



Psalm 39

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To the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

1 I said, "I will guard my ways, Lest I sin with my tongue;
I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle,
While the wicked are before me."

2 I was mute with silence,
I held my peace even from good;
And my sorrow was stirred up.

3 My heart was hot within me;
While I was musing, the fire burned.
Then I spoke with my tongue:

4 "LORD, make me to know my end,
And what is the measure of my days,
That I may know how frail I am.

5 Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths,
And my age is as nothing before You;
Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor.

6 Surely every man walks about like a shadow;
Surely they busy themselves in vain;
He heaps up riches,
And does not know who will gather them.

7 "And now, Lord, what do I wait for?
My hope is in You.

8 Deliver me from all my transgressions;
Do not make me the reproach of the foolish.

9 I was mute, I did not open my mouth,
Because it was You who did it.

10 Remove Your plague from me;
I am consumed by the blow of Your hand.

11 When with rebukes You correct man for iniquity,
You make his beauty melt away like a moth;
Surely every man is vapor.

12 "Hear my prayer, O LORD,
And give ear to my cry;
Do not be silent at my tears;
For I am a stranger with You,
A sojourner, as all my fathers were.

13 Remove Your gaze from me, that I may regain strength,
Before I go away and am no more."

Selah

Selah

Main idea: The Lord uses affliction to train us into sweeter silence and stronger hope.

Introduction: learning to put our hand over our mouths. "THINK" before you speak.

1. Sometimes, doing the right thing doesn't make you feel better, v1–3

- a. In many cases, the right thing is to be silent, v1–2b
 - i. This may take great effort, v1b, 2a
 - ii. This may be especially true in the presence of the wicked, v1c
 - iii. There are times when even a good saying isn't good to say, v2b
- b. But even the right thing may still come with pain, v2c–3b
 - i. Greater or more vivid sorrow, v2c
 - ii. Boiling heart, v3a
 - iii. Burning mind, v3b

2. When you cannot speak rightly, you can at least ask to listen, v4–6

- a. His first request is to be taught, v4. It is safer to ask for changes in ourselves than for changes in our circumstances.
- b. Sometimes the request is self-fulfilling, v5–6. Just making the request reminds him of how quick and light life in this world really is. This is a blessing, because the quickness and lightness also applies to our afflictions, especially if we have come to know the eternal weight of glory that awaits us in Christ (cf. 2Cor 4:17–18; Rom 8:17–18).

3. When you've listened to the Lord, you are better equipped to ask well, v7–12

- a. He now realizes that his hope is sure, v7. Realizing that he is a vapor, and that all other helps are a vapor, shifts his hope entirely and only onto the Lord. The Lord is not a vapor, and this hope is sure! (cf. 146:3–5)
- b. He now wants to be delivered of his sin most of all, v8–11. Although a big part of his trouble was the wicked (v1) and foolish (v8), they will soon be gone. It is his own sin that he most needs removed.
 - i. More reflection leads to a more stable silence, v9. It is a much better path to silence to consider the mighty hand of God (v10) than to attempt silence as a method of restraining sin by force (v1–2).
 - ii. More reflection leads to a more accurate view of self, v11. The very lesson he was asking to learn in v4–5, he now realizes in v11 that the affliction has been God's means for teaching him.
- c. He now realizes that his hope is eternal, v12–13
 - i. His weakness was a reason for himself to keep silent, but with the Lord it is a reason for God not to be, v12
 - ii. He now realizes that the chastisement/discipline must be temporary, and he desires to see its end instead of his own, v13

Conclusion: "THINK" before you speak is a helpful set of principles. But actual thinking, actual meditation upon God, under the pressure of His discipline is more effective than any technique. A right spirit is more helpful than a right strategy.

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Psalms 39 will have as our portion. The entire Psalm, these are the words of David to the chief musician to Judgathan. A Psalm of David, I said, I will guard my ways. Lest I sin with my tongue? I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle.

While the wicked are before me, I was mute with silence. I held my peace, even from good and my sorrow was stirred up. My heart was hot within me while I was musing the fire burned, Then I spoke with my tongue, Yahweh make me to know my end and what is the measure of my days that I may know how frail I am.

Indeed, you have made my days as hand breaths, and my age is as nothing before you. Certainly, every man, it is best state, but vapor say law shortly, every man walks about like a shadow. Surely, they busy themselves in vain heaps, up riches, and does not know who will gather them and now, Lord, what do I wait for?

My hope is in you deliver me from all my transgressions. Do not make me the reproach of the foolish. I was mute. I did not open my mouth because it was. You who did it? Remove your plague from me. I am consumed by the blow of your hand when with rebukes you correct.

Man for iniquity. You make his beauty melt away like a moth. Surely every man is vapor. Salom hear my prayer. Oh, you all and give ear to my cry. Do not be silent at my tears for. I am a stranger with you. A Sojourner, as all my father's were remove your gaze from me that I may regain strength Before I go away and them no more So far the reading of God's inspired and inherent word.

It is a great help to us that in anticipating. The sufferings of the Lord Jesus, God gave us the sufferings of David, the first great king, the one after whom Christ in his kingship is called the son of David. The one to whom was promised to descendant, who would sit on his throne and his kingdom would be forever and ever, because not only do we have the perfect sufferings of Christ from which to learn in the New Testament, I often to a believer who's having difficulty even, especially to those who are either suffering, under unjust government, as occurred more in my previous ministry.

Although, the way things are going in, God's providence, may occur more in my future ministry as well. But also very closely tied, the end of first Peter there. First Peter chapter 2 there to the sufferings of a wife of of a husband who is not walking with the Lord.

And and loving her and living with her and understanding fashion and so forth. And she still needs to submit to him and so forth. We have that perfect example of Christ and His suffering who opened not His mouth and that reminds us of Psalm 39. But Psalm 39 is helpful for us in a different way because Christ wasn't a sinner Christ was suffering for our sins and he was about to experience the horror of God's fury upon our sins upon himself.

But he didn't live in his day-to-day knowing that that he needed discipline to grow him in holiness. He was already perfectly. Holy He grew in wisdom and stature and favor with God and with men, but he didn't have sin to mortify and he didn't need to vivify any righteousness.

He was already perfectly righteous. Well, not so for David and not. So for us. And so the Holy Spirit gave us great mercy in the way that he brings David, not just through troubles, like the trouble with Saul but troubles like the trouble with Absalom and other situations that were a consequence of his own sin And you notice that the Holy Spirit reminds us of that, even in the superscript of the Psalm to the chief musician, to Jeduthen, Jeduthen being the name of one of those particular Levites that David had appointed for the leading of music in the public worship of Israel, anticipating the temple.

And then there were a number of Jehoahazs or Ethans coming down from him, either descended, biologically, or taking the same office and singing in the leadership. Why make a point of that? Because, this is a very personal Psalm in the way it cries out to God. And yet it has given for us to sing and pray and corporate worship.

And what a great mercy of God because there are people who come to the public worship and they're in the midst of great trouble troubles. So hard that they feel like if they open their mouth to express what they're feeling, they might, as they stuff says, in Psalm 73 betray, a generation of God's people and often that trouble is in large part due to our own sin.

And we're not sure how to compose ourselves before God. What can such people see? Well, if we only saying the songs of men you would have hardly anything to sing but thank God. He gives us Psalm 39, it gives us Psalm 39 which teaches us some surprising things. But, by the time we get done hearing, then we're not actually that surprised at all.

One of the great lessons of this Psalm is how to put our hands over our mouths. Now, our children, at least the older ones, we by my god's grace have had different ways that we have grown and different things that we can pay less attention to detail with. And we used to be able to give each child a great deal of particular instruction.

And with, with the older children and if my younger children are hearing this for the first time, then I'm sorry and take this council. Now, if you're not good at restraining your mouth with your head or your heart, you can use your hand. So when you start to speak or when you're tempted to speak and a situation where you know that you shouldn't, You can both use the negative and tell yourself, you shouldn't, but use also use the positive, give your hand a command and just cover your mouth, okay?

It's much more difficult to speak with your hand on your mouth and the psalmist. The psalmist knows here that he should think before he speaks. In fact he says I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle in verse 1 and yet even though in God's grace to him he was he gave him some success there in not saying what he shouldn't say.

One of the main things that he discovered by that, in the first three verses of the Psalm is that sometimes doing the right thing doesn't help. You feel better, Sometimes you do the right thing and it feels just as painful and just as miserable after you've been doing the right thing for a while, that's something you should know before him because if you expected that whenever you did the right thing, it would start to feel better.

You would very easily give up doing the right thing because you don't and there are many who say, well, I tried not speaking and it didn't help. So now I just tell them off whenever I know Sometimes doing the right thing, doesn't help. You feel better.

And if you cannot speak rightly or if you cannot, if you don't have it's not just you can't say something nice. It's, you don't know what to say. That is nice. You can at least ask to listen The first prayer. First, petition of this Psalm verse verse 4. Yahweh make me to know my end.

That's a fancy way of saying teach me, teach me my end. Perhaps one of you children when you are asking mom for help in homeschool tomorrow? I say mother could you make me to know that's part of my math lesson So if you cannot speak rightly you can at least ask that you might listen.

And then, when you've listened to the Lord, you're better equipped to ask. Well, the petitions start to come more freely In the last portion of the Psalm there, which we will consider in the last place. And if you have, oh, I did. I yeah, I did hand outlines. If you have an outline there that should be verse 7 through 13 on number three.

So first learning to put our hands over our mouths, David was practicing what we call and our home. Think before you speak I probably mentioned it to you in the past and that is our number of things that what number of tests that what you're going to say should have to pass before.

It can come out of your mouth. First of all, is it true? If it's false, you shouldn't say it at all? Second of all. Is it helpful? This is often a timing thing or a situational thing. The person that you're speaking to might be the kind of person who has never helped and then you just, you don't speak to a person like that.

That's something the Lord teaches us. Don't cast pearls before swine The third of all is it important? Our house could be quieter. If we were more consistent in making things that we say past this test, There are a lot of things that you can correct somebody about or inform somebody about her talk to somebody about that.

Just aren't important. And the Lord says we're going to have to answer for every idol word. Not just every overtly wicked word. Fourth of all. Is it necessary? This is a cousin to. Is it helpful? Is it necessary? Part of the question of isn't necessary. Is is it your job to say that thing?

Sometimes we have to remind ourselves if we are not the person's father. I'm not their father, I'm not their elder. This is something that somebody else is actually tasked by God to do some of some of us, even tend to correct, brothers and sisters when mom is sitting right there and if she really wanted to correct it, she could have done.

It isn't necessary. And then of course, as it kind Is, it kind is also a cousin to is it helpful Often? This is this can be. Who else is there? We want to save each other's honor in front of others. It's part of obeying the ninth commandment. And so, there's a kindness in choosing around whom and where to say something.

And then, of course, there's manner and word choice, facial expression and learning the skill of expressing appreciation, and and acknowledging God's grace, in someone before you criticize them. The Apostle Paul being perhaps, a, most famous example of this gushing with Christian affection, to some whom he is going to cut deeply with the word.

Not to many sentences later, Unless you've got a Galatian problem in which case, he just go straight to cutting. Sometimes the kindness is not to try to couch everything in sugar because the cancer is so deadly that you don't want to cheapen The Council, It takes skill right to.

Well, think before you speak, David knew that he shouldn't speak, especially when the wicked were in front of him, this would either be because he would encourage them. And their wickedness, We see this happen. Even on the cross with the Lord Jesus. Those who who feel like they have had their suspicions about God confirmed.

Because look at how this man ended up who hoped so much in God And David expresses such things for us as well. We we should be careful not to speak in a way that the wicked wouldn't understand. You know, there's a righteous way of expressing your complaint before God We have that throughout the Psalms but if you know you're around people who are given to grumbling and complaining then you don't want to reinforce that for them.

You have a greater duty to cheerfulness and thankfulness in your speech out of love for them and desire for the honor of God's name. And then you don't wish to say anything that would, that would bring dishonor to God, perhaps even by your own sinning, and this is what he says.

In verse 1, I will guard my ways. Lest I sin with my tongue And many cases. The right thing to say, is nothing at all.

Watch out. When you feel like you must say something, watch out. When you feel like you must anything, Don't let your feelings determine for you, of course of action. Decide. If the Bible requires you to say something, If you feel like, you must say something. And you start figuring out what to say before you've actually figured out.

If you should say something, you've gotten ahead of yourself and you're going to end up sitting, it may take great effort, we talked about, putting our hands over our mouth or the think before you speak. This may especially be true in the presence of the wicked to say nothing in front of them.

It may be especially true if you're just a kind of person who speaks to much. Some of us are the scripture says where words are many transgression is not absent or sinful people. And the more that comes out of our mouths, the higher, the, the number of opportunities for that sin to overflow from our hearts, There are times when even a good saying isn't good to say, look at verse 2, verse says, I held my piece even from good or I refrained from good, he had things that are good in and of themselves but especially with the wicked there or especially with his heart in the condition.

It was, he would have been wrong to say it. Even though the thing in itself was a good thing, sometimes we do this, when we don't have enough knowledge of a situation where we've jumped to conclusions and made assumptions about others or made assumptions about what God is doing, Job's friends.

Do this for chapter after chapter, They say lots of things that would have been good in and of themselves. A lot of things that aren't They didn't seem to understand God's gracious operating with man, according to a substitute very well at least not the way Job did. But you might have something that is good to say or is a good thing in itself and it would not be good for you to say.

So, in many cases, the right thing is to be silent. But even doing this right thing, keeping silent may still come with pain. Notice the immediate experiential results of his holding his peace and being quiet, like he should have verse 2. My sorrow was stirred up. It didn't go down, it went, it became greater.

My heart was hot within me While. I was musing the fire burned and so it became harder for him because he couldn't say something and part this is because we are sinners. And one of the reasons why we feel like saying something is we are not humbled under the hand of God, like we should be that becomes a theme in the rest of the Psalm which he seems to realize because he goes on from explaining that doing the right thing and not speaking didn't make him feel better to speaking, but instead of asking for his circumstances to change, he asks for his self to change verse 4, Yahweh make me to know my end.

His first request is to be taught. That's a great example for us when we are in times of trouble because our first request is often Lord get me out. And yet, do we not know that? It's our Lord who gave himself for us? Our Lord, who has earned everlasting blessedness and is bringing us, surely do that blessing blessedness.

He is the one who chose That suffering for you. It might not even be a correction for a particular sin, but it is still part of how he is making you perfectly. Holy There are two things that you you can pray. In addition to save me from this because he will ultimately save you from it.

There's nothing wrong with praying for that. But two things you can always pray, glorify yourself. Lord. Give me. Give me the opportunity to bring you glory in the midst of this. That's one thing. Another one is teach me whatever it is. I need to learn through this. Lord, I know you are doing me, good.

I know you are conforming me to Christ, but I also know that I'm hard-headed and dull-hearted slow on the uptake and quick to resist. Teach me Make me to know. My days make me to know my end and what is the measure of my days, rather? Excuse me. That I may know how frail.

I am Sometimes asking to be taught as itself self-fulfilling, Why? Because it's not just the word that is a means of grace. Or if you're in the public, courtship the sacrament. That is a means of grace. What other means of grace Word, Sacraments and prayer And in prayer and fellowship with God, which, you know, when you're praying.

The Holy Spirit is helping you because we don't know what to pray for. As we ought Romans chapter 8 but the Holy Spirit intercedes with us and that whenever we call upon God as our Abba and know that that is true. It's because he has sent the Spirit of his son into our hearts.

Sometimes we hear as a Benediction at the end of worship, the the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Well, here's one sure way to have the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Do something that the Holy Spirit is always doing for you.

And that whenever you do it, He is helping you. You want the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Pray. And here he starts to pray. You always make me to know my end. What is the measure of my days that I may know how frail I am and then we get several verses of him.

Learning and meditating upon and realizing how frail he is, and how short his life is. You see how even in the midst of the praying and by the means of the praying, the thing that he was asking for was answered. Sometimes this is a another one for me. Because when you're in a difficult situation, what you need most of all is to know the sweetness of Christ.

What bitterness cannot be made sweet. If you have fellowship with the Lord, Jesus, in the midst of it, you say, oh, Lord, make me to remember how sweet you are. And what does the Holy Spirit immediately? Do He reminds you? Who Jesus is He reminds you that that, even though he is, the God, very God, a very God.

The quality with God is not something for him to grasp that he humbled himself to become a man for you that he's demonstrated his love for you and in dying for you while you were his enemy. And now he is your beloved bridegroom, who laid down his life for you as, as a member of his bride and is lovingly.

Washing you with his word like, as with water, because he's laser focused on the day when he presents you to himself blameless, and without spot and he's giving you all of that desire for him. You you start to ask him to remind you of the sweetness of knowing him and even in the midst of asking him, he starts to bring to your mind, all of the ways in which he is sweet to you.

So we see the Holy Spirit doing this for David here. It's just he immediately goes in verse 5. Indeed, you have made my days as handbreaths My age is nothing, before you certainly every mana. Is best state is, but a vapor. That's the same word as that vanity word in the book of Ecclesiastes.

And several times, we see it in this Psalm. Surely every man walks about like a shadow who barely there. While they are there. Surely they busy themselves in vain, he heaps up riches and he does not know who will gather them a theme that we find in Proverbs in Ecclesiastes as well.

And so he realizes how quick and light life in this world really is. Well, if you're a believer and all the suffering you will ever get is the suffering that you have in this world. And you start to remember how quick and light this world is by comparison to the next road by comparison to the next life.

Then you can start to say with the apostle in Romans chapter 8 that we are going to inherit with with Jesus. And if we suffer with him for a little while and then we'll be glorified within and the light and momentary affliction, in this world is producing in us.

An eternal weight of glory. It says the same thing. And second Corinthians, 4, 17 and 18 when he talks about their recent afflictions and yet, they're not to be compared all of his their flick. His afflictions in this life are not to be compared to the eternal and weighty glory.

That is to come. So when you cannot speak rightly, you can at least ask to listen. And when you ask to be taught, when you ask for the Lord to make you to know, and a truth about yourself about him, he starts to answer even in the midst of it.

And then when you've listened to the Lord, you're better equipped to ask well Now Lord, what do I wait for verse 7? My hope is in you. He now realizes that he has a hope that is infinitely greater than any of his troubles. Even the trouble of his sin from which he will be, ultimately delivered.

If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us. From all unrighteousness, We pray this lead me not to temptation but deliver us lead us not to temptation but deliver us from evil. And here, he says deliver me from all my transgressions.

He has a sure hope and it is from his sin, not his situation that he wants to be delivered. Most of all, There are the wicked in verse 1 and the foolish and verse 8 who are a problem for him. But it's not their sins that he wants to be delivered from so much as his own, as he's reflected upon who He is and who God is, and the fact that his suffering cannot be forever.

And that his sin is, is his greatest trial in the moment. He's found a much more stable source of silence. I was mute. I did not open my mouth because it was you who did it Before. He was trying not to speak because the wicked were in front of him and he was afraid of what he might do.

Now, He is able not to speak because he sees God, he sees God saving him from his sin. He sees God showing him that the quickness and lightness of his affliction, he sees God showing him the life in this world is but a vapor here one moment gone. The next and and very light even while it's there.

So he has a more stable silence. He has a more accurate view of himself. There's one who is who is in verse 11, the way that he had asked to be taught and were and recited out loud and versus four through six.

He now realizes that he has an eternal hope verse 12 and 13. Here, my prayero Yahweh. Give ear to my cry. Do not be silent at my tears. Now, when he says for, I am a stranger with you, he's not saying that he is strange to the Lord, he's talking about the Lord, as the permanent one, and he is the one who is passing through the word, stranger or the word sojourner.

Here would have been in their culture. One who has to receive hospitality in Israel, they had laws for Sojourners and strangers. They they were protected and the people were commanded to do them good. But they weren't permitted to own land. And so there's a word picture here of God, being the one who's from everlasting to everlasting.

He has permanence. He has the this enduring quality and we recognize ourselves as being almost weight less compared to the weightiness of God. But we pass through this life with him, it's like coming into into a town and knowing you're only going to be there for a day but the great king lodges you in his house.

You see for I am a stranger with you is. Sojourner is all my father's were as not a, a further complaint or despair or discouragement it is. Triumphant, it says, remove your gaze from me that I make a regain strength before I go away and M, no more. This isn't the despair of Job.

This is having come to the conclusion in Psalm 39 that because he has the Lord because he's in fellowship with the Lord, that it's the sin and it's the the suffering that our time limited. Yeah. He's, we are a vapor in this life, but we are the ones who belong to the.

Lord, He realizes that any instruction. Chastisement discipline must be temporary. So think before you speak, maybe a helpful set of principles but actually thinking and meditating upon God under the pressure of his discipline is more effective than any technique because we need to be humbled about ourselves and we need to be realistic about our circumstances.

So that we may be cheered and strengthened by the reality of walking through those things with the Lord himself and a right spirit, it's much more helpful for maintaining godly silence than a right strategy. He had the right strategy in the beginning, didn't he? And still, there was that pain and that burning and the increase of his sorrow.

But in his dwelling upon the Lord and interacting with him, he came not only to write strategy but to a right spirit, which enabled him to maintain the silence before God in the hope and confidence with which he ends. The Psalm may God, the Holy Spirit, give us to know our days.

But to know our God and to be able therefore to count our affliction momentary and light tumble ourselves in the sight of the Lord because we're confident that he who cares for us and upon whom we are casting our cares will lift us up. Well, with that as preparation, for our hearts.

For coming into our climate prayer. Let us come to pray together.