wilderness travel, harassing enemies, and the prospect of having to take a well-defended land. Their incessant complaining blinded them to the blessings they should have been celebrating. They were a free people armed with the hope of a better life just ahead, but by whining about their role as victims, they lost it all.

The Israelites should have learned a lesson from one of their ancestors, Joseph. Joseph was entirely innocent when he was sold into slavery by his brothers and framed by his master’s wife. But instead of playing the victim card, he buckled down and got to work. If fate made him a slave, he would be the most dependable slave he could be. If he was imprisoned unfairly, he would be a model prisoner. Joseph understood what so many people today don’t: complaining about life’s inequities *changes absolutely nothing*. Eventually, Joseph’s determination to rise above his circumstances paid off enormously.

When the Prodigal Son returned home to his father, he didn’t give his dad a “sour grapes” sob story about how life was out to get him. Instead, he took full responsibility for the mistakes he had made. His simple confession, “I have sinned,” revealed a young man who had learned a valuable lesson about life: Having a victim mentality robs me of the power to improve my situation. It is only by taking responsibility for my life that I can find a way to change it.

– David King