

## PSALM 39

### *The Vanity of Life*

#### INTRODUCTION.

- A. To the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.
- B. "The Brevity and Vanity of Life."
- C. Roy H. Enoch (6-1-94).
- D. "Juduthun" of this psalm and also of Psa. 62,72 was one of David's three Music leaders. The other two were Asaph and Heman (1Chr. 16:37-42). Jeduthun was also the King's Seer (2Chr. 35:15).
- E. Coffman uses William Jones' outline for this psalm:
  1. Silence in Trouble (39:1-3).
  2. Speech in Trouble (39:4-6).
  3. Supplication in Trouble (39:7-13).

#### THE TEXT.

- 39:1** I said, "I will guard my ways  
That I may not sin with my tongue;  
I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle  
While the wicked are in my presence."
- 2** I was mute and silent,  
I refrained *even* from good,  
And my sorrow grew worse.
- 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 extent of my days;  
Let me know how transient I am.
- 5** "Behold, You have made my days *as* handbreadths,  
And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight;  
Surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Selah.
- 6** "Surely every man walks about as a phantom;  
Surely they make an uproar for nothing;  
He amasses *riches* and does not know who will gather them.
- 7** "And now, Lord, for what do I wait?  
My hope is in You.
- 8** "Deliver me from all my transgressions;  
Make me not the reproach of the foolish.
- 9** "I have become mute, I do not open my mouth,  
Because it is You who have done *it*.
- 10** "Remove Your plague from me;  
Because of the opposition of Your hand I am perishing.
- 11** "With reproofs You chasten a man for iniquity;  
You consume as a moth what is precious to him;  
Surely every man is a mere breath. Selah.
- 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 like all my fathers.
- 13** "Turn Your gaze away from me, that I may smile *again*  
Before I depart and am no more."

#### COMMENTS.

- A. Silence in Trouble.  
**[v1]** David tries to remain silent in the presence of the wicked. We do not know his specific reasons. "I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle" shows his effort in remaining silent.

**[v2]** "I was mute with silence..." showed that he was silent for a while, "and my sorrow was stirred up." But keeping silent seemed to make his frustration. Ash says that the Hebrew for this verse begins with three words, "dumb" "silent" and "peace" which stressed the poet's attempts to contain himself.

**[v3]** Contains expressions which intensify the picture of the poet trying to contain himself like a fire smoldering and finally bursting into flame. Jeremiah had expressed a similar idea of not speaking about God to those who were so rebellious (Jer. 20:9).

B. Speech in Trouble.

The author ponders the brevity of life. His description seems to reflect the difficulties that often come through trials and temptations.

**[v4]** "...make me to know the end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am." David seems to be praying for knowledge and understanding of his existence.

**[v5]** "...my lifetime is nothing before thee." He seems to compare his lifetime with God's eternal nature and it seems so insignificant and brief. Two figures are used in this verse to illustrate its brevity:

1. "handbreadths" are a very short measure, about three inches.
2. "vapor" or literally, "mere breath," again, shows its emptiness and lack of substance.

**[v6]** Men "busy themselves in vain; he heaps up riches, and does not know who will gather them." Solomon expresses this idea in Eccl. 2:18-19.

C. Supplication in Trouble.

When David looks at life, he realizes that the only thing w/ lasting value is what God gives us. Our own efforts are feeble and without much substance. The only thing we wait for is what God can give us--eternal life and the blessings of grace. It is of great value to pause from time to time as David seems to here and get our priorities in perspective. We also should realize that some of our difficulty may be God's punishment for some of our sins and shortcomings. "Deliver me from all my transgressions..." (8).

**[v10]** "Remove your plague from me; I am consumed by the blow of Your hand." He realized that God was trying to correct him and that it was deserved.

**[v11]** "When w/rebukes You correct man for iniquity..." God always corrects us for our good that He might bless us even more. In that correction, he often takes what is most dear to us "You make his beauty melt like a moth..." and this reminds us what Jesus told the rich young ruler when he asked, "what lack I yet?" See Mt. 19:21,22.

**[v11,12]** "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry..." He shows great faith in the Lord even when rebuked and punished. This is one of the characteristics that makes David a man after God's own heart. He always accepted God's punishment as just and glorified Him for his rebuke as well as for His grace. We need to learn these lessons.