

# The Wise Response To A Troubled Heart

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*Non-Series Psalms*

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**Bible Text:** Psalm 39

**Preached on:** Sunday, November 16, 2014

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If you would please join with me in turning to Psalm 39.

To the Choirmaster: To Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

1 I said, "I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth with a muzzle, so long as the wicked are in my presence." 2 I was mute and silent; I held my peace to no avail, and my distress grew worse. 3 My heart became hot within me. As I mused, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue: 4 "O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am! 5 Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath! Selah 6 Surely a man goes about as a shadow! Surely for nothing they are in turmoil; man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather! 7 And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you. 8 Deliver me from all my transgressions. Do not make me the scorn of the fool! 9 I am mute; I do not open my mouth, for it is you who have done it. 10 Remove your stroke from me; I am spent by the hostility of your hand. 11 When you discipline a man with rebukes for sin, you consume like a moth what is dear to him; surely all mankind is a mere breath! Selah 12 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; hold not your peace at my tears! For I am a sojourner with you, a guest, like all my fathers. 13 Look away from me, that I may smile again, before I depart and am no more!"

Let's go together to our God in prayer.

*Lord, I give you thanks for the day that you have given us together. It's a joy to gather together with your people. It's a joy to see each other, to encourage each other. It's a joy, Lord, to sing praises to you. I thank you for the way that our hearts are edified and reminded of truth and instructed with singing. I thank you for Josh and the abilities you have gifted him with and for those who help him or the ways that our hearts have been ministered to today through song. We thank you for another opportunity to come face-to-face with your word and we ask, Lord, your powerful, gracious working in this hour. We*

*joyfully confess that we're nothing and we can do nothing. But Lord, you're present and it pleases you to work through preaching and so we ask you to do that. We ask that you would be at work in the proclamation of your word. We ask that you would be at work in the hearing of it, that you would strengthen us in our inner man to be able to receive the things you have for us tonight and I pray the result would be that our lives are transformed, that our lives are changed and that tonight your people would be encouraged and lifted up, built up in the faith. Where we need it, Lord, I pray you'd correct us and where there is a need in this room of salvation, Lord, save. Show yourself mighty in raising the dead. Lord, bring someone from spiritual death to life even tonight we ask and we will give you thanks for what you do and we pray this in the wonderful, powerful name of our Savior, Jesus. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

We live in a world that is full of pleasures even after the fall. This life is full of all kinds of pleasure. We know pleasure in the realm of the senses: sight, sound, touch, taste, smell. Lots of things to enjoy. Just think about your favorite meal and how pleasing that is to you. We know pleasure in the realm of thought. We know pleasure in the realm of expression: art, music, literature. We know joys in the realm of relationships, especially as believers. If we have a Christian marriage, what a joy that is to us and what a joy it is, our children, gifts from the Lord; the pleasures involved in raising them. And we know pleasures in the realm of accomplishments, that we achieve something, when we accomplish something, finish something, even something as small as maybe a garden or doing something with wood or whatever the case may be. We know those joys, those pleasures.

But pleasures that are known in a world that is under a curse are for the most part fleeting pleasures. Now, they are pleasures that do not finally satisfy. It's like living in a world full of echoes. These temporal pleasures are reminders of a time that has been lost. The pleasures we know today speak of a time in the yesterday, a time before sin, a time that we've never known. I mean, the only pleasures we've known, we've known in a world that's under a curse. There was a time that was much better. There was the time before the fall. There was a time before there was separation from God. In fact, the pleasures that are known by lost men are the emptiest kind of pleasure, merely sensual. The best you can get when you live in sin, the best you can get, I'm talking now about lost mankind, the best you can get when you're spiritually blind, when you're spiritually dead, when you're a slave to a cruel master, Satan. It's the best you can get when you have no real understanding of the Creator's purpose for mankind and therefore no real understanding of your own purpose. Do you realize, beloved, when you drive out into Houston, Texas and you see all those cars tonight when you go home and you see all of those cars and all those headlights, do you realize how many people you're looking at who have no true understanding of the Creator's purpose for mankind and no true understanding of their own purpose on this planet? The result is that all of those pleasures that men know, they proved to be phantoms. They don't last. They leave you empty. They run away from us. They run away from us due to the robbing, ruinous nature of sin.

How many things in this world start off beautiful, end up ugly? Do you have a friendship, for example, tonight that you can think of that has been ruined by sin? And you can think

back on days that now seem to be almost like a dream. You wish you could go back to it, times where there was joy and peace and unity and fellowship but it's been ruined by sin. It's gone. The world is full of things like that. Pleasures that run away from us because of the reality of aging, the disappearance of youth. I know about that, do you? It doesn't seem so long ago that I was young but I'm not young anymore. Things that I used to enjoy doing I just can't do. Pleasures that run away from us because of the presence of sickness, human frailty. We meet with people every day who have to deal with the daily pains associated with just the frailty of our humanness. Pleasures that run away from us because of the reality of death. The longer you live, the smaller your circle of relationships becomes: family passes away, friends pass away, acquaintances pass away. The longer you live, the more you come face-to-face with the reality of mortality.

Now, it's true, let's not be too dark, it's true that we as believers, we know pleasures that the world doesn't have access to. We know pleasures that come from the hand of God but even as believers, we come face-to-face with the brutal realities of this world we live in. The creation is described metaphorically as groaning for redemption, waiting for the revelation of the sons of God because there will be the revelation of the Son of God, a new heavens, a new earth, freedom from the bondage of the curse. If the world metaphorically groans for redemption and the Bible says we do as well, then that means even believers know what it is to live in a very difficult place.

Now, when we were young, we didn't think much about these sorts of things. We didn't reflect much on the brevity of life and the difficulties of life. When we were young, it seemed like it was all sunshine, not many clouds. We just didn't think about it often and even today, there are many people who don't like to think about these sorts of things. You know, just keep moving. Stay busy. Stay entertained. Get up in the morning, keep yourself busy, lay down at night and repeat and let's don't think much about where it's all headed, what it all means. Just keep existing. Do you realize it is a gift when in a relationship with God, you learn about the brevity of life and the difficulty of life and you reflect on eternity. That's a gift. Now, when you reflect on these things apart from a relationship with God, it just makes you dark; it leads to cynicism. But when you reflect on these things in a relationship with God, it doesn't lead to despair, it leads to wisdom. It leads to the kind of life that really counts when you understand the difference between what is temporal and what is eternal. When God teaches you about the brevity of life and about the difficulty of life and about the eternity that is coming, when you learn that in a relationship with God, that's a gift. It's foolishness to treat temporal things as if they are eternal things.

This is what we meet with in Psalm 39. David is contemplating the brevity of life and the difficulty of life and therefore he is thinking about the true meaning of life. He's meeting with some kind of difficulty but he doesn't specify what it is. As has been mentioned before, you know, that's kind of a good thing, isn't it? Because that means it's vague enough that we sort of plug our own situation into it wherever it is that we're being made conscious of the brevity of life and the difficulty of life. Well, David was being made aware of that also. We don't know what it was exactly. What we do know is that this is an individual lament. This is one man's sorrows and this is one man's troubling questions but

wisdom never stops at its own condition, wisdom then takes what's going on in the individual life and reflects on the rest of life and that's what David does here. He takes what's happening in his own life and he reflects on life as a whole, thinks about mankind in general, and what he does here is very wise and we will be wise to listen to him as the Holy Spirit through David gives us here the word of God, God's word leading us to reflect on the brevity of life, the difficulty of life and the meaning of life.

This Psalm has been organized by commentators a number of different ways. I think an easy way to deal with it and an effective way would be this way: verses 1 through 6, we see in view of his perplexity, in view of his troubled heart, David makes a commitment that he then works out. A commitment worked out, verses 1 through 6. Then in verse 7, you have sort of the high point of the Psalm, you might even say a turning point in some ways but you have his confession that he then works out. So you have a commitment worked out, verses 1 through 6; you have a confession worked out, verses 7-13. And I want you to notice something with me as we walk through this Psalm together: there is a pattern. David will request something then he's going to reflect on what he requests. So there is a request and then a reflection, a request then a reflection, a request then a reflection.

Notice first of all, the commitment that he makes in view of his troubled heart. Something is going on inside of him but he's made a commitment. Verse 1, "I said, 'I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth with a muzzle, so long as the wicked are in my presence. I was mute and silent; I held my peace to no avail, and my distress grew worse. My heart became hot within me. As I mused, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue.'" He begins this Psalm with something very valuable because it sets the tone for the entire Psalm. He's going to talk to us about frustrations but before he reveals his frustrations, he wants us to know that these frustrations do not speak of irreverence and they don't speak of disloyalty. David reverences God. Even as he's dealing with this in his heart, he reverences God. How do we know that? Well, he tells us that he made a commitment so as not to sin. He's aware of the possibility of sin and he doesn't want to sin so even as he's battling this thing within himself, he's doing it in the context of reverence for God and he's loyal to the Lord because he doesn't want to say anything that would dishonor God in the presence of wicked people. Do you see that in verse 1? "I will guard my mouth with a muzzle, so long as the wicked are in my presence."

So he's dealing with frustration, he's dealing with something that's bothering him but he's not doing this in any kind of sinful anger; he's not doing this in irreverence; he's not doing this in any sort of disloyalty toward God. This is a man who reveres God, and he's loyal to God. He's jealous for the glory of God. I think that's important to think about because that's possible for us too, isn't it? I mean, to really deal with frustrations even while we fear the Lord. Even while we are jealous for the glory of God, we can be honest. We can be transparent about the fact that there are things that trouble us. We could even say it this way: there are things that we wish were different. We don't say it irreverently, we don't say it disloyally, it's just true.

His commitment reflects wisdom. David was wise to know his propensity for sin. Why does he say he's going to put a guard on his ways? He's going to watch over what comes out of his mouth? He's going to muzzle his speech, why? Because he knows how capable he is in the midst of this frustration of sinning. He doesn't want to sin so he's committed to disciplining himself in terms of his speech so as not to sin. That's a godly man. "I don't want to dishonor you, Lord, so I'm just not going to say anything." And David knows something that you and I need to learn as well, you know, you can't be transparent regardless of the company, right? I mean, you've got to be wise enough to know that lost humanity will take what God's people say even in a well-intentioned way, just giving voice to what's hurting, giving voice to their pain, giving voice to their frustration. God knows your heart and you know what your desires are but wicked people will take that and twist it and turn it as some sort of argument against our God and against the truth. So we have to be careful where we are transparent. We have to be careful where we unveil the pain, the hurt that we are feeling. "I will guard my mouth with a muzzle, so long as the wicked are in my presence." Charles Spurgeon said this, he said, "Unguarded ways are generally unholy ones. Heedless is another word for graceless. If a man's own children rail at him, no wonder if his enemies' mouths are full of abuse." Drawing an analogy there between someone's children who would rail at their father, then don't be surprised when the father's enemies rail at him also. So we don't want to be guilty of encouraging our Father's enemies of railing at him so let's us as his children not rail at him or be misunderstood to be thought of as railing at him. He said, "I'm going to put a guard over my speech."

This is a commitment that he made but he finds in this commitment a challenge. This is a challenging commitment. Verse 2, "I was mute and silent," literally he says, "I held my peace to no avail," from good is the idea. From good, it's difficult to know exactly what he has in mind but one translation has this: "I was stone silent. I held back the urge to speak. My frustration grew worse." It says here in the ESV, verse 2, "and my distress grew worse." We don't know exactly what he was dealing with. We do know this, whatever it was, David saw this as the disciplining hand of God. Look at verse 10, "Remove your stroke from me; I am spent by the hostility of your hand. When you discipline a man with rebukes for sin, you consume like a moth what is dear to him; surely all mankind is a mere breath!" Then he says in verse 13, "Look away from me, that I may smile again." So he sees himself as under the disciplining hand of God. This is the stroke that has come from the hand of God. This is the hostility of the hand of God. This is what he's feeling and he's determined not to talk about it. He doesn't want to sin but the problem is that this is increasing his pain. You see, this is just pent up within him. You know, God has designed a way for us to get the pain out and that way is the way of expression. We just have to be wise about how we do it and that's what David does.

Verse 3, "My heart became hot within me. As I mused, the fire burned," so what does he finally do? "Then I spoke with my tongue." But notice that he's done this wisely because as we continue through the Psalm, who is he talking to? Verse 4, who does he address himself to? "O Lord." So he's not saying this to others, he's not saying this in the presence of the wicked. This is David now before the Lord and he's going to unburden his soul. Can I encourage you to do the same? Do you feel burdened? Do you feel troubled? Has

your heart been burning within you? Have you been disciplining yourself saying, "I know that God loves me and I reverence him and I don't want to sin against him so I'm just not going to talk about this that's bothering me." I would encourage you to unburden your soul but do it in a wise way and there are godly people you can share your burden with but the first place we ought to go, the primary place where we unburden our souls is before the Lord himself.

That's what David does here and he does this with a very wise request. This is this pattern that we're talking about: request, reflection. You see the request in verse 4 and you see the reflection in verses 5 and 6. Here's his request, "O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am!" "Show me, Lord. Show me how short my life really is. Show me how fleeting my life is, how transient it is. Show me my mortality. Show me the brevity of my life. Let me know this." That seems like a strange request given the fact he's talking about it. "David, don't you already know this? I mean, the very fact you're asking God to show you this, doesn't it mean you have some perception of it? Some conception of it?" Well, if we understand David to simply be saying, "Let me know intellectually that my life is not going to be very long," we would have misunderstood him. That's not what he's saying. When he says, "Make me know my end," I think what he's saying is this, "Lord, let this reality not just be information to me, not just be in my mind, but let me now live in light of such a reality. Teach me how to live life in this condition. Teach me a heart of wisdom in light of the brevity of my life. Let me practice," verse 4, "Let me practice a life that reflects the knowledge of these realities. Let me know how fleeting I am, that is, in the way I live every day." You see the same thing in Psalm 90 when Moses wrote, "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." As I said earlier, when you treat temporal things like they're eternal things, that's foolishness so wisdom is to recognize the brevity of life so that you don't waste your life. You make the right use of it. "Teach me that, Lord." Can I just ask you tonight: are you making the best use of your life? What David acknowledges, have you embraced that truth that your life is not going to last very long? And are you asking God in light of that reality to teach you how to make the best use of your days?

Well, he reflects on this, verse 5 and his reflection begins with himself, "Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you." His reflection begins with his own life and what he's thinking about is his life is like an apparition; it's a ghostlike existence. He says, "My life is but a few handbreadths," okay, four fingers, a couple of inches, a little over two inches and he says, just a few of them. "Just stack up these handbreadths upon one another, just a few of them, that's what my life is." Notice he sees the sovereignty of God in this. He says, "You have made my days like this." You see, God is the one who set the boundaries for the time of human existence. Do we realize that? You know, this average lifespan of all about 70 years, do we think that's just the product of nature? Or do we understand that a sovereign God has set the boundaries for the time of our existence?

And this thing called a lifespan, compare it to the eternal nature of God. That's what he does in the next statement, "My lifetime is as nothing before you." "You're eternal, my life on this earth as I am right now, it's brief. It's nothing." What is David doing? He's

recognizing his smallness. Recognizing his smallness. It's a good lesson. Men want to believe that we're a big deal. I mean, this is how we tend to think: in some sense, the world didn't exist until we showed up and in some sense, the world will cease to exist if we're gone and the truth is, as you know from God's word, the truth is the world existed before we showed up and if the Lord tarries, the world as we know it now will exist when we're gone. So we're just here for a few handbreadths, that's all. We're not really a big deal. Just a vapor.

But he doesn't stop with himself. What does wisdom do? It reflects on a larger picture and so he says, next statement, "Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath!" All mankind. And if "Selah" means "pause," and we're not certain that it does but if it does, stop and let that sink in. All mankind stands as a mere breath. "Surely a man goes about as a shadow!" As I said a moment ago, like a ghost, like an apparition, like a phantom, like a shadow. Here for a moment and then he's gone. It's as if he wasn't even here. And yet here's the foolishness of it all, the next statement, "Surely for nothing," for a breath, "they are in turmoil; man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather!" Here's the shadow existence, you know, here for a moment and then it's gone and what do these men do with this little bit of time that they have? They spend their time in an uproar running after things, chasing after things, trying to accumulate things that are just as much a vapor as they are. Instead of setting your heart on eternity, instead of setting your heart on what is substantive, what will last forever, this shadowy existence called man sets his heart and his energies and his concerns on things that won't last. For nothing they are in turmoil. For nothing. For nothing.

How much of what you're spending your days on will amount to nothing? How much of where your thoughts are focused, your energies are focused, your concerns, your troubled heart even, how much of what is focused on will amount to nothing? You notice what men will sell for things that won't last forever? Sell their marriages for things that won't last forever. Sell their time with their children for things that won't last forever. Listen, sell their soul for things that won't last forever. Isn't that what our Lord said, "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?" What will it profit him? Nothing. Nothing.

So here he is heaping up wealth. He doesn't get to keep it. He doesn't even know who's going to have it. Someone might object at this point and say, "Oh yes I do. I know who's going to have it. My kids are going to have it. My grandkids are going to have it." Can I just tell you, my friend, you don't know that. You may think you know that but you don't know that and you won't be around to know. How many people thought they left their children an inheritance that ended up being wasted? How many people in the history of the world have seen what they worked so hard for gone in an instant shortly after they entered eternity? You don't know. Proverbs 23:4 says this, "Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven." So we've just got a conflict of perspectives, don't we? God says it's not worth much, the world says it's worth everything. Now, who are you going to believe? God says it's not worth much, the world says it's worth your soul. Who are you going to believe?

Well now, we come to another section, verse 7, we find a confession. This is the high point of the thing because he's going to utter this confession. Now, just like his commitment sets the tenor for the rest of what follows, we need to know this is not an irreverent man, this is not a disloyal man, this is a man struggling with some honest questions. In the same way, this is not a man who doesn't trust the Lord. This man trusts the Lord. This is what this confession tells us, verse 7, "And now, O Lord, for what do I wait?" In this lifespan that is like a shadow, in this world full of shadows, things that don't last, where do I grab hold for something substantive? Verse 7, I wait for you, "My hope is in you." You want to hold onto something substantive, embrace the Lord, the living God. You want to live for something, for someone who is going to give you that which lasts forever, then set your heart on the living God. "I trust in you. I wait for you. My hope is in you." So as you listen to the rest of him working this out, hear it in its context, this is a man who trusts the Lord. I think it is so helpful because as we come face-to-face with the brutal realities of life, we are believers who still struggle with the difficulties of life lived in a world that is under a curse.

So what does he ask for? Here's his requests, verse 8, "Deliver me from all my transgressions. Do not make me the scorn of the fool!" What is he asking for? "Lord, would you have mercy upon me?" You see, he sees what he's going through, whatever it is, it might have been an illness, it might have been a difficult set of circumstances, we don't know what it is but whatever it is he's going through though, he has connected this to his sins. And what he's afraid of in verse 8 is that his life would end up on the trash heap of testimonies, that his life would become a point for mocking among the wicked, among the fools. So he's saying, "Lord, would you save me from what I've done to myself? Would you have mercy upon me?" How many of us tonight know that if the Lord should count iniquities, no one can stand? Can I call us tonight from this verse to a greater humility? Do you know what we do sometimes? We look at the so-called fallen, the fallen and we sort of with proud hearts say, "Look at them," as if we have escaped that on our own, as if the reason why our life is not on the trash heap of testimonies is because we're so wise and we're so good and we're so obedient. I'll just put it to you this way: how many of your sins if the Lord had let it run its full course could have ruined you? How many of your acts of disobedience could have ruined you? Do you think you stand on your own? If any man thinks he stands, what should he do? Take heed lest he fall.

"Lord, have mercy upon me. Save me from myself. Save me from my transgressions. Deliver me from them. Don't make me the scorn of the fool. Don't let my life end up as fodder for fools." He understands the potential for his transgressions to ruin his life, the rest of his life. So what does he do? He reflects on that and it's a submissive reflection. Verse 9, he says, "I am mute; I do not open my mouth, for it is you who have done it." "I'm asking you to deliver me but I know this, what I'm experiencing right now, you're in control of. This is your choice. I have no right to complain. I ask you to keep me from being the fodder for fools but, Lord, I have no right to open my mouth. You're the one who has me under your hand. It is your right to do it and what you do is right so I don't want to complain sinfully. I have no right to complain. I have no right to complain."



But that leads to another request, verse 10, "Remove your stroke from me." Some translations have "your plague." "I am spent by the hostility of your hand." "Save me from myself. If you choose not to, I can't utter a word. I'm under your sovereign hand but I ask you to lift this plague from me, to lift your hand of discipline from me because I'm spent by it." Interesting. When he says he's spent by it, it means to come to the end of something. He's come to the end of something. That is to say, "Lord, I don't feel like I can take anymore. I feel like I'm about to perish. I can't take anymore. If you choose not to I can't complain but, Lord, would you lift your hand?"

And then here's his reflection, verse 11, "When you discipline a man with rebukes for sin, you consume like a moth what is dear to him; surely all mankind is a mere breath!" "I ask you to do this, Lord, but I know that I can't make you. I mean, this isn't a fair fight. When you discipline a man with rebukes for sin it's like a moth that consumes. This is what it feels like, Lord, your hand is on me and it's like everything that is dear to me is disappearing and I can't do anything about it. Mankind, not just me, all mankind, what are we before you? We're just a mere breath. You're big, I'm small. You're strong, I'm weak. You're eternal, I'm a breath." So when God begins to deal with a man, he has no chance. Do you want to know the foolishness of men? When they think they can fight against God and win. My friend, if the Lord sets his hand against you, you have no chance. No chance. Selah.

So what do you do? What do you do when you feel like you're under the disciplining hand of God? Everything dear to you is being consumed? It's your own doing. You can't open your mouth in complaint. God is the one who has you where you are. What do you do? What does David do? Verse 12, "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; hold not your peace at my tears! For I am a sojourner with you, a guest, like all my fathers. Look away from me, that I may smile again, before I depart and am no more!" What do you do? With a humble, submissive, believing heart, you cry out to God for mercy. It's what he's doing. You cry out to God for mercy and you do it in a way that recognizes the character of the God whom you are addressing. When David says "give ear to my cry" and then he says "hold not your peace at my tears," what does he know about God? When there are sincere, humble, heartbroken tears, God doesn't remain silent. He's not unmoved. "Lord, see my tears and don't be silent. I'm appealing to your compassionate heart. Have compassion upon me. Have compassion upon me."

He appeals to the grace of God when he says, "I am a sojourner with you, a guest, like all my fathers." He's talking about his relationship to the Lord and he's tying his own relationship with God with his forefathers. There's a history here and like a sojourner, like a guest, you see, he lives in a place with God that he can't claim he belongs to by nature. He's not someone who can claim to have rights to exist in the presence of God. This is something God has afforded. This is something God has given, granted, and it's a matter of grace. "In many ways, Lord, I'm still like a stranger in my knowledge of you. I stand where I stand with you because of your grace. You've allowed me this place and position with you. O Lord, remember me." You don't stand before the Lord on the basis of your works, do you? So when you find yourself under the disciplining hand of God, do

you want to appeal to your works or do you want to appeal to his grace? "Lord, have compassion upon me and be gracious to me."

Then what does he ask for? He asks for relief. He asks for blessing. "Look away from me." Obviously he doesn't mean "forget me." What he means is, "Lord, you're giving your attention to me in the form of discipline. You're giving your attention to this small breath of a person, this shadow. You've set your attention on me in the form of discipline. Would you please look away from me? Would you allow me to smile again before I depart and am no more? Would you let me know your favor in a fresh way before my life is over?" You cry out based upon God's compassion. You cry out based upon God's grace. You cry out and ask God for his favor, for his blessing.

But there's something missing. This Psalm says something but it doesn't say everything. James Boice put it well, he said, "Instead of just focusing on where God places his eyes, we need to concern ourselves where we place ours." Where we place our focus. David's cry is an honest one. He captures our feelings. He's right. He asks for forgiveness. But the question is where are we going to fix our eyes? If God's eyes are fixed on us in the form of discipline, are we convinced that he loves us? I mean, if we're his people, does he love us? Is God as concerned about your happiness as he is your holiness? And so if he's at work disciplining you as a son and it's unpleasant at times, don't you know that his goal is his glory and your good? So what you do is you remain under the trial and you fix your eyes on the Author and the Perfecter of your faith. David expresses that in a sense in verse 7 when he says, "I'm going to wait for you. My hope is in you." And yet he asks God for relief.

Now, I wonder if there's someone here tonight that you've been living in Psalm 39 in terms of your feelings. You've been brought face-to-face, maybe through a number of things we've described. You've been brought face-to-face with the brevity of your life and the difficulty of life, your own mortality. Would you say to the Lord tonight: God, grant me a heart of wisdom to know what to do with this. To make the most of this life that you grant me. And if what you're feeling is due to your sins, would you confess them? Would you turn from them? If you've been in turmoil, running after that, trying to heap up that which you can't keep, would you accept what the rich young ruler rejected? Jesus offered him treasure in heaven if he would throw it all away and follow Christ. He said no. Would you say yes? Would you throw away the shadows you've been chasing after? Would you throw them away to follow Jesus tonight? Would you? Would you set your heart on what is treasure indeed? Would you stop listening to the testimony of the world who says that all of this is really important and would you listen to the testimony of God which says it isn't it? Would you stop trading everlasting pleasures for that which keeps running away from you? It doesn't finally satisfy you, it leaves you empty and it will continue to leave you empty for the rest of your life. Would you recognize it? Would you recognize it tonight? Would you repent and cast yourself on the mercy of God saying, "If you don't grant this, I can't say a word but I appeal to your compassion and to your grace and I ask for your blessing." The God who you will be calling out to gives you a promise that when you seek for him with your whole heart, you will find him. He doesn't ignore those tears, does he?

Let's bow together for prayer.

*Our Father in heaven, we are so grateful that our hope is not what is represented in this present age. Our hope is in you. Our hope is a living hope. Our hope is your Son and one day we will stand in his presence if indeed he has saved us, if we know him, and we will know a world in which there is no more loss, no more pain, no more sickness, no more death and above all, we'll know the joy of freedom from sin, full acceptance in your presence and fellowship with our Savior face-to-face. Forgive us, Lord, where we try to satisfy our hearts with that which will not satisfy. Give us a heart of wisdom. Teach us to number our days, Lord, that we would not waste our lives. For those in this room in need of repentance, Lord, I ask you to grant it. Let them see, let them hear, let them receive, let them turn from what will not satisfy to your Son who is all satisfying. Let them look to his atoning death for the forgiveness of all of their sins in a right relationship with you. We ask you for this in Jesus' name. Amen.*