

Asking God the Deep Questions

Opening Text: Psalms 39:1-7

Many of David's psalms were inspired during times of great trial and distress. Psalm 39 was written at a time of impending danger, possibly a time when invading armies surrounded him and laid siege to Jerusalem. He declared "*the wicked are before me*".

Sometimes, the presence of calamity or danger can make us think about the deep issues of life.

Verses 4-7 describe a man trying to make sense of all that is before him. While he meditated quietly, suddenly all his questions exploded into a prayer. David's prayer touched on some of the very core issues of our existence.

Historians tell us that after the calamity of the Second World War, that was the prevailing state of mind of people in the western world: many questioned the true meaning of life. The philosophical term for that state of mind became known as "Existentialism". The "existential attitude" as it was known, was characterised by a sense of dread, disorientation and confusion in the face of an absurd, chaotic world.

In this psalm, we can say that David was having an 'existential moment'.

The writings of Dostoyevsky, Nietzsche, Sartre and other philosophers proposed that man should find in himself (not God) the answers to the meaning of life. That thinking became extremely popular in the years that followed WWII and influenced society at all levels and in all fields: arts, drama, literature, psychology etc.

David was having an 'existential moment' but he didn't look for answers within himself: he went to God. He didn't share in the same sense of superiority of secular humanists, but he came to God with all humility.

This is an intense prayer, but David doesn't come waving his fist at God demanding answers. He comes with humility:

4"Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am.*5* 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. Selah *6* 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. *7*"And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You.

There is great wisdom in humility:

Proverbs 26:12 NIV: *When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.*

The very thing we need, the answers we long for come from humility.

There is always hope for someone humble and teachable:

Proverbs 26:12: Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? *There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

Proverbs 9:9-10 - *Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning. 10 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

Here's how we need to approach the core issues of our existence, of the world we live in, the issues of suffering and other things we can't explain:

1. Don't look 'inside', look to Jesus

Most answers we need, transcend human knowledge. They lie elsewhere:

Colossians 2:3 says "*in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*"

Jeremiah 33:3 - *Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'*

2. The importance of humility

V.1a – "*I said, I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue*"

Ecclesiastes 5:2 - *Do not be rash with your mouth and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore, let your words be few.*

Here's what humility looks like:

a) Acknowledging that we are finite and limited in ourselves.

Verses 4-5: "*Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am. 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. Selah*

Psalms 90:12 - *So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom*

James 4: 13-15 - *13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; 14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."*

b) Acknowledging our own frailty outside God.

Verses 4: "*Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am.*

Romans 12:3 - *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*

3. Seeing God as the absolute source of your every need

6 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.

‘Stuff’ isn’t the answer. Materialism isn’t the answer to our existential problems.

Materialism will tell us that our frailty can become strength, our vulnerability become security – if we have riches. **Here’s what the bible says:** *“They busy themselves in vain; he heaps up riches and does not know who will gather them”*

So much of human activity in this life focuses on the creation and accumulation of wealth. We do that basically to achieve a sense of security. The Bible calls that a vain pursuit.

Interestingly, the very thing we perceive as security, the Bible calls it uncertainty:

1 Timothy 6:17 - *Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.*

I believe that many of us need to re-think their relationship with material wealth. There are 3 levels where that relationship can be unhealthy:

- a) The love of money (allegiance to Mammon)
- b) The fear of going without (spirit of poverty)
- c) Greed (**Luke 12:15** – *“Take heed and beware of covetousness for **one’s life** does not consist in the abundance of things he possesses”*)

Let your security be in God!

Psalms 16:8 - *I have set the Lord always before me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.*

4. Putting all your hope in Him alone

7“And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You.

David is saying, ‘I don’t know what awaits me but my expectation, my hope is in God’. There is great wisdom in living a life where God is your hope, your source, and your security.

Psalms 37:25 - *I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.*

Psalms 71:5 - *For You are my **hope**, O Lord God; you are my trust from my youth.*

V.14 - *But I will **hope continually** and will praise You yet more and more.*

Hope is the cure for the ‘existential’ mindset. Hope in God: the contented, happy expectation of good is the greatest weapon against the spirit of fear and discouragement. When the enemy comes against us, like when he came against David, we can hope. We can have an anticipation of a good outcome and victory.

Recap on how we need to approach the core issues of our existence, of the world we live in, the issues of suffering and other things we can't explain:

- 1. Keep looking to Jesus.**
- 2. Having humility before God**
- 3. Making Him the source of every need you have.**
- 4. Putting all your hope in Him**