



Empowering People to Change the World

Psalm 39
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Alright, let's all open our Bibles to **Psalm 39**. Make sure you have a Bible in front of you because we're going to read a huge chunk of this; and if you don't have one, you'll be

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bored and lost. **Psalm 39:1**, “*I said.*” Alright let’s stop there. What is there possibly to notice in two simple words? We notice that David was talking to himself. In fact, many of your translations will say, “*I said to myself.*” How many of you here talk to yourself? Right, and those not raising their hands are saying to themselves, “Don’t raise your hand; that’s lame.”

Alright, so we agree we all talk to ourselves; the question is what does your self-speak sound like? Is it productive or destructive? Are you building yourself up or tearing yourself down? Are you your greatest advocate or your own worst enemy? What’s going on in that tiny brain of yours? Your answer to this question will have a massive impact on your life. John Milton said, “The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell or a hell of heaven.” You have within your mind the power to create a heaven of hell or a hell of heaven; to see the good in a bad situation or to see the bad in a good situation.

Point number 1: **Guard your thoughts.**

What’s going on in your mind? What are you saying to yourself all day? Is the Lord driving your self-speak, or is your sinful nature driving it? If the Lord is driving it, you can make a heaven of hell. You can, for instance, “***Count it all joy when you fall into various trials.***” (**James 1:2**) Or you can say as David said in **Psalm 27:3**, “***Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.***” David had the ability to get through impossible circumstances, and I doubt he had some cheesy fake smile on his face. But I know for a fact he had hope and confidence in the outcome. Why? Because he walked closely with the Lord. You’ll notice this as a theme today. It’s all about your time with the Lord.

See, this isn’t pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps type stuff. That won’t cut it. And it’s not just that some people get it and some don’t; or some are glass-is-half-full type people. You know what it is? It’s proximity to the Lord. David was in desperate pursuit of God’s heart. He walked closely with Him. So, when he faced impossible circumstances, he had within him the ability to make a heaven of that hell; to stand firm on what he knew to

be true of God and wait for his deliverance. In fact, this Psalm we're studying today, **Psalm 39**, is a picture of David enduring the Lord's discipline and refusing to despair.

See, when you walk with the Lord, life is hard... but it's always hopeful. Life with God is always looking at the bigger picture and seeing there is something greater going on here than just my immediate circumstance. What you see with your eyes is never the whole picture. Only God can show you the whole picture. And with that whole picture, He can show you He is producing something in you; there is meaning and purpose in the struggle. With God, the glass isn't just half full, it's overflowing; and not with momentary pleasure, but with eternal purpose.

So, is God driving that inner voice or is your sinful nature driving it? Are you walking closely with the Lord or are you venturing out on your own? With God, you can make a heaven of hell. But, on your own, you can make a hell of heaven. Your mind can become so focused on the negative, so pigeonholed into all that is wrong with your life or with the world, that you can make a hell of heaven. The clearest example I have of this is the news. Turn on the news for 30 minutes, and suddenly, the sky is falling, the world is ending, and we all hate each other.

To anyone here that is addicted to the news, I dare you to turn it off for two weeks and see what happens. You'll find, first of all, that you didn't miss out on anything that was critical to your existence; and secondly, I guarantee you'll see a level of negativity leave your life.

The nature of your life is the culmination of what you choose to focus on. You have within your mind the ability to create a hell of heaven. Who here knows someone that, no matter what, can just find a way to make anything miserable? This is the type of person that if you handed them a million bucks, they would complain that they have to pay taxes on it.

Now, that's the funny version of it, but the more real version is pessimism: always fearing the worst is coming around the corner. Cynicism: believing the worst in people,

always suspecting the worst intentions in people. Bitterness: being jaded, refusing to see the good in things. Depression and ultimately hopelessness.

And the determining factor? Once again, time with the Lord. Someone who is stuck in a pattern of creating a hell of heaven is someone who has ventured out away from the Lord and has become easy prey for the enemy. I know because I have spent a good portion of my life flip flopping between walking in the joy of the Lord and battling depression.

I've taken medication for depression before and believe there is sometimes a place for that. But as I continue to walk it out and examine my own heart, I know that mine has been mostly self-inflicted, primarily by venturing out away from the Lord; bouncing back and forth between what I read in God's Word and believe to be true but then leaning more on what I perceive as my immediate reality and getting so wrapped up in busyness and the circumstances of life that God takes a back seat as I try to hold it all together myself and sneak God in whenever I get time. Your proximity to God literally has the ability to shape your reality and what you focus on.

If heaven is eternity in the presence of God and hell is eternity in the absence of God, then while on this side of the grave we have the choice with each day to decide, is today going to be heaven-bound or is today going to be hell-bound? Am I going to truly walk with the Lord today or am I going to venture out, try it on my own, and see what happens?

You literally have this capacity all within your own head. Do you believe that? I do because I've walked it. So, what's your inner dialogue sound like?

What's going on in our head all day, our inner dialogue, is incredibly powerful; and the more time we spend with the Lord, the more it will be His Truth driving that voice. The more time we spend in the world, the more it will be the enemy driving that voice, amen?

I want to give you two examples; and you tell me which one sounds more like your daily inner dialogue. You ready? Option 1: “You idiot, you blew it again, I knew you were going to screw that up. Why do you always do that? You’re so dumb.”

That’s hard to even listen to, isn’t it? And yet I wonder how many of us talk to ourselves like that all day? Is that the voice of God or the voice of the enemy? Enemy. But truth be told, for a real big portion of my life, that was exactly what I felt God thought about me. Then I got to know Him and realized God’s not like that.

So, is that your inner dialogue, or does your inner dialogue sound more like option 2: “That didn’t go as planned, but that’s alright. God’s here, and it’s all good. We’ll figure it out and move forward. You’ve got this; God is with you.”

Be honest with yourself, is your inner dialogue more like the first option or the second?

See, here’s the problem: **Proverbs 23:7** says, “*As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.*” So, what’s that mean? It means if you are constantly telling yourself you’re a loser, a failure, an idiot, then what are you going to be? A loser, a failure, or an idiot. Conversely, if you think in your heart that you are as God’s Word calls you; “redeemed, beloved, promised a good future, and destined for glory,” then what are you going to be?

Zephaniah 3:17 says that the “*Lord delights in you and rejoices over you with singing.*” So, do you think the Lord goes from rejoicing over you to condemning you for making a mistake? Of course not. He might discipline you, but He will not condemn you.

Quick note: God doesn’t lead with condemnation; He leads with conviction. There’s a difference. Condemnation means guilty and hopeless. Godly conviction means guided to glory. Christ took all of the condemnation for us. God leads with conviction, not condemnation.

Let your inner dialogue be guided by the Word, not the world. Let it be guided by Godly conviction which leads to repentance and glory.

This is so important. In fact, Paul tells us in **2 Corinthians 10:5** that we are to take EVERY thought captive to the obedience of Christ. How many thoughts? Which thoughts? EVERY thought, captive to the obedience of Christ. What's that mean? It means before you ever accept a thought as reality, you have to first take it in a chokehold, drag it to the throne of Christ, and say, "Hey, Jesus, is this a good one or a bad one?" If He says it's good, you go with it. If He says it's bad, you put it out of your mind and move on. That is necessary for EVERY thought. How many thoughts?

See, we're not just subject to whatever pops into our head. We have the ability to control our thoughts, control our inner dialogue, and by doing so, control the trajectory of our lives. **Let's be like Christ, even in the way you think about you and talk to you.** I wrote this down in my notes: **Stop being a jerk to yourself and stop ruining your own life. It's not nice!**

Is your life moving in step with the Lord, or is your life moving in step with the world? Guard your thoughts.

Side note: Realize we just spent 12 minutes on two words in the Bible. If you ever think you're not getting anything out of the Bible, it's probably because you're not paying attention; you're distracted. I know because I read this passage a dozen times and thought there's nothing here to preach on. But when we actually dig in and spend the time with the Lord, He gives us revelation. Guys, it's all about time with the Lord.

Let's keep reading our verse. He says, "***I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, while the wicked are before me.***"

Point number 1 was "**Guard your thoughts.**"

Point number 2: **Guard your tongue.**

Scripture mentions the power of the tongue more than 130 times because in the tongue there is the power to create or destroy, to encourage or cripple, to build up or to demolish.

Proverbs 21:23 says, “*He who guards his tongue, he guards his life from danger.*”

There is great danger in a tongue left unguarded. If your mouth is out of control, your life is out of control. How many here can admit to having caused some damage with their words?

David says, “*I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle.*” It’s a picture of doing whatever it takes to keep our tongue from doing harm. We’ll be selling some muzzles in the lobby after service. If you’re married you get a deal, buy one get one free.

He says, “*While the wicked are before me.*” Initially, I read that and thought “oh, does that mean we can say whatever we want whenever we are around believers?” Just being honest.

No. See this is David complaining to God about God disciplining him. And he doesn’t want to mislead unbelievers in his complaints. So, he is saying, “I will be extra careful to hold my tongue when I’m around unbelievers.”

This is why it’s so important to be in true community with believers; so that you can share your struggle with them. And they know the truth of Who God is, so they can hear your disgruntlement with God and help you see what’s really happening. An unbeliever can’t do that.

If you share your disgruntlement with God with an unbeliever, you are likely going to lead them further from God. So, no, this doesn’t mean you can talk like trash around believers. It means be extra careful around unbelievers and have a group of believers with whom you can be real.

But I think there’s one more element to it. I think the prophetic element to this verse is David saying, “I will hold my tongue while the wicked are before me;” or in other words, “I will hold my tongue until Christ comes back to wipe the earth of all wickedness.” I think it means to guard your tongue until Christ removes the wickedness in you and you no longer have the ability to sin with your tongue.

Ephesians 4:29-31 says, *“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.”*

Let no unwholesome talk proceed from your mouth. Yes, we all like to be the life of the party and cut it up with the guys and make people laugh, but would you believe it can still be done with wholesome, edifying, God-honoring talk? Let no unwholesome talk proceed from your mouth. I’m going to commit to getting better at that one. Anyone else with me?

David goes on in our verse and says, *“I was mute with silence, I held my peace even from good.”* Marriage comes to mind here. How many spouses here, both husband and wife, know that sometimes, even when what you have to say is right, it’s just better to hold your peace? I have a short video for you; this is what I thought of with this.

How many of you know sometimes you just have to keep your peace even when you know you have the right answers. Wives, sometimes you have to let your husband drive off a cliff in order for him to realize he needs to stop and ask for directions. Husbands, sometimes it’s not about fixing the problem, it’s about just listening.

David says, *“I kept my peace even from good.”* There is great wisdom in that.

He goes on and says, *“My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned. Then I spoke with my tongue.”*

See, he doesn’t just say whatever pops into his head. He has a threshold; he holds back speaking, until he can’t hold it anymore, until the fire in him is burning too hot to hold it back, and then finally, he speaks. Some of us need to increase our capacity, our threshold, to hold back speaking until it is absolutely necessary.

I always have the most respect for the guy at the table who sits there quietly and doesn’t really say much until it’s asked of him; and then when he finally talks it’s like he

just solved the entire problem in two sentences. You know what I mean? I want to be like that guy. Most of us are like yappy lap dogs who just have to be heard. We need to increase our threshold for holding back speaking.

David says, *“My heart was hot within me.”*

Here’s the most convicting part of it all; Jesus, in **Luke 6:45**, said, ***“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”***

The words coming out of your mouth are the product of what is in your heart. So, what do the words coming out of your mouth say about your heart?

You’ve all heard it said, “if you squeeze an orange, you get orange juice.” And if you squeeze an angry person, you get anger; if you squeeze someone that is full of the Lord, you get the Lord.

Are the words of your mouth shouting Jesus, or are they shouting something else? I’ll never forget in Chicago; this was such a subtle thing but so profound to me. One of our other worship leaders came up to me and said, “Kyle, I can tell you have been really spending time with the Lord lately.” That was such a compliment because I wasn’t walking on water or raising people from the dead. It was just through conversation that she could tell I had really been going hard after God in that season.

It also makes you wonder what she thought the rest of the time. She could probably tell I was usually too busy and short on time with God.

See, here’s the thing: “Whether you are present with the Lord or absent from the Lord, that is driving your tongue.”

I have to admit, controlling my tongue has probably been my greatest struggle, both inwardly to myself and outwardly in my marriage, with my kids, and at work. In fact, as I was studying and trying to write this message, I hit a total road block when I got to this part. I wrestled long and hard with the Lord; and He said, I’m not going to let you just

write this and pontificate on this point just to act like you have learned the lesson. You're actually going to learn the lesson."

See, in all of my trying to be a good Christian husband, a good dad, doing pastoral work, and keeping up with all of the busyness, I became distant from the Lord. And unfortunately, you can't do the Lord's work without the Lord.

Yesterday's manna is stale today. Just as the minute you leave the gas station you are already starting to consume the fuel you just put in, the minute you step out of your time alone with God, you are already starting to consume the fuel He just gave you. I wish I could say, "Well, you can just be present with God all day, and that would be enough." But there is just simply greater power to your time alone with God than your daily walking with God. This is why Jesus went away to pray so often and for so long. He knew He needed to be alone with God.

He said, "I do only what I see and hear the Father doing." I can't tell you how many times I've prayed, "God, I just want to do what I hear and see You doing." What's the answer? Spend time alone with Him. Al talked at Men's Group this week about how exhausting it is doing all of the stuff God never asked you to do and how invigorating it is doing exactly what God has asked you to do. But there's only one way to know what God is asking you to do. It's to be spending as much time alone with the Lord as possible.

See, I could spend hours convincing you to try to control your tongue; but your tongue, what comes out of your mouth, is a byproduct of a far greater issue, which is your time with the Lord.

Our first point was "**Guard your thoughts;**" the second was "**Guard your tongue.**"

The third and most important point: **Guard your TIME.**

If you get this one, it will pretty much accomplish the other two for you. That's why I haven't spent a whole lot of time giving advice on HOW to do the first two. This one will accomplish those two. Without this one, the other two are just behavior modification.

Look at what David says, ***“Lord make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am.”***

He’s saying, **“God show me how short my time here is. Help me to number my days.”** Did you know the average lifespan is just shy of 79 years? I heard a sermon on this one day. The pastor said to number your days, so I literally went and looked, based on my birthdate, if I live the average lifespan, what day will I die? I’m not weird; you’re weird. It’s a bit morbid and an eye opener but gives perspective to the fact that we aren’t going to be around forever. Our time here is short, so we better use it wisely.

He says, *“Indeed You have made my days as handbreadths, and my age is as nothing before You; certainly every man at his best state is but vapor.”* How long does a vapor last? Gone just like that, isn’t it?

Verse 6 says, ***“Surely every man walks about like a shadow; Surely they busy themselves in vain; He heaps up riches and does not know who will gather them.”***

David, how dare you insult my American dream, to heap up riches and hope that I will be the one to enjoy them one day. And how much of our time is spent in vain pursuit of things we may not ever even enjoy. How many RV lots are chock-full of RV’s that are used statistically 20 days a year. Can you imagine paying for 345 days of storage and 20 days of use? Even worse are the storage units that sit for years full of junk you probably don’t even know you own. Like, if the place burned down, you probably wouldn’t even know what you lost. There are over 2 billion square feet of storage space in America, most of which is stuff piled up that the owner will probably never even enjoy.

I’m not condemning having stuff. No, the problem is stuff having you. The accumulation of stuff having more of your time and heart than does God.

David says, ***“Surely they busy themselves in vain; he heaps up riches, and does not know who will gather them.”***

Watch where he goes from here in verse 7, ***“And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You.”***

Guys, the purpose, the value in your time is God. Don't waste it on lesser things. Imagine having a gold bar and giving it in exchange for a tootsie roll. Your time is the gold bar, and God is what you can afford. Don't waste it on something less than God.

Again, having stuff is not wrong; in fact, I believe God richly rewards those who richly bless Him by spending their time with Him. Don't let the enemy distract you by getting you to spend your time on lesser things. Dedicate yourself to spending time with the Lord. Put it on your daily calendar and treat it with the importance that you do a flight. Do you cancel your flight last minute? No, you paid good money for that flight, and there's nothing getting in the way of your catching that flight. Treat your time with God with that same importance. Don't let anything get in the way.

Now, the risk here is that you leave here with a head full of knowledge and no plan for action. So, I want you to take out your phone or your notebook and schedule your next time alone with God. Let's say tomorrow morning, pick a time; you might have to get out of bed early. That's alright. If you get out of bed and start sprinting without God you're going to trip.

So, what time tomorrow morning? And then down below where it says notes, make a plan. What are you going to do? You could read and reread a single chapter and meditate on it until one section pops out. You could memorize a single verse. You could worship. Go ahead and select that repeat option and set it to daily.

Yes, I'm being a little pushy, but I spent a lot of time writing this sermon. I don't want it to be a waste of my time or your time. You could have been watching football this whole time, but you were here, so let's make it worth it.

David, the man after God's own heart, is showing us in **Psalms 39** the importance of guarding our thoughts, our tongue, and above all our time. It is first and foremost time alone with God that will guide all of these and maximize your life and your capacity to have an impact in the Kingdom of God. Let's get serious about our time alone with God and watch Him work.

Let's worship.

