



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

"All About Praise"

Series of Six Psalms

LESSON 2

This week we will be taking a look at Psalm 39, which has been categorized as one of the "Psalms of Prayers in Times of Trouble." These are Psalms in which the authors bring their troubles to God in prayer. This grouping is usually divided into two categories: the laments of the community and the laments of the individual. Psalm 39 would be considered a lament of the individual, which constitutes the largest group of the Psalms. The author is experiencing some kind of trouble or anguish and is pouring his heart out to the Lord. We, as people, can generally relate better to this category of Psalms because they are of such a personal nature.

This Psalm has been given many titles over the years, such as "Altogether Vanity," "No Fixed Abode," or the "Measure of Man's Days." It is a little bit confusing the first time you read it, and, I must admit, not very encouraging. As I read it over the first few times, I found myself asking the Lord why He put this one, specifically, on my heart to write. But the more I studied, the more I understood the answer to that question. There is a lot of truth packed into these 13 verses, and I believe God has some important challenges for us. May the Holy Spirit open our eyes to everything the Lord has for us this week, and may we study with the intent to apply it to our lives!

First Day

1. Let's begin by reading Psalm 39:1-13. Observe the chapter. What facts do you find? What details can you see? Who is speaking? Who is the author speaking to?

2. Can you find any repeated words or phrases? What does that tell you?

3. What would you say is the main thought of this passage?

4. Many scholars break this chapter into four sections. What do you think those are?
Section 1: Verses
Section 2: Verses
Section 3: Verses
Section 4: Verses

5. What verse sums up this chapter the best?

6. Upon first reading, can you see any personal application or lesson for yourself?

7. How would you title this Psalm?

8. Some believe that Psalm 39 is a continuation of Psalm 38. Read Psalm 38:1-22 and jot down reasons that the two may possibly be tied together. How are they alike?

We'll end here for today. Psalm 39 is certainly one that we can all relate to at some period of our life. Have a wonderful week "musing" with David!

Memory Verse of the Week: "And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You." Psalm 39:7

Second Day

Work on your memory verse. It's really the answer to David's questions. Is your hope in Him?

Today we're going to study the first section, verses 1-3. Begin with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to give you knowledge and wisdom as you read.

1. Read Psalm 39:1-13, concentrating on verses 1-3. How many times does he use the word "I"?

We know David, who is author of this Psalm, is writing to Jeduthun, one of the chief musicians that was appointed to lead public worship, along with Asaph and Heman. (1 Chronicles 16:37-42, 25:1-8; 2 Chronicles 5:12, 35:15) It sounds like he's talking to himself, making some kind of pledge, resolving to keep his mouth shut. Sounds like he is ready to pop!

2. Why does he want to keep his mouth shut? Who doesn't he want to speak in front of?
3. After reading through the whole chapter, it's obvious that David is troubled about the brevity of life. But why does he think he needs to keep silent?
4. What can happen when we share our "spiritual" concerns or struggles with unbelievers? What can happen if they misunderstand?

David seemed compelled to speak but didn't trust himself to even open his mouth, even for the good. He didn't want unbelievers to misunderstand him, thinking he was criticizing the Lord or His ways. He didn't want to

appear disloyal, knowing that if he vented in the wrong way, or on the wrong person, he could misrepresent God and dishonor His name. David didn't seem to trust himself, so he tried hard to guard his mouth.

5. Have you ever "vented" the wrong way to the wrong person? What was the result? Did it come around to bite you or even dishonor God?

David knew that his tongue could do a lot of damage if left to its own. He would have to deliberately and purposefully guard and muzzle it to keep his mouth from sinning. When he was upset, he knew it was the time to keep silent.

6. Read the following verses and note what they say about the tongue:
- a. Psalm 34:13
 - b. Proverbs 10:31-32
 - c. Proverbs 12:17-22
 - d. James 1:26
 - e. James 3:6-12
 - f. Ecclesiastes 3:7
7. Does your mouth cause you to sin very often? How can you deliberately and purposefully keep it shut when you need to?

"Man's mouth, though it be but a little hole, will hold a world full of sin. For there is not any sin forbidden in the law of Gospel which is not spoken by the tongue, as well as thought in the heart, or done in the life. Is it not then almost as difficult to rule the tongue as to rule the world?"

Edward Reyner

"If, in any way, I belittle those who I am called to serve ... if I talk of their weak points in contrast, perhaps, with what I think of as my stronger points ... if I adopt a superior attitude, forgetting to consider the wisdom of the voice that ask me, inwardly, 'Who made you different from the one you are criticizing ... and what do you have that you have not been given?' ... if I can easily discuss the shortcomings or the sins of any man or woman ... if I can speak in an off-handed way, even of a child's wrongdoing ... then I know nothing of Calvary love." Amy Carmichael

8. Write your thoughts on the above quote by Amy.

David's heart burned like a fire while he "mused" or "meditated" on his issues. When he finally spoke up, we see that he directed it to God, expressing his anguish while seeking wisdom. We'll look at what exactly was bothering him tomorrow, but for now, let's end with a prayer by Amy Carmichael. Are we willing to pray this with her?

"My Father, how often do my words 'sing' someone else? (And how much time do I spend thinking critically about another -- so that nothing but words that sing come out?) Today, Lord, work in *me*. Change the thought-life in me when I strip others of dignity ... or reduce them point by point ... in order to build myself up. And give me Your voice, to speak words of value ... admiration ... encouragement ... compassion ... true kindness ..."

Third Day

What's your memory verse?

1. Let's begin by reading Psalm 39:1-13 again. David's problem finally emerges in verses 4-7. What is bothering him? How would you explain this section?

Some believe that David was very ill when he wrote Psalm 38, perhaps believing he wasn't going to live. Not only was he sick, but his friends and those he loved deserted him as well. Some think that although he obviously recovered from his illness, perhaps this trauma in his life brought him to the place where he was musing about the brevity and frailty of life itself. I personally believe that David thought about this a lot because he was faced with life-threatening situations often.

David is struggling with the emptiness and meaninglessness of existence. James discusses this topic in James 4:13-16, and Job talks about it as well (Job 7:7). The key word in this section is "hebel" which is translated "breath" and "in vain." David's son Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes, which talks about how meaningless and vain life is, apart from God. He writes about his quest for power, success, money, and wisdom in an attempt to find out what's really important. He uses the word "vanity" 37 times in his writing to express the futility of it all. He gives his conclusion in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.

In verses 4-5, David seems to be asking the Lord to help him learn this lesson so he can stop being perplexed and start focusing more on eternity. He realizes that life is very short. A "handbreadth" is just about four fingers wide, less than half a span.

2. Moses wrote about this in Psalm 90:12. What did he say about this subject?

3. How does Ephesians 5:15-16 tie in with this section?

James Montgomery Boice wrote, "The world would rather have us not think of the brevity of life. That spoils the fun. And the devil hates when we think about eternity, so he does his best to keep us amused."

4. Why would the devil hate when we ponder eternity?

5. Time is short. What should you be "investing" in? Read Colossians 3:1-4.

6. How much time do you spend contemplating the brevity of life and the frailty of man? If life is short, are you doing your best to make every minute count? (Or are you just trying to have a good time?)

7. Are you setting your mind on things above or on things of this world? Where are you finding your satisfaction?

8. Are there things that tempt or "charm" you in this world? Do you find yourself scattered, anxious, or easily distracted? How can you guard yourself against that?

9. Notice in verse 5, David says, "**You** have made my days as handbreadths." Why is this such a big statement, considering the problems he's grabbing with?

Although David is wrestling with the emptiness of life, he realizes that life is not an accident. God has "willed" our life; it does have meaning. The only "real" meaning must be in our relationship with Him. "A man's heart plans his ways, but the Lord directs his steps." (Proverbs 16:9) The Lord "fearfully and wonderfully" made us; our days were fashioned for us, when as yet there were none of them." (Psalm 139) We are part of God's plan, no matter how meaningless or empty this life may seem. When we know Christ, we have new meaning and hope. Acts 17:28 tells us that "In Him we live and move and have our being." In Him, we are home.

10. Do you ever struggle with the emptiness of life? Can you, like David, rest in knowing that it all does have a purpose?

Have a wonderful day, ladies. May you reflect on your life and devote yourself to investing your time wisely, making every moment count, preparing yourself for His return!

Fourth Day

Review your verse.

1. Read Psalm 39:1-13, focusing on verses 7-11. What is the main point of this section?

2. Read Job 7:17-21. How does Job seem to raise the same question?

In Psalm 38, David talks about the cruelty of his friends and loved ones, as well as his enemies. Now in Psalm 39, David brings up the severity of God's discipline and judgment.

3. Does David accuse God of being unjust in His discipline?

4. How does Psalm 39:7 seem to be a turning point for David?

David reminds himself that all His hope can rest on the Lord. All his questions, concerns, frustrations, and doubts can all rest on a God who can't be shaken. He never changes; He never varies. David realizes that in all the futility of life and death, all that he needs ... is God. He alone is sufficient; He alone is enough.

5. Is "God alone" enough for you? Have you come to the point where you understand that He is all you really need? In the midst of your trials, heartaches, and circumstances, can you say, with David, "My hope is in You"?

6. What does David cry out for in verse 8?

7. Why do unbelievers seem to like to see Christians fall or fail?

David accepts his discipline from the hand of God. He acknowledges his sin; he understands the penalty. Although he accepts it, he readily asks God to take it from him, hoping he's endured enough pain. He seems to feel that he has lost all of God's blessings. He is reminded, once again, that every man's life is like a vapor.

8. What is a "vapor"? Why does David use that picture to describe man?

How does man's beauty "melt away like a moth"? Paxton's Illustration of Scripture says, "The meaning may be, as the moth crumbles into dust under the slightest pressure or the gentlest touch, so man dissolves with equal ease, and vanishes into darkness, under the finger of the Almighty."

John Kitto said, "The moths of the East are very large and beautiful, but short-lived. After a few showers these splendid insects may be seen fluttering in every breeze, but the dry weather, and their numerous enemies, soon consigns them to the common lot."

One more thought on this passage. John Phillips points out that, "Sin, like a moth, eats away in the dark—secretly, silently, surely. It leaves its mark not only on the human soul, but on the human body as well. Sin and sickness had perhaps consumed David and his beauty like a moth."

9. Again, what truth is David trying to illustrate? What point is he reminding us of?

10. Have you ever felt the sting of God's chastisement? Did it remind you of the frailty of man and the greatness of God? Or did it cause you to back away from Him in anger?

That's all for today. I pray that we develop a greater understanding of the severity of sin and what it does to our relationship with God. I pray that we continue to learn to take sin seriously, stay as far from it as we can, and always continue to hope in the Lord.

Fifth Day

Write your verse by memory.

1. Read Psalm 39:1-13, concentrating on verses 12-13. How does David wrap this up? What's his main point in this section? What's he crying out for?

In one last-ditch effort, David pleads with God to hear his prayers, see his tears, and grant his request. For a mighty man to reveal his weaknesses in tears shows us a man who is truly humble.

2. What does David see himself as, in verse 12? What do you think he means? Why does he bring this up to God?
3. Verse 13 is an interesting verse. What do you think David means, in your own words?

David reminds God that he is just a guest, a stranger who is passing through. The terms he uses are words that were used to describe foreign residents in Israel, some of long duration, some short-term. These "guests" were to be treated well, but couldn't own land. They were not permanent residents. They were simply pilgrims "passin through." This concept is used throughout Scripture, both in the Old and New Testament.

4. Look up the following verses and notice what they say about being "strangers." (Who is talking, and who is the passage talking about?)
- a. 1 Chronicles 29:15
 - b. Hebrews 11:13
 - c. 1 Peter 2:11
5. How can we practically live as pilgrims and strangers of this world today? How is that different than living as a "permanent resident"? How can we guard ourselves from becoming "permanent residents"? (1 John 2:15-17) Give other verses if you can.

If I was to put these verses in my own words, it might sound something like this: Please God, hear my prayers! Please see my tears. Remember, I'm just a stranger here; I really don't belong. My life is a vapor, remember? Can you just lift Your hand of judgment for a second? Can you please give me a break? Can I just recover from this pain before I go on and die? Please, I've had enough.

David doesn't really make much sense. All he can see is his pain and circumstance and wants to experience a small amount of joy before the Lord takes him home. About this verse, Kidner writes, "The prayer of 13a makes no more sense than Peter's 'depart from me' in Luke 5:8, but God knows when to treat that plea. The very presence of such prayers in Scripture is a witness to His understanding. He knows how men speak when they are desperate."

This Psalm doesn't end with the usual note of assurance or encouragement, but yet, even in his lamenting, he knows he still has hope in God. And that, my friends, is very encouraging!

Have you ever approached God with some "desperate" prayers? Aren't you glad that He didn't always answer them, smite you for disrespect or lack of trust, or laugh at you? He knows we are like a vapor; we are like dust. He knows our weaknesses and our frames. He created us; He loves us! He understands!

6. What lessons can you see in this chapter? How is this Psalm significant for your life?

7. What do we learn about man's frailty and weakness from this chapter? Where do we find our strength? Is there anything that God asks us to do in our own strength?

8. Life is short. Are you wasting it or investing it?

9. Are you going through a rough time right now? Can you relate to David in his prayer in 12-13? Keep reminding yourself of verse 7 and keep clinging to the Lord!

10. Are there any changes that you need to make in your life as a result of studying this chapter?

**"Lord, we choose YOUR strength over our weakness today!
In our weakness, YOU are made strong!
(2 Corinthians 12:9-10)**

