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Two Essential Lessons for Believers; Psalm 39
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Introduction – In our age of modern transportation, the Lord has blessed us with an instrument to reveal our impatience. It is called the traffic light.

Impatience and patience. Little things reveal our impatience. Someone in the checkout line ahead of us has far more items than we do. The drive-through window takes longer than 5 minutes. We don't like to wait. The truth of life, however, is that we wait for many things. We wait for the calendar to arrive at special occasions. We wait for results from medical tests. We wait for our paycheck. Inevitably, we wait. No matter how quickly we expect things to occur, the truth is that things take time.

The most difficult things for which to wait are spiritual concerns. Waiting on the Lord. We wait for the Lord to answer, for the Lord's timing, for the Lord's deliverance. And that is where we find David in Psalm 39, waiting.

We've discovered the psalms often have a clear connection between them as we find in Psalm 38 and 39. In 38 David is repenting before the Lord. Part of his repenting is a waiting for the Lord to answer. 38:15, 21-22. David has expressed his sincere repentance, and now he waits for the Lord to assure of forgiveness, to deliver from his trials, and to once again enjoy the peace of a right relation with God. While he waits on the Lord, David learns two essential lessons that are relevant for every believer. For we too will surely experience times in our lives when we are waiting on the Lord, and therefore, we will surely need to know these lessons.

- I. Essential Lesson #1: Learning to Tame the Tongue (vv1-3)
 - a. Read vv1-3. The point here is that David knew he should not answer his adversaries. He is experiencing a time of spiritual turmoil, and so he knows if he speaks, he will not speak in a godly manner. So when David does speak, he speaks to the Lord. V4.
 - b. David knew the tongue is extremely volatile. It can build up and it can tear down. It can edify and it can destroy. It can help and it can harm. Being in his present state, he determined it was best not to say anything at all. David was very wise to understand the

condition of his heart made it too easy to lose control of his tongue. So he muzzled his mouth.

- c. James 3:1-10. David, in Psalm 39, is essentially putting into practice the teaching of James 3. He's not in a condition to speak, and so he doesn't.
- d. Someone has said God intended us to make careful use of the tongue that's why He created the tongue enclosed in lips, behind the bars of our teeth, and swimming in a pool of saliva – that our words would be few and cool.
- e. Listen to Paul's counsel for our words in Ephesians 4:29 – “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”
 - i. So there is the need for wisdom and discernment. Our words need to fit the occasion so that the end result is edification not discouragement or destruction.
- f. In the same chapter Paul says in v15 that we are to speak the truth in love.
 - i. So we not only need wisdom and discernment as to if we should speak at this time and what we should say at this time, but also in the way we say it. Even rebuke and correction can be uplifting if done in a loving manner and tone.
- g. Jesus issues a stern warning in Matthew 12:36-37 – “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”
 - i. Wow! God records every single one of our words, and one of the evidences that will be presented on the day of judgment proving whether or not we are believers will be the words we have spoken. That should give us great pause!
- h. How do we do that?
 - i. Follow David's example. If we're not in a condition to speak, don't. David just left it with God because he knew if he spoke up at that moment, he would either say the wrong thing or the right thing the wrong way. So we too must sometimes just be silent.

- ii. Listen to those closest to us. They will let us know when our words are untrue or unkind or unhelpful. Listen to those who love us enough to gently challenge us about our words.
- iii. Pray for God's abiding Spirit to teach us when and when not to speak.
- iv. Learn David's remedy for the tongue.

II. The Remedy for the Tongue: A Humble View of Life (vv4-6)

- a. Read vv4-6.
- b. The brevity of life is a great restraint upon the tongue! Think about it. We feel so compelled to justify ourselves and to silence or return insult to our accusers. On the flip side, often at the heart of our compelled response is nothing more than a self-centered desire to end up on top. If we can speak our mind, then we'll be at peace. But that's not the outcome of our self-centered speech is it? No, the more likely results are alienation, separation, and division.
- c. Prov 15:1 says – A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
- d. This life is far too short and has enough trouble of its own without contributing to our hardships by speaking untimely words.
- e. Hear me well. We are commanded throughout Scripture to address false teaching, to lovingly correct one another, and to speak the truth. But it's just as important to know when to speak as to know when not to speak. And one of the helps to temper our self-centeredness and our compulsion to justify ourselves is to remember life is so very short. Don't waste it on worthless words. Spurgeon said when compared to the eternal, the lifespan of a man is but a tick on the clock. May we spend our words wisely that we might edify and build up and winsomely point to Christ.

III. Essential Lesson #2: Discerning Discipline (vv7-11)

- a. No doubt some of David's hardships in this text is referring to the assault of his enemies, but he has perceptively looked beyond their assaults to see the loving and wise hand of His heavenly Father. That doesn't excuse any wrongdoing of David's opponents, it just allows him to know nothing comes his way except through the hands of God, and therefore not for his destruction, which is the purpose of his foes, but for his good, which is the purpose of His Father.

- b. There are really two lessons on discerning discipline here: (1) recognizing the hand of God – v9b. (2) understanding it is for our good – v11.
 - i. There are only three ultimate reasons why God disciplines His children and all of them are for our good.
 1. He disciplines us to drive sin out of us.
 2. He disciplines us to drive us to Him.
 3. He disciplines us to make us more like Christ.
- c. Once we begin to learn this essential lesson of discerning discipline, knowing it comes from God and knowing He has purposed our good, it is then we make an epoch turning point in our walk with God. We move from blaming Him, doubting Him, and even hating Him to loving Him.
 - i. I remember growing up as a child when my parents would discipline me, and boy were they good at it, I would be so mad at them. “I don’t like you. I can’t wait to get out of here.” Then I grew up and I learned the way of sin and the way of rebellion and the way of the world and the way of salvation, and today I’m thankful for every time my parents disciplined me, and I love them for it.

IV. The Response for Discipline: Prayer (vv12-13)

- a. We see David expressing through prayer what he has learned by discerning discipline. He’s not blaming God. He’s not being swallowed up in self-pity. He’s not losing his faith. He’s waiting.
- b. He has recognized and repented of his sin – Psalm 38. He has learned the lesson of the tongue and the lesson of discipline while he waits on the Lord. Now he knows the Lord will answer and will restore, and so he turns to him in prayer.
- c. And prayer, my friends, is never wasted. For we see the compositional strategy of the psalms continues. After the repentance of Psalm 38 and the lessons learned while waiting in Psalm 39, comes the answer in Psalm 40. Vv1-3.

Conclusion – What a journey David has traversed with God from Psalm 38-40! The journey begins in sin - 38:1 – O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. The journey ends in song – 40:3 – He put a new song in my mouth. It begins in sin and it ends in song. Conviction, repentance, suffering, and discipline are all intended for the same end: worship!