

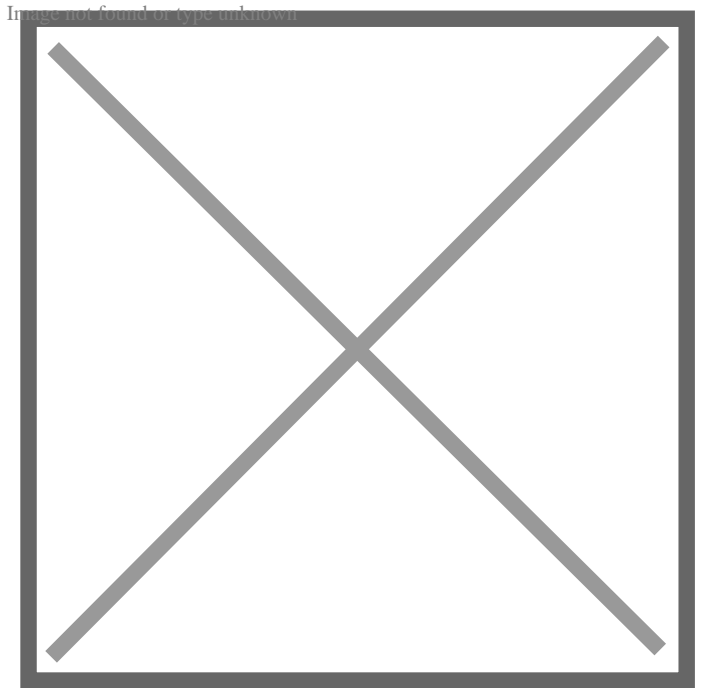
the spice box ” New every morning “

By Sharon Robertson, Lt. Colonel

“Misery loves company,” it is said, and I believe it! The only thing worse than bravely suffering in silence is bravely suffering in silence and no one noticing it.

The Jews of the Babylonian Captivity knew the feeling:

*Is it nothing to you,
all you who pass by?
Look around and see.
Is any suffering like my suffering
that was inflicted on me,
that the Lord brought on me
in the day of his fierce anger?
(Lam. 1:12 NIV).*



Self-pity can be one of the most debilitating emotions one can experience. It strikes us all at one time or another, whether in time of loss, in moments of great disappointment, or in times of physical, emotional or mental distress. It destroys one's ability to focus on anything but the wrongs, real or imagined, and the afflictions we suffer. It tells us we are hopeless, powerless, that no one understands our pain. We lament with the biblical poet:

*I have been deprived of peace;
I have forgotten what prosperity is.*

*So I say, "My splendor is gone
and all that I had hoped from
the Lord.*

*I remember my affliction and my
wandering,*

the bitterness and the gall.

*I well remember them,
and my soul is downcast within
me...*

(Lam. 3:17-20 NIV).

And when hope is gone, what remains?

One thing only: faith—pure, plain old stubborn, determined “I will not let thee go” faith. The enduring, unquestioning, unreasonable faith that gives substance to things hoped for and is the evidence of things we cannot otherwise prove, the faith that enabled Job to declare, Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him (Job 13:15 KJV). The faith that declares in the midst of trouble, I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety (Psalm 4:8 NIV).

The Hebrews had a fierce, stubborn type of faith that convinced them that even when God’s punishment seemed unbearable, God still cared.

*Yet this I call to mind and
therefore I have hope:
Because of the Lord’s great
love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.*

*They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
I say to myself, "The Lord is
my portion, therefore I will
wait for him."*

*The Lord is good to those
whose hope is in him,
to the one who seeks him;
it is good to wait quietly
for the salvation of the Lord.
(Lam. 3:21-24 NIV).*

When I was a child my brother brought me a toy from Japan. He called it a Japanese handcuff. The thing didn't look like much—just a slender tube of straw, maybe five inches long. I had no idea what I was supposed to do with it.

He told me to stick a finger in each end of the tube—easy enough—and then to pull my fingers out of the tube. Not so easy! No matter how hard I tried, as long as I kept fighting the tube I couldn't get free. Finally he told me to push in with both fingers at the same time, and instantly the tube relaxed to its original dimensions. I was free.

Sometimes life can be like those Japanese handcuffs. We can only break free by abandoning our determination to fight against the circumstances, and seek instead the victory found in waiting in faith for the salvation and release our Lord has in mind for us.

Like Paul, we need to determine that we are not objects to be pitied and sympathized with, but are still victorious in Christ, content in whatever situation we find ourselves, and praying that God will find a way to use us to bring honor to his name.