

Seeking Purpose in Life

Psalm 39: 4-8

Again we come to another psalm of David, the most prolific writer of the psalms. Many agree that Psalm 39 is a continuation of the thoughts expressed in the previous psalm. There David struggled with the inner battles he fought due to sin in his life. While he was free to make certain choices, he was not free from the consequences of his choices. Whether this psalm was written in the same context as the previous one or not, clearly David is struggling with his life at the moment.

There is great truth for all in this psalm. Like David, we have freedom to choose our actions, but we are never free from the consequences associated with our choices. The Bible confirms that we will reap what we have sown. Living in rebellion to the will of God will eventually catch up with us, and we will be forced to deal with the consequences of our rebellion.

This struggle was so difficult that David is pondering the realities of life and the struggles associated with life itself. No doubt we have all pondered the mysteries of life and considered our place in the grand scheme of God's sovereignty. While this psalm may not generate a lot of excitement, it is beneficial for each of us. Hopefully we will be challenged to consider our lives at this present moment, seeking the Lord to reveal our need, and provide the wisdom to make the necessary adjustments. I want to discuss the [certainties](#) David expressed as we consider the thought: [Seeking Purpose in Life](#).

I. The Brevity of Life (4-5a) – While we are unsure of David's age as he penned these words, it is clear that he was contemplating the brevity of life. Consider:

A. His Supplication (4a) – [LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is.](#) David prayed for understanding and wisdom regarding life. While it doesn't appear that David was seeking specific information about the time he had left or the exact details of his death, he did want to understand his purpose in life. No doubt David had been disappointed in some of his decisions and he longed to make the most of the time he had left. Some think David was curious about the duration of his suffering. Either way, he wanted to live mindful of the Lord and discover God's plan and purpose for his life.

- I am thankful we can't see our future. None of us know how much longer we have left upon this earth. Death has been after each of us since birth. This is the only life we have to live for the Lord upon this earth. We need to live in light of God's grace, seeking to magnify Him in every facet of life. I pray we will all make wise decisions as we pursue the Lord and strive to honor Him. [Psalm 90:12 – So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.](#)

B. His Perception (4b) – *LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.* David had enjoyed great success and power as king and yet he realized his frailty before God. He was a mere mortal, forced to deal with the struggles that accompany a body of flesh. He had trusted in his own strength and wisdom, paying a great price for failing to seek the Lord. David desired to understand his own weakness and limitations. He longed to reach the place where he depended solely upon the Lord. His life here was but a fleeting moment, and the Sovereign is eternal.

- In the days of our youth we don't ponder these thoughts much, but as we age we begin to realize our own weakness and frailty. Whether we choose to believe it or not, we are dependent upon the Lord each day we live. This body of flesh will soon enough return to the dust of the earth. We must live in light of our own mortality, resting in the eternal God to provide life beyond the grave.

C. His Admission (5a) – *Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee.* David knew his life was but a brief moment in the span of eternity. Regardless of the number of years he lived on earth, it was but a handbreadth, a fleeting moment. His position and status in life could not stay the hand of death. His life, when compared to the eternal God, was just a mere glimpse in time. David admitted his mortality before God.

- Human nature possesses a desire to live as long as one possibly can. However, like David our lives are but a brief moment in time. Even those who live to be a hundred years old have a brief existence in the scope of eternity. The life we live on earth is but a moment when compared to the eternal state of the spirit. We must be willing to admit our own mortality and trust in the Lord to provide our acceptance to the Father and eternal life in heaven. *James 4:14 – Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.* Our life is very brief at best, and yet we must prepare for eternity here!

II. The Vanity of Life (5b-6) – Along with the brevity of life, David also understood the vanity associated with much of life. Consider:

A. The Acknowledgment (5b) – *verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.* As David considered his life and the life of others, he concluded that they were at best vanity. This would appear to be spoken in regard to life lived apart from communion with the Lord and a personal relationship with Him. Life, in and of itself, can often be empty and meaningless. Many search for purpose in life, constantly seeking that which brings fulfillment and peace. Such pursuit will

continue until one comes to know Christ in salvation. He alone can provide the purpose we so desperately seek and the fulfillment we long to have.

B. The Appearance (6a) – *Surely every man walketh in a vain shew*. David is speaking from first-hand experience. Like others around him and many before him, men rarely revealed the true inner man. They kept their insecurities and failures hidden under a façade of composure and self-confidence. While they sought to reveal one who had it all together on the outside, within they battled their inner struggles. Few revealed their true self before others.

- There are few people in life that we really know. We know what they want us to see and know, but much of their lives are kept hidden beneath a façade. We are often uncomfortable with who we really are and fearful of the consequences that would result if people knew us like we know ourselves. Therefore we are tempted to walk in a show of vanity, rarely allowing anyone to get close enough to see who we truly are.

C. The Anxiety (6b) – *surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them*. Those who appear to have it all together struggle with the same worries as others. David declared that men could enjoy great success, gaining great wealth, and yet fail to enjoy the fruit of their labor. They were consumed with worry about who would enjoy it after they were gone. Material success and the pleasures of this life had failed to bring real peace and contentment.

- This is one worry that I have not had, but the principle remains. We may not be rich by the standards of some, and yet our desire for more can consume our lives. We can become so focused on material possessions that we fail to see the real purpose in life. Such pursuit and worry is pointless. We all came into this world with nothing and we will leave here with the same. Our desire in life should not be focused on personal wealth or gain, but on leaving a legacy of faithfulness to the Lord and laying up treasure in heaven!

III. The Frailty of Life (7-8) – Here David discussed the utter frailty of man's existence upon the earth. Notice:

A. The Consideration (7a) – *And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee*. As David pondered the great meaning of life he questioned the Lord regarding life's purpose. Lord, what am I waiting for? What is my purpose? Have I fulfilled your desire for my life? Is this all there is, or is there more for me? It appears David was fearful that his sin was final and fatal. He sought the Lord for

comfort. We too have likely pondered similar questions. In our moments of uncertainty and desperation we must trust the unseen hand of God. Our eternal destiny rests in His finished work, not in our efforts or merit.

B. The Confirmation (7b) – *my hope is in thee*. David had tried to forge his own path and failed miserably. His efforts had brought shame and despair. He reached the point where he realized his hope must be in the Lord and in Him alone. David had submitted to the Lord, pleading with Him to take charge of His life and deliver him from the mess he had made. His hope was in the Lord alone.

- Few ever comprehend this eternal truth, but it remains nonetheless. Our hope rests in Christ alone. I am not depending on my effort of ability to secure a place in heaven. In myself I am worthy of eternal condemnation in hell, but through His grace I am afforded life. He has redeemed me from my sin and imputed His righteous to my account. I am totally dependent on the Lord in this life and the one to come!

C. The Desperation (8) – *Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish*. David had reached the depths of despair. The choices he had made had brought sin into his life that resulted in shame and reproach. David knew the enormity of his sin and did not want that to be his legacy. He cried out unto the Lord to remove his transgressions and the reproach that came with them. He knew God alone could provide the forgiveness and restoration he so desperately needed and desired.

- Like David we all sin and miss the mark. While God is never pleased with our failures, they do not have to be final. The Lord is able and willing to pardon our sin and restore the fellowship sin has broken. We can't just refuse to acknowledge our need and expect to have fellowship with Christ. However, if we come before Him with a repentant heart, He has promised to forgive and restore.

Conclusion: Has the Spirit revealed areas in your life that need to be brought before the Lord? He is never pleased with our sin, but He stands ready to forgive. Are you living in light of His grace, seeking to honor Him in all you do? If not, seek Him today for the help you need. If you are yet unsaved, come while there is time and opportunity. Life is brief; it will be over soon enough. We must prepare to meet the Lord in this life, believing in Him for salvation if we expect to possess eternal life in heaven.