

Psalms: The Songs of the People of God
Psalm 39: Responding to the Discipline of God
Sunday, June 17, 2018

Introduction

While this is not necessarily a Father's Day sermon there is a sense in which I can more fully understand Psalm 39 because I have a good dad. Psalm 39 is a response to the discipline of God. The discipline of God is often misunderstood but the Scriptures are clear that God's discipline is motivated by His love for us and His desire to see us grow in holiness (Hebrews 12:7-11). This is a truth that I can more fully understand because I have a dad who modeled loving discipline.

In Psalm 39 we have David during a time when he's experiencing God's discipline but he doesn't necessarily see it as loving; quite frankly, he's frustrated by it. In the Psalm we hear some of that frustration as David responds to God's discipline. David trusts God, but he's also very honest about the severity of God's discipline and his desire for relief.

The Silent Sufferer: David is suffering because of God's discipline but chooses to stay silent (39:1-3)

- **David's Reason for Silence** – Throughout the Psalm it becomes clear that David isn't in agreement with God's level of discipline toward him. In much of the Psalm David is asking God for relief. But while David is frustrated by God he still desires to protect God's name. Even though he's questioning God in this particular situation he doesn't want to give others a reason to question or oppose God.
- **The Pain of Silence** – As David holds his tongue his heart is burning under the pressure of the discipline and his frustration with the situation.

The Silence is Broken with a Sobering Complaint: Life is short and seemingly futile and yet God fills it with the pain of discipline (39:4-6)

- **David is frustrated by God's discipline in light of the brevity of life (vs. 4-5)** – Life is short and it goes by quickly and this adds to David's frustration. Why is God allowing his short life to be filled with so much pain? The extent of the discipline seems excessive considering the brevity of life.

- **David is frustrated by God's discipline in light of the seeming futility of life (vs. 6)** – David sees much of life as frustrating and futile and this reality is only compounded as God's discipline is added into the equation (Ecclesiastes 1:2-3; 2:18-21).

A Confident Resolve: David affirms that his hope is in God (39:7)

- While David is frustrated with the level of God's discipline, especially in light of the brevity and seeming futility of life, he remains sure of this: God is the only true source of hope. There is nothing else that is sure and there is no one else who can save. In a world that is temporary and fleeting God is the only firm foundation and David affirms that his hope is in God.

David's Ongoing Requests in Response to God's Discipline (39:8-13)

While David confesses his trust in God, his situation is not immediately changed; he is still suffering under the discipline of God and in verses 8-13 he asks for mercy and relief.

- **A Request for Forgiveness and Mercy (vs. 8-11)**

In these verses it becomes clearer that David's suffering is a result of his sin, he asks for forgiveness. At the same time David feels crushed by this discipline and he asks God for mercy (Job 7:11-21).

- **A Request for Peace and Rest (vs. 12-13)**

The psalm ends with a very honest and candid prayer: God, will you allow your servant a time of peace and rest? David has been exhausted by God's discipline and asks for relief.

Psalm Summary:

God loves us and God hates sin. When we are in sin God will discipline us and do what he must in order to bring us back. When we experience His discipline we must guard ourselves from anger or the temptation to curse God. Instead, we must humbly seek forgiveness and remember that He is good and He is our only hope.