

Psalm 39

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[0:00] Please do open up your Bibles back to Psalm 39, that's on page 467. The Psalms capture the entire spectrum of human emotion.

! As we walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

And the Psalms have everything in between. All the mixed and messy emotions of this life, the whole spectrum. And in this current Psalm, we come to something mixed and messy.

David is wrestling with a frustrating, agonising aspect of life. Living in a cursed world. David is trying to deal with being a sinner under God's curse.

It's the frustration we all feel every day. This Psalm is David wrestling with that reality of life. And he's bringing together all the things we've seen over the past few Psalms, over the past few weeks.

[1:21] So do you remember, in this cursed world, sin often has no consequences. The wicked get away with so much. The church is persecuted and lives in fear.

And there's little justice in this life. And this injustice, it's all a part of the curse. And it's frustrating. And David is writing from this injustice.

So look at verse 1, just over the page. The wicked are in my presence. He's writing with the wicked around him.

But at the same time, sin really has consequences. David's been confronted with the wrath of God. Suffering in his body. Torment in his soul.

All the broken relationships because of his sin. David's sin has caused all these dominoes to come crashing down around him. And he's feeling God's curse very sharply.

[2:24] So look at verse 8. Deliver me from all my transgressions. And verse 11. You discipline a man with rebuke for sin.

The reality of sin and suffering and persecution and pain and God's discipline. It's all piled up on David.

To sum it up, he's feeling the curse. And it's frustrating him. It's tormenting him. It's this messy mix of, I don't deserve this curse.

But look at my sin. I do deserve this curse. It's just agonizing living in this world. And we often feel, don't we, all these things piling on top of us.

Our sin. Our bodies. Our relationships. Our shame. All the opposition around us. We feel the curse. Well, that's David as well.

[3:27] And David, he's trying to come to terms with the curse. Struggling with how to cope in this world. And in this psalm, he's reached breaking point. Look at verse 3.

My heart became hot within me. As I mused, the fire burned. He's reflecting on the curse.

Trying to deal with his life. And it's burning him up inside. His heart is hot. You could say that this life is making his blood boil.

And this is something we all feel living in this world, isn't it? This life can make your blood boil. Well, this is where this psalm begins.

And this is my first point today. This life can make your blood boil. This life can make your blood boil. This psalm starts in an interesting way. We see how David tried to approach living in this world.

[4:28] How he tried to deal with the pain of the curse. Look at 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.

David has been really godly here. With all these enemies attacking him, with all his sin weighing on him, he didn't lash out with his tongue. He guarded his mouth.

He was very careful with his words. He didn't spread lies in return. He didn't complain or moan or just unleash bitterness about living in this world. No, he was silent.

He was patient. He held his words and he took it. This is a godly, commendable approach here. In the face of the curse and frustrations of this world, patience and thanksgiving and a controlled tongue, that is a God-given virtue in this world. So before we go any further, let's just realize that. [5:36] Remember that. But at the same time, David's silence isn't removing the curse around him. In fact, the frustration grew more.

Look at verse 2. I was mute and silent. I held my peace to no avail. And my distress grew worse. Now, David isn't saying, patience doesn't do anything, so just give up on godliness. No. He's had a good response. But he's saying, his silence isn't solving the problem out there.

Patience isn't actually removing the curse. He's just experiencing more. That this world doesn't reward godliness. And that's true, isn't it?

We can do all the right things, follow Christ faithfully, and for no apparent reason, things get worse. Life crumbles.

[6:41] Plans fall apart. Life just gets worse. And that's the frustration of the curse. And we can and we should handle this frustration with a careful tongue and humility and repentance and patience, absolutely.

But even then, the curse still remains, doesn't it? And David feels this. And this frustration, it's been bottling up inside, and it's reached breaking point, and he needs to let it out.

Verse 3. My heart became hot within me, as I mused, the fire burned, then I spoke with my tongue. He's like this pressure cooker, heating up, pressure building, and he just needs to say something. Or it's like his heart is this furnace, and it's been getting hotter and hotter, and the blood is pumping around his body, and it's boiling. David is feeling what we all can feel, that this life can make your blood boil.

And he can't hold it in. All this burdening sin, all this injustice, and the pains of his body, the lowness of his spirit, the brokenness of his relationships, he can't stay silent about it anymore.

[8:02] And so he does the right thing, and what does he do? He cries out to God. He lets it all out to God, and what does he say? What are the words that break the silence?

Verse 4. Oh Lord, make me know my end, and what is the measure of my days. Let me know how fleeting I am.

Lord, let me know. Let me really know just how short and fleeting life is. And this is the second thing we need to see today.

This life is fleeting. This life is fleeting. In all his pain and frustration, in the face of the curse, this is what David prays for.

Lord, let me know how fleeting I am. Lord, remind me how short life is. God, please would I know, deep in my heart, that it's not that long until I die.

[9:10] Now notice, David doesn't vent to the people around him, does he? He doesn't complain or retaliate or become ungrateful. He doesn't say, well, silence is no use. Let's just give up on godliness.

No, he is frustrated, but he brings his frustrations to God. And what does he ask for? Well, he wants to know how fleeting life is.

Now, David isn't asking for an actual day of his death. He isn't looking for a specific date here. No, he's wanting the right perspective on life. He wants to truly realize how brief and fleeting and short life in this world really is.

And why? Why does he break the silence with this? Well, because everything changes with this perspective. David is asking to see his own life compared to the backdrop of eternity.

He wants to change his focus in life. You know, in films or photography, you can change the focus, can't you? You can have something in the foreground like this microphone, and you can have the focus just on that.

[10:27] And so whatever's in the background, it's all blurry, but the microphone, it's all clear and in focus. And that's all you can really see. That's what your eye is taken to.

But you can also change the focus, can't you? You can change it to look at the background. And when you do, it all becomes sharp, doesn't it? And all this expanse behind the object in the front, all

that expanse behind it, it becomes clear.

And what you thought was the main thing in this picture, it fades away, and you get a whole new perspective. Well, David wants God to change the focus of his life from the foreground of the frustrations of this life to the expanse of eternity behind it.

Lord, let me know how short this life is compared to the eternity that awaits me. Because when we focus on this life, when we do that, we think that's all there is.

And we think this is all that matters. And it makes the frustrations and the pain of the curse even worse, because that's all we see. This world becomes the only thing in focus.

[11:51] But when we realize how fleeting life is, everything changes. And we start to see the eternity behind it all. And the curse, it doesn't become less painful, but it becomes smaller.

It becomes more manageable. And David wants to know this, because it's true. This life really is fleeting.

Look at verse 5. Life is only a few handbreadths.

So if you were to measure eternity and put it kind of on the length of a ruler, the ruler would go all the way to the end of the universe and never stop.

And that's how long eternity is. And our life, our life on this earth, our years are just a few handbreadths on that ruler.

[13:05] And so if you could zoom out and look at all of that and view time from God's perspective, our lives, they're basically nothing before God.

And then David says, surely all mankind stands as a mere breath. The word breath is used a lot in Ecclesiastes to describe our lives.

It's sometimes translated as vanity or vapor or mist. So if you remember Ecclesiastes 1, vanity of vanities, all is vanity, says Ecclesiastes. Well, vanity and breath, they're the same word in Hebrew. And we're starting a new series in Ecclesiastes in September, so tune in for that. You can explore that further. But notice what David is saying here. Our life, it's like a mere breath.

So you know that on those cold winter mornings, I wish right now was a cold winter morning. It's that hot, isn't it? On those cold winter mornings and you're waiting for the bus and you blow your breath and you see your breath in front of you and it's there, it's real.

[14:21] But what happens just after a second? It disappears. It's gone. It has no real impact. It was there for a moment, but then it's gone and it's forgotten and it's all over.

Well, that is our life. We're here on the timeline of history just for a mere moment and then we're gone.

All that pain and frustration and burden, it's so real for a moment, isn't it? But then it's gone and it all becomes a forgotten memory and the world moves on.

And that really is life, isn't it? Have you ever looked through old photo albums of your grandparents, your great-grandparents? You get them down from the loft, you open them up and you see all these memories and events from years ago and it makes you think that this, what I'm holding here, that this was an entire life, an entire life full of highs and lows, full of frustrations and the curse of this life, a life that at the time it felt like that's all there was.

But now what is it? It's a distant memory, a few photos in a box, it's over, it's a mere breath, it's gone. This life is really fleeting.

[15:54] And for those of you younger here today, you may not feel that, you might think, no, no, no, hold on, life is really long. It feels like ages. But how about this?

After the service, go and speak to some of the older folk here today and I bet they can tell you it feels just like yesterday that they were your age. And I'm sure they'll tell you life has zoomed by, it's fleeting.

And it can be filled with great things, you can prosper and be happy and love it, or it can be filled with sorrow and frustration and injustice and pain and this life can be a real slog.

But either way, it's over very quickly and it's nothing compared to eternity. And David cries from his torment, Lord, let me know that.

Lord, please pull the focus to eternity and then I'll be able to cope. Then this frustration, this curse won't overwhelm me, it won't break me because I know there's an end.

[17:04] I know there's an end in sight and it's not far away. Just think, if this life is all there is, if we didn't know this life is fleeting, if this is all that there is to focus on, then this life is going to be harder to cope with.

The frustration will be greater because this is all that there is. Our life isn't a few hand breaths on the ruler, our life would be the whole ruler.

It's all that there is, all the meaning and significance, it's only now. And that's overwhelming, that's crushing. That can really make your blood boil.

Without God and without the eternity he gives you, this life, it can be crushing. We can think, is that it? This is all I get for my existence.

It's no wonder why darkness and despair and hopelessness is so common in the world right now. People are looking at the curse, feeling the frustration, only seeing that in the foreground and thinking that this is only it.

[18:18] This is all we have and quite frankly it's rubbish. And if you feel that today, can I invite you to join in with this psalm?

Lord, let me know how fleeting I am. Knowing how fleeting life is, it helps us, it's a relief. It shows us that this pain will end, that the frustration will come to an end, that the injustice will not last long, that the wicked, those who persecute the church, that they might prosper now, but their prosperity, it's a blip on the timeline.

And knowing this, it makes the pain of this life not less sharp, but more bearable. It's like when you're exercising and you reach that burning point and your lungs run fire, aren't they?

And if you can't see how long is left on the timer, it feels like forever. It feels like, I just want to give up, I can't keep going. But if you can see the time in it, it just says three seconds left on the clock. You push through, don't you? It's just three seconds. Well, this life can make your blood boil, but there's just a few more seconds to go.

[19:34] It's fleeting, it's a breath. And God has come down to us to show us the timer. In the Lord Jesus Christ, God, has pulled the focus from the overwhelming frustration of this life and out to the glory of eternity.

Christ has come to us to say to us, you don't need to store up treasures here on earth. You don't need to live like this is all that there is. There are greater treasures in heaven.

You don't need to be burdened by your life here, the frustration here. There is a world to come where that will be no more. No more. The Apostle Paul says this light momentary affliction of this life, it's preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

And so, do you live like this is all that there is? If you do, the good things of this life will disappoint you and the frustrations of this life will overwhelm you.

And here's how to deal with it. Come to God and cry out, Lord, let me know how fleeting I am. But how do we do this?

[20:58] How do we actually come to terms with this? Anyone can tell themselves life is short. Anyone can open up a photo album. But how do we really know it?

How do we really live in the face of this cursed world? Well, there's only one way we need to place our hope in God. And this is my final point today, hope in God.

Hope in God. Verse 7 is central in this psalm. Verse 7. And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.

David comes to God with all his burdens, all his frustrations, all his sin, all the injustice, all the pains of the curse. And he says, Lord, my only hope is in you.

The only solution to the curse is God. And that's because the curse is from God. Did you notice where David says all these things come from in his life?

[22:00] Look at verse 9. I am mute, I do not open my mouth, for it is you who have done it. Verse 10. Remove your stroke from me.

I am spent by the hostility of your hand. Look at verse 11. You discipline a man, you consume like a moth. God has subjected this world to frustration.

That frustration you feel, it's from God. When Adam fell, God cursed the world. Sin has consequences, and this is it. We're living in it.

And this is a humbling reality to acknowledge. All this, this curse we live in right now, this is deserved.

This is God's righteous and wise response to sin. And so fundamentally, we are not innocent in this world. We are not victims in this world.

[23:06] We are righteously under a curse. This world is cursed by God, which also means he is the one who can help us.

The curse is from him, but so is the mercy. He is the one who can deliver us, and in his grace, he does. Whatever aspect of the curse you are experiencing right now, whatever frustration there is, and it's making your blood boil, God is the one who can deliver you.

The Lord Jesus has come not just to show us that there is an eternity, but he's come to bring us there. The Lord Jesus says to you today, come and follow me, and I will take you out of this fleeting world and into eternity.

Hope in God, and I will take you there. And when you do, you will realize this life is really fleeting. This life, you will discover this life is barely the first chapter of your story, and it's nothing compared to what Christ has prepared for you.

And he will deliver you from all the frustrations of this world. If your transgressions are burdening you, and your sin is overwhelming you, be like David and cry out to the Lord and you will find forgiveness.

[24:33] If the consequences of your sin are too much and it feels hopeless, it is not hopeless. You can hope in God and one day he will remove that discipline from you.

If you see the wicked prosper and the injustice of this world is making your blood boil, cry out to God because he is your hope.

This isn't all that there is. Hope in him and justice will come. In his sheer and amazing grace, God delivers us from this cursed and frustrating life.

He hears the prayers of sinners and he brings peace to your tears. Just finally, just look at verse 12. Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry.

Hold not your peace at my tears. Your tears matter to God. Your frustration matters to God and when you cry to him, God will not hold peace from your tears.

[25:41] He may show you mercy in this life. you may find that you can smile again for a while in this life but whatever happens for those who hope in him, you will smile again.

This life will be blood boiling, frustrating, but this life is not long. And after only a breath, you will have a world waiting for you. So brothers and sisters, let's hope in God.

Let me pray. Let me pray.