Everyone is but a Breath (2)

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[0:00] Well, if you can turn with me once again to Psalm 39, and we're going to be dealing with the second half of that psalm.

We'll take it from verse 7 to the end of the psalm at verse 13. Are you going through a difficult time just now?
Some trial of some sort? Or have you done so in the past? Or do you know someone who's going through a difficult time?
This psalm is about such an experience, and I hope it will be useful for all of us in our journey as believers and Christians.
I'm going to be candid about that.
[1:27] He was in serious distress and suffering of some undisclosed sort and endeavored to hold back and keep silent about the torrent of emotions he was feeling.

We see that with how he opened this psalm. 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. Notwithstanding the distress and suffering that he was experiencing, he still did not wish to take the chance of an outpouring in the presence of unbelievers.
And yet his suffering led him to see with much greater clarity the fragility and fleeting brevity of life.
And having seen the uncertainty and fleetingness of this life, as well as its absurdity and ultimate meaningless apart from God, David nonetheless explicitly confesses his hope in God.
[2:53] And we find that in verse 7. And now, O Lord, as I have stared into the darkness of humankind's problem and its situation, its mortality, its absurdity, its suffering, and now he says, O Lord, what do I wait for?

For what do I wait? And that word wait has a strong connotation of expectation and hope. And of course, the psalmist uses the word hope in the next line.
And it's such an amazing line coming out of that furnace of suffering. My hope is in you.
Yes, it's a waiting hope. It's a hope that is being asked by you, Lord, to wait.
Because he could see no hope to be had in the world of uncertainty and brevity and declares his hope in God.
[4:18] Isn't it wonderful to know that the Christian hope is no uncertain hope? It's no conditional hope. It's not maybe. The Christian hope. The Christian hope is as certain as God himself.

And this hope at verse 7 is the pivotal point in the psalm. And enables David to break his silence and to offer petitions to God and personally disclose his inner thoughts and feelings to God.
That is where he's bringing that torrent of emotion. That storm that is within in the midst of his suffering.
That is like crashing waves threatening to come out. He's now going to allow them to come out.
Let's follow him as without the slightest reticence.
He pours out his heart before God in a mosaic of sharing, petition, and yes, even complaint.
[5:45] I don't know if you're aware, you perhaps are. But those people who are pretty expert, who have researched the psalms to discover the different genres, if you like, the different characters of psalms, this is what they have told us.

That the psalms of lament and complaint in the 150 psalms in the book of psalms are the greatest number of all the different categories.
Whether they are psalms of praise or psalms of thanksgiving or psalms of confidence and trust or whatever. I don't know if that surprises you.
It does not surprise me at all. Anyway, let's look at David's petitions firstly, and then we will look at his personal unburdening and unveiling his personal feelings about this suffering.

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First of all, we see his first petition in verse 8. Deliver me from all my transgressions.
[7:09] Deliver me from all my transgressions. First of all, note that he's not saying here, I don't mean that that's not included, but he's not explicitly saying and emphasizing or majoring on forgive my sins.

He's asking to be rescued, to be delivered, to be liberated from his sins.
And that is because sin, this problem that human beings have, is something mighty powerful.
It's something that we cannot tame. It's something that takes us into places that the better part of our being would not go.
It's something that he mentioned at the beginning of the tongue. And of course, as you know, James has a lot to say about the tongue.
[8:17] A poison. A power that is difficult to control. My mum used to say, quote that, I don't know whether you'd call it a rhyme, that sticks and stones will break my bones, but names or words will never hurt me totally wrong.

The problem is, if we utter hurtful words, it's difficult, isn't it, to get them back.
And David realises that he needs help. He doesn't only need, if you like, God to say your sins are forgiven.
But like Paul, who in Romans 7, talks about this wretched man that I am, and this picture that he has of dragging a dead body of sin, as he makes his journey as a Christian to the celestial city.
Paul reminds us, there's this dimension in sin. It's an enslaving power. Isn't it wonderful when we think about this and we realise this is true, and we know it's true in our own experience, yet Jesus, remember, I mentioned this recently, when he saw the crowds, he felt compassion for them.
[9:57] And note well that the psalmist is asking for deliverance from sins as a believer.

Now it's absolutely true that every person who comes to Jesus Christ in repentance, acknowledging their sin and guilt, and accepting that Jesus is their saviour, that person's sins, dare I say it, past, present, and future, are dealt with at the cross of Christ, and on the shoulders of Christ.
He's borne the incredible burden of them all. So that Paul can say in Romans 5, you're justified, you're declared clear, because of that cross of Christ.
But just as Jesus washed the feet of the disciples in John's Gospel, at chapter 11, and Peter didn't want to be washed, how dare you wash my feet, you're the Lord of glory, I'm just a sinner.
Jesus said to him, if I don't wash your feet, you'll not be clean. He says, he'll wash all me then. But listen, we all get our feet dirty in our day-to-day living. And we need deliverance, as well as forgiveness, for that.
[11:43] And remember also, the power and deceitfulness of sin. Paul could say, that which I would not do, I do.

And that which I do, I shouldn't do. Who can help me, he says, and then he says, thank God, Jesus Christ, he is the only one that can.
Jesus himself said, whoever sins is the slave of sin. Jesus himself knew, that that dimension of sin, I think it was the late Martin Lloyd-Jones, that I once heard saying something about that, in the tent hall in Glasgow.
He used to come there, quite every year, or every other year, and many of us used to go and hear him, and he, in his own inimitable way, and brilliant way, he used to say that, it's not more education we need, it's power, to help us, in a wrestling, with the self, with the will, with the I.
So there's the first thing, that David, the first petition of David, delivered me, from all my transgressions.
[13:23] And then, the second petition, that David makes, is in verse 10. he says, remove, your stroke, from me.

Now, that word stroke, is quite a strong word, some other translations, would have scourge. And, you'll note, that the language, is quite terse.
it's, it's, it's, to the point, remove, your stroke, from me, Lord.
It is okay, to ask God, to remove, the stroke, of our suffering. Paul asked, didn't he?
Paul said, I sought God, three times, for this thorn, in the flesh. He didn't remove it. Jesus Christ, in Gethsemane, said, Lord, if it is possible, take this cup, from me.
[14:49] Now, what we have to, realize, I believe, is, that was not, a pseudo prayer. Jesus never, had a pseudo prayer, in his entire life.

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When Jesus said, if it's possible, that you could, remove this cup, from me, it was a serious petition. Remove, says the psalmist, your stroke, from me.
And then, in verse 12, his third petition, his third petition, is this, hear my prayer, O Lord.
And you see that, O there, that sort of, vocative, that it gives it, pathos, it should alert us, and make us remember, that, here, this is not just, a sort of, hear my prayer, O Lord.
Yes, O Lord, hear my prayer. And he, he repeats it, in a slightly, different line, give ear, to my cry.
[16:16] The poet, is building up, the words, if you like. And he puts it, then, in another way. Hold not your peace, this is quite ironic, isn't it?

Because, he's, he was silent, that psalmist, he kept his silence, he was mute, because he didn't want anything, to come out, before unbelievers.
But what is he saying to God? Don't you be silent! And then, in verse 13, this remarkable, petition, I think, I don't know what you think, but I think it's, amazing in a way.
In verse 13, he says, look away from me. Stop, obsessively, gazing on me, and causing your stroke, to be, with me all the time.
Look away from me, that I may smile again, before I depart, and am no more.
[17:54] Is it wrong, to want, a little bit more time, with our loved ones, as we sojourn, as pilgrims, quality time?

I would say, dare, to be honest, before God.
Tell him, like it is. Our Father in Heaven, is well able, to absorb, our job-like, honesty, during, trying times.
I'm often, encouraged, by that verse, he knoweth, our frame. I love that verse. He remembers, that we are dust.
And of course, that other statement, about Jesus, being touched, with the feeling, of our infirmities, and was in all points, tested, like as we are.
[19:28] And that makes him, a brilliant high priest. Well, there are, his petitions, moments, and, I've already hinted, that the lesson, for us, is to, take, all our emotions, and the storm, within, before our Father, in Heaven.

And dare, to be honest, before Him. Secondly, David's, personal disclosure, to God. In verse 9, he says, and I take this, as just, reinforcing, the comment, he made earlier on, whether that's, the correct way, you know, preachers are not, infallible, I don't know.
But I take it, that's how I would, want to understand it. It's a reference, to his silence, and muteness, for God's honour, at the beginning, of this, psalm.
He says, I am mute, that is to say, I do not open my mouth, that is to say, before unbelievers, I am still mute, before them.
But look what he says, after that, for it is you, who have done it. I mean, one of the, massive themes, in the Old Testament, I don't mean, to be irreverent, as the buck stops, at God.
[21:23] There may well be, secondary, reasons, or secondary, causes. But the moment, we say, that he is sovereign, and the moment, he says, that we say, that nothing can happen, without the permissive, will of God, we've already, locked ourselves, into, what the psalmist, says here, I am mute, I do not open, my mouth, for it's you.

Now, we've got to be careful there, God is not, God is not, the author of evil, and God does not, actively, and directly, and explicitly, bring evil, to people.
and we could spend, a lot of time, a lot of time, in this, and I can't, because of the, limited time, it could be, something that, I don't mean, for me here, we could, we could have a, talk about, in a question session, or something like that, but anyway, there is his, first personal, disclosure, to God, Lord, there's nobody else, that I'm going to, corner, if you like, and say, it's your fault, Lord, it's you Lord, that I've done it.
Remember, Peter was it, in the Acts of the Apostles, in that sermon, and he said to, in one sentence, you had these, two mysteries, if you like, irreconcilable, at least, in the face of it, you by wicked hands, have crucified, the Christ of God, but, by the, the, determinate counsel, of God, he acknowledges, it's God, who has allowed, his suffering, now the thing is, when one does that, it can either, be comforting, or not, it can either, be difficult, now, our best man, when Mary and I, got married, in 1977, so you know, a wee bit more, about me, our best man, Arthur, took motor neurons, condition, in his 40s, and he was, diagnosed, to have, his prognosis, was five years, or just over it, and, the prognosis, was almost, exactly correct, and when I used, to go and see,

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Arthur, and saw this, great mind, he worked in a, company called, Barron Stroud, and he was involved, in the submarines, at Fast Lane, periscopes, and all that, sort of stuff, designed, and I used to, go and see him, and see this, crumbling body, and yet, this sharp intellect, totally unaffected, by it, and, and one day, he said to me, I know God, has a purpose, but I have no idea, what that purpose is, and I also, cannot understand, why he can only, fulfill his purpose, in this way, it's you, that have done it, verse 10, verse 10, or 10b, if you want to be precise, this is him, sharing, his thoughts, and his emotions, and his feelings, with his heavenly father,
[25:25] I am spent, note the word, by the hostility, of your hand, Joe Blake, I think so, I'm finished, that's what he means, by spent, my life, isn't really worth living, because your stroke, is still on me, I am spent, by the hostility, of your hand, and then, in verse 11, when you discipline, I would like to say, a person, a man, or a woman, a boy, or a girl, but anyway, a man, with rebukes, for sin, you consume, like a moth, now, either means, when he says, like a moth, this is a picture, isn't it, this is a, a, a simile, if you like, and he's saying, it's as if, we read at the beginning, didn't we, in the psalm, what is man, that you are mindful, of him, now, these words, in that psalm, isn't a, philosophical question, eh, it's a, surprising question, it's, what is man, that you're so, mindful of him, and, and, and, eh, this is the same, eh, sort of, idea, hear my prayer, and, and, and give ear, sorry, where were we, where were we, 10, 10, 10b, the hostility of your hand, when you discipline a man, with rebukes for sin, you consume like a moth, what is dear to him, it, it could be, that, he's not, meaning, is that our value, like a moth, it could be, that the moth, is just a picture, of, consuming, and, and, and that, that's, that's what he say, but, what I want you to notice, is these words, what is dear to him, how true that is, is it not, as you know,

I think I said to you, I worked for five years, years in the children's hospice, and I've worked, for two years in an adult hospice, and I've worked, in a children's hospital, cancer ward, and in the intensive care unit, of a children's ward, you consume, you consume, what is dear, to him, and you see, when all is said, and done, the things, that are dear, to you and I, as human beings, as men and women, as girls, and boys, are actually, things like, our health, our loved ones, to be valued ourselves, to have relationships, and this, is what, he is saying, so, verse seven, and now, oh Lord, what do I wait for, my hope is in you, and, and you know, it's kind of, because he's able, to say that, and mean it, he's able, to be so honest, with his God, and before his God,
David laments, the loss, brought about, by God's, justisement, we're so fragile, we're so easily consumed, like a moth, your justisement, brings about, terrible loss, what is dear, to us, by this time, I don't know about you, are you detecting, just a little bit, of complaint, in the psalm, a little bit, if you don't like that word, lament, finally, he says this, and this, is wonderful, to hear him saying this, in, verse, 12, for I, am a sojourner, with you, a guest, like all my fathers, now I think, reading between the lines, one of,
David's, questions here, in this psalm, is, why, with people, so fragile, like human beings, do you make their trial, so momentous, something like that, I think that's the unspoken, kind of, thing here, but then, we have to remember, Jesus Christ, there is mystery, and suffering, not necessarily answers, but perhaps, we get, what shall I say, a little clue, as in, the greatest righteous sufferer, whose name is, Jesus Christ, issuing, out of that suffering, and that shame, and that disgrace, and that rejection, and that torture, and that abandonment, of his father, was eternal redemption, for you and I, as I close, just, two or three lessons there,
God indeed, can use our suffering, to draw us closer, to ourselves, to reset, our lives, and our priorities, and our lifestyle, I can tell you, that in Chas, Robin House, the kids hospice, all of the parents, who were on a journey, of losing their child, whether it was, when they were five, or ten, or fifteen, or whatever it might be, it had reset, their entire values, and their entire way, of looking at it, so much so, that they couldn't stand, anybody, talking about, trivialities, but, God can use, our suffering, and, that, that, experience, of our mortality, can remind us, that here, have we no continuing city, and, it can remind us, that as, the psalmist says here, for I, am a sojourner, with you, a guest, like all my fathers,
[33:53] Paul, has a, a very interesting, theology, of suffering, the apostle Paul, but, I cannot, I cannot, sort of, give it any justification, in detail, just now, because, our time is up, but, but, Paul almost, sees, any suffering, we have, as, what he calls, sharing, in the sufferings, of Christ, and, he speaks, of it, in, language, of, privilege, and, honor, and, that, last statement, there, that he shared, with his, heavenly father, for I am a sojourner, with you, a guest, like all my fathers, reminds us, that, we too, you and I, here this evening, like all our fathers, Christian fathers, before us, and

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mothers, and men, and women, and boys, and girls, they too, have finished the course, what then, as I close now, of you, and me, notwithstanding, the storm of feelings, and thoughts, that are within, for most of us at times, it might not even be, huge trials, trials, will we, say, with David, in this, pivotal verse, of the psalm, and now,

Lord, for what do I wait, my hope, is in you, may it be so, for each, and every one of us, Amen. we're going to, conclude then, our service, by singing, in Psalm, 39, this psalm, that we have been, looking at, tonight, and, and, last week, and, we're going to, sing, from verse 7, on page 50, to the end, of the psalm, let's be upstanding, for this praise, verse 7, but now, what do I do, for Lord, my hope is set on you, O my transgressions, rescue me, let's, close in storm, pursue,
I held my peace, and would not speak, for you did this, may may may