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## Psalm 39

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## Psalm 39.

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### Topics.

- LORD, make me know my end and how fleeting I am.
- My hope is in you LORD deliver me from all my transgressions.
- Look away from me LORD that I may smile again, before I am no more.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

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### INTRODUCTION

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Psalms are songs and prayers offered to God by the nation Israel, they cover the range of human emotion, expressing praise, faith, victory, sorrow, despair, depression, frustration and the troubled heart of a mourner. They contrast the righteous with the wicked, and include the wisdom and the treasure of God's word. Psalms were written at the beginning of the 15th century BC and probably collected in their final form in the 3rd century.

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### BOOK ONE (PSALM 1-41)

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### PSALM 39:1-5

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To the Choirmaster: To Jeduthum. A Psalm of David.

### **O LORD, make Me Know My End and How Fleeting I Am.**

- **Psalm 39:1-5:** 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." <sup>2</sup>I was mute and silent; I held my peace to no avail, and my distress grew worse. <sup>3</sup>My heart became hot within me. As I mused, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue: <sup>4</sup>"O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am! <sup>5</sup>Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath! *Selah*

David is feeling angry on the inside that is why he says, "I will guard my speech that I may not sin with my tongue. He feels his life is threatened in some way, maybe due to sickness, enemies or some great loss, but whatever the circumstance David seems to be angry at God because of it. He does not want to speak in anger or say something he might regret and thereby sin, nor does he want to speak his mind to the LORD in the presence of the wicked, because he would then be a bad testimony to the LORD, so he guards his mouth and holds his peace. Eventually the fire burning within him gets the better of him and he does speak (it would be right and proper to suppose he found a place to be alone with God before he spoke) and asks the LORD long will he live? When will his fleeting life be taken? This Psalm is a good example of how we can all be honest with God, in how we feel. God will not withdraw His love just because we tell Him we are feeling depressed, disappointed, in despair or that we are burning within because of some circumstance that has brought upon us great sorrow, grief and fear because of: -

- The loss of a loved one, a crushed a dream or the birth of a still born child and such like heartbreaking circumstances.

- The loss of a job, the collapse of our business or the home destroyed by fire and any other disaster that robs us of everything we have worked for and leaves us with enormous insecurity and uncertainty.

Any of these types of things have the potential to cause us to feel anger toward God for not preventing such horror, sorrow and sadness from coming into our lives. This is how David is feeling at this time, he feels as if:

- His life is worth nothing before God.
- Every man and woman alive is but a breath to God.
- God is not concerned with who He afflicts or destroys.

This anxiety is understandable when the following Scriptures are considered:

- What happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. <sup>20</sup>All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. (Eccles. 3:19-20).
- There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evildoing. (Eccles. 7:15).
- The righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God. Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him. <sup>2</sup>It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. <sup>3</sup>This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. (Eccles. 9:1-3).

Though the event in these verses refer to death, by extension it can apply to any event good or bad that comes upon mankind such as any form of love, blessing and goodness or any form of sickness, trouble, hardship, sorrow and grief because good and bad come to both the righteous and the sinner, even Jesus said:

- God makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matt. 5:45).

This is why David felt that his lifetime was as nothing before the LORD (v5) and that man goes about as a shadow and a mere breath (v6) and why he feels he is being disciplined for his sin like a moth being consumed (v11). The author of Ecclesiastes also tells us that no one can find out the work of God that is done under the sun. However much they may toil in seeking, they will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out. (Eccles. 8:17). This is why the faithful are called to walk by faith and trust in the love and grace of God.

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## PSALM 39:6-11

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### **My Hope is in You LORD Deliver Me from all My Transgressions.**

- **Psalm 39:6-11:** Surely a man goes about as a shadow! Surely for nothing they are in turmoil; man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather! <sup>7</sup>"And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you. <sup>8</sup>Deliver me from all my transgressions. Do not make me the scorn of the fool! <sup>9</sup>I am mute; I do not open my mouth, for it is you who have done it. <sup>10</sup>Remove your stroke from me; I am spent by the hostility of your hand. <sup>11</sup>When you discipline a man with rebukes for sin, you consume like a moth what is dear to him; surely all mankind is a mere breath! *Selah*

David looks at mankind and feels humans toil all their life storing up wealth for nothing, because they do not know who will gather it meaning, they do not know if fire, disaster, storms, floods will destroy it or whether

their riches will be taken by war, robbers or enemies or whether a wise or foolish person will take ownership of the treasures they have stored up after their death. By the anguish David expresses in the language of this Psalm it is possible he is writing it during the time he was in great distress and deeply mourning the death of Bathsheba's first child especially since he prays the LORD would deliver him from all his transgressions (v8). He was deeply aware of his great sin concerning Bathsheba' and his grossly wicked plan to have Uriah killed in battle when the prophet Nathan confronted him with it, but whatever the circumstance it has caused David great distress. There are times during life when troubles, hardships and sorrows come our way and cause some to feel God has withdrawn His favour and his love from us and is treating us simply as a breath that feels no pain and has no emotion or feelings of hurt, grief and sorrow This seems to be how David is feeling at this moment in time, because of the anguish his heart and mind is in due to the distressing and suffering circumstance he feels trapped in.

**NOTE:** it is important to keep in mind that the focus of this Psalm is not upon what David believes about God's nature and character, but upon how he is feeling during a time of great grief and sorrow. It is certain many faithful brothers and sisters in Christ will be able to identify with David's honesty before God.

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### PSALM 39:12-13

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#### **Look away from Me LORD, that I may Smile Again.**

- **Psalm 39:12-13:** "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; hold not your peace at my tears! For I am a sojourner with you, like all my fathers were. <sup>13</sup>Look away from me, that I may smile again, before I depart and am no more!"

**Sojourner:** comes from the Hebrew word (*Towshab*) and in the context of these verses means, a foreigner or stranger that is temporarily dwelling in the land as distinguished from a native citizen. It carries the idea of staying at a place for a brief visit. This is how David viewed his life on earth, he saw himself as a sojourner on a spiritual journey with the LORD.

**Hold not your peace at my tears:** means see my grief and my sorrow and answer my cry.

**Look away from me:** means take your eyes off my transgressions and remove your hand of discipline.

While living in this fallen and corrupted world the mindset of David was of being a temporary citizen walking with God like all the faithful fathers who have gone before him. Those who belong to Christ should see themselves in the same way since they are not citizens of this world, but of heaven.

Paul in his letters wrote:

- For through him we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup>So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup>in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup>In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Ephes. 2:18-22).

**NOTE:** this is not a prayer of David speaking against the LORD, David would never do that, but it is his perception of things around him. It is an honest expression of his heart and how he is feeling while he is in distress. We know this Psalm is not about David's lack of love for the LORD, but an authentic heart-rendering expression of how he is feeling, because he says, "He is a sojourner with the LORD'S, just as the LORD'S faithful fathers were," and tells the LORD his hope is in Him and then asks the LORD to deliver him from all his transgressions.

David perceived God's great love regardless of his circumstances (God or bad) this is why he could be openly and sometimes brutally honest before God in prayer. To have the steadfast love of God dwelling in his heart was his greatest treasure. Sadly, some today do not perceive the love of God as David did and because of this lack of perception of God's love and grace tend to determine whether God loves them by their good or bad circumstances. They feel if life is charmed and blessed God loves them, but if it suddenly takes a turn for the worse and trouble comes, they feel God has withdrawn his love, but this is superstition and judging God according to the fickle circumstances of this world.

When anyone today who believes in Christ doubts God's love all we have to do is look back to the bloodstained cross and see what it cost the heart of the Father to save us and how much his Son suffered to redeem us and spiritually crown and cloth us with his royal and majestic robe of righteous so that we could be justified and granted eternal life in everlasting glory apart from self-effort and strictly adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days or keeping religious customs and traditions. This truth should comfort every faithful brother and sister in Christ since it is certain if God was prepared to sacrifice his Son for us, while we were indifferent and apathetic toward Him and uninterested and unconcerned about what honoured Him and what didn't He will with great joy do everything to keep us for eternal life now we love His Son. (He does this by daily lavishing us with grace)

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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