

Shaken to life

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[0 : 00] It's actually part of the story of how I came to faith, how I became a Christian. This psalm was quite important. Looking back, it tells a little bit of what I thought was going on with me at the time.

Some of you might have heard this before. It was back when I was living in Yorkshire and I was driving home from work. It was February time, there was ice on the road.

It was February time, North Yorkshire, really cold, icy night. As I approached a bend in the road, I went to touch my brakes and there was no response.

It was an icy road. Nothing. I'd hit black ice. I hit my brakes again, nothing. I started to do that thing that you'd been taught repeatedly, nothing. I just started to slide and kept on sliding.

I started to speed up sliding. There was a car directly in front of me. There was a car on the other side of the road. The car was getting closer and closer.

[1 : 05] I remember the sled drifted across. I hit the car on the other side. I sort of bounced off. I hit the car. I think I clipped the room in front of me.

Then hit the other side of the road. Before I knew it, I'd come down a steep slope and I flipped the car upside down. I was still sliding upside down.

It seemed like ages. It was probably only like 10 seconds or something. It felt like ages. Then it eventually came to a standstill. Everything was on the sit-backs of the seats now on the roof.

I'm kind of in a heap on the floor. I managed upside down to take off my seatbelt, crawl out of the car. The car completely smashed to bits.

Amazingly, I just had a cut finger. That was it. Now, tell that story. The seriousness of it, to begin, it was shocking.

[2 : 02] It took me quite a month to come to terms with the fact that if I hadn't have hit the car that was coming up, I would have tumbled over the edge. That's kind of where it started for me to think, what would have happened if I would have gone over the edge?

In my head, if I'd have gone over the edge, I'd imagine it like a picture of a James Bond film where it tumbled down and then a big explosion. I know that doesn't normally happen. But that's kind of where I thought, I imagine if that would have happened.

So there was loads of stuff that I needed to work out. I had a bit of PTSD. I had to take time off work. And the biggest thing I kept thinking was, I shouldn't be alive, should I? And what would I do? What would I have thought if I'd have met the living God there that night? At the time, I didn't see this experience as the Lord's discipline.

But I remember coming across this psalm a few years ago. Not at the time. It would have been pretty hard to think that at the time. But I remember coming across this psalm and it changed how I thought.

[3 : 08] Because the car crash, it was a terrifying moment, don't get me wrong, in life. But now what I see was that God used this moment to discipline me.

Because what he used is he used it to question existence. He used it to question what life was. I have that perspective now.

The truth is, as you can imagine, it wasn't a pleasant experience. Just because God used it for good, in the end, it's not something I'd go through again.

Or actually what I'd suggest, what I'd win for anybody else to go through. It's only looking back that I can actually see now how God used it. It's important to say that from the beginning.

Because it's important when we think about what we're really looking about is God's discipline. That we can't always tell when God is disciplining us. We can only really see it when we look back in retrospect.

[4 : 08] And think, oh yeah, I can see that now. That that was what was happening. It's important because not every bad situation. We have to get this right.

Not every bad situation or moment of suffering or difficulty in life. We shouldn't always put that down to discipline. We can't. And if that's what you took away from what I was saying, I'd have done a bad job this morning.

Because we can't take every time we go down through something as if that's, oh yeah, I must have done something wrong. I'm being disciplined. You've got to be careful about how you think about things that are going on in your life.

However, what we're going to see in Psalm 39 is that David is responding to being disciplined by God. There is something different about him, though, that's different to us.

Because David is different to us. He's God's chosen king. So he has a different perspective and awareness of what's going on with his life. He wrote the Psalms, which is God's word.

[5 : 11] So he is aware in the ways that we're not of when the Lord's hand of discipline is upon him. We can't always know. We can only look back.

David can be aware in the heat of the moment of when the Lord's hand of discipline is on him in ways that we can't. And we're going to see in Psalm 39 in how he responds to discipline.

How he responds to discipline. Three things. We're going to see a godly attitude. We're going to see repentance. And then we're going to see asking for mercy. The godly attitude.

The repentance. And then he asks for mercy. Firstly, the godly attitude. Now, I don't know what you were like growing up. Whether you were a goody-two-shoes or whether you were always in trouble. So, but I reckon most of us, at least at some point, even if we were really good kids, we all got grounded at some point. Now, if you were grounded, if you've ever been in that kind of trouble with your mum and dad, did you just accept it?

[6 : 18] Say, oh yeah, you're totally right. You're right. Actually, that's the kind of punishment I've given to myself. I shouldn't be allowed to go out for a week.

You're just totally right. Hands up. Hands up. Totally. In fact, give me two weeks. No, I can tell you. You didn't do it. You moaned. You complained. It's not fair.

Not just to your parents. For anyone who'd listen. And when you complained, like, well, certainly if I complained, like most of us, I didn't quite paint the accurate picture of the reasons behind it.

And you think about it. We're still like that a little bit, aren't we? If something happens and you feel it's unfair, you give your account of the story, don't you?

You make out the unfairness of it all or you make excuses. Even if you do something wrong, you say, this is a classic one I do when I'm a bit grumpy. You say, oh no, it's because I'm tired.

[7 : 16] You see, and how many of us say that, oh yeah, it's because I'm tired? And don't get me wrong, like, that is a contributing factor. But we say, oh yeah, I did this because.

There's always a reason. There's always an excuse. We never display the full thing when we're given our account. In this psalm, what we see is David is under some form of discipline in his life from the Lord.

We don't know exactly what, for something he's done. But he's feeling the weight of it. You know in verse 1 what he says? It's interesting. He says, David's under discipline, but he has kind of a godly attitude regarding the discipline he's under.

What he's basically saying is, I'm not going to complain about it to others who don't know the Lord. I'm not going to complain about it. He decides that complaining about God when he's surrounded by the wicked is not the right thing to do.

So I'm going to muzzle my mouth. I'm not going to talk about it, even though he's being disciplined. You see, what he doesn't want is his discipline to damage God's reputation in front of those who don't follow him.

[8 : 44] When you're being grounded, if I was complaining about the unfairness of it all, if people were to believe me about, no they probably didn't, they kind of knew that I was being a bit of a wrong one.

But if people were to believe me, it would damage the reputation of my parents. Wouldn't it? They'd think, oh yeah, look at his parents, they're awful to him. He's not done anything wrong. But here, David knows he's done wrong, and so he doesn't want to complain about God to people who don't know him.

He doesn't want to damage God's reputation in front of those who don't follow him. He doesn't want there to be any possibility of God's name being tarnished. Now you might be thinking, well, why would complaining to God in front of people who are not followers damage God's reputation? You see, he's God's king. So if he starts questioning God in front of someone who doesn't know him, it could easily give the wrong impression.

It could easily look like he's got a problem with the God that he's the king of. He's the one who represents God to the people. And so he's God's chosen king. He doesn't want to sin with his mouth.

[9 : 55] He doesn't want to gossip about God. He doesn't want God's name to be dishonoured. He doesn't want any opportunity for the wicked, either outside of Israel or in Israel, to look on God in the wrong way.

He's God's representative, and so he restrains himself. He muzzles his mouth. It is easy to see, isn't it, for us, perhaps, if we make a complaint to God in front of people who, I mean, we might do that even in front of the church.

You know, sometimes it's good to lament about the circumstances that we're going through, but if we were to do that in front of people that don't want to follow him, how it wouldn't paint God in the right light.

So it is worth thinking about how do we speak about the God we love in front of the people we want to know him. And it's good to think about, as well, how we speak about our lives.

Instead, there is an alternative choice. Instead, we should take our complaint to God before we speak to anyone else about it.

[11 : 03] We take our complaint to God before we speak to anyone else about it. And then, you know, we'll have the perspective through prayer so that we won't misrepresent him, and especially in front of the people who don't know him, so that they don't get the wrong idea.

You just notice, with King David, that's exactly what he does. He doesn't stay silent either. He doesn't talk openly in front of everyone, but he doesn't stay silent either.

Just look with me in verse 2. Look with me in verse 2. So he's talking about, he's talking about to begin with, verse 2.

So I remained utterly silent, not even saying anything good. But then, here what happens. But, when he stays silent, he doesn't talk to the Lord. He says, but my anguish increased.

My heart grew hot within me. While I meditated, the fire burned. Then I spoke with my tongue. The longer he stays silent to God, it starts to eat him from the inside.

[12 : 14] His anxiety, anguish. He can't take it anymore. But it's so difficult that he's just not, because now he's not speaking to anyone. He's not speaking to the people because he didn't want to represent God.

He's not speaking to God because he's almost keeping a distance. Staying at a distance from God is not right either. More anxiety and distress. That's not honouring to God.

If we leave the things of our life and the emotions we feel, if we distance ourselves from him. And so eventually David is compelled.

He's compelled. He can't do anything else. He's growing hot. I had to speak with my tongue. He's compelled to speak with God directly.

If we wanted God's name to be honoured, we need to think of how we speak about God in front of people. But also we need to think about how we should take that complaint.

[13 : 11] The thing that's burning us up from the inside. The thing that is making us anxious and worried. The thing, maybe even the sins that we've done, that we take it to God in prayer. It is right that we go to him with anything that is on our hearts and speak to him about it.

What he says, however, is perhaps, I think, surprising. And I think it's what the discipline... We don't know what it is, the situation that it is.

But the discipline has revealed something about his life. Which is what we're going to look at next. And what it shows us is kind of this discipline moves him to repentance.

What we may in verse 2... I want us to think a moment for the existence of a fly.

We don't often think about what a fly is doing. It doesn't come to our heads. Unless we see an annoying us in the corner of a room. We want to get rid of it. Annabelle's always... That's one of my roles in the house.

[14:35] Is to get rid of insects. We don't often think. Because they have no value to it. They're buzzing around, irritating. Eating dirt and muck. I remember when I was little...

Do you remember asking this kind of... What is the point in flies? What is the point in wasps? They're just annoying. But you're going to have to use your imagination for this. It's a teeny tiny... I want you to imagine. That a teeny tiny fly lands on your hand.

Okay. And somehow... Let's see. You're going to have to go with your imagination. Somehow manages to get your attention. And is able to speak. And the fly says to you...

What is the point of my existence? Because... Because... Imagine that. In comparison to a human, to you... The existence of a fly...

Is much less significant. This is what it is like... When you or I come and question... Or what David is like...

[15:37] When he comes and questions the Lord. It is like a fly speaking to a human... Is like a man... Speaking to Almighty God. Imagine the fly saying...

What is the point of my existence? This is almost exactly the same question... That David is asking Almighty God. About his purpose in his life.

Look what he says. Verse 4 again. Show me Lord my life's end... And the number of my days... Let me know how fleeting... My life is.

The distance between David and God... Is actually much bigger... Than the distance between a fly and us. David turns to God... Through this discipline...

To find the answer to his life. He doesn't turn to sin... Or something to make him feel better... But he turns to the living God. He doesn't... Notice he doesn't just sit there...

[16:34] Willowing... Sort of... Trying to answer his own questions... Trying to come up with his own... Philosophies and ideas... And what it all must mean... But he brings this question...

Directly to the living God. To explain... What is life all about? Show me Lord my life's end. What God shows him...

Is sobering... And not what you would expect. When David answers... In verse 5... He's repeating what God has shown him.

You have made my days... A mere handbreadth. The span of my years... Is there's nothing before you? Everyone is but a breath...

Even those who seem... Secure. Verse 6... Surely everyone goes around... Like a mere phantom. In vain they rush about... Heaping up wealth... Without knowing... Whose it will finally...

[17:36] Be. The answer... The answer about life... That David receives... From God... That he's repeating to us... In almost a prayer back to God...

Is this... That when you focus on yourself... Your earthly life... When you focus on heaping up wealth... When you focus on... On your life... As if that's the sum total of all things...

The answer is... Your life is but a breath. When that is your focus... He's actually saying something that's very... It's hard for us to actually hear...

But he's saying... You know... The point to your life is... It's like a vapour... Gone. Because even... The wealth that you have... Will go to someone else. You start up all your life... When you die... It goes to someone else. You just put yourself in David's position...

[18:39] For a moment... Maybe... You've gone through things yourself... Which are hard... He's under some intense event... And stress in his life... There's obviously some difficulty... Big...

Because he's... It's a big thing isn't it... He's questioning the whole point of his life... And the answer he gets back is... Your life's worth nothing David... I mean...

What do you do with that? Our lives... If we focus... On me, me, me... You remember... Have you ever seen Finding Nemo?

Have you ever seen Finding Nemo? There's a seagull in it... Go mine, mine, mine, mine... If we focus on me, me, me... On ourselves... On what we can do... On get done... On what we have... It makes it meaningless...

A breath... Like a phantom... You see... When I look... The reason this psalm is powerful in my own life... Is because when I look back at the car accident...

[19:34] And the months that followed... This psalm... Puts into words... My lived experience... Because what it... I started to realise... What this psalm puts into words...

That everything I'd put my energy into before... All the things I'd focused on... Or tried to do... And help me put in my hope and trust... And my bank balance... My education... Or my friends...

Or satisfaction... And other things... What would they have been worse... If on that cold, icy night... I'd have tumbled over the edge... My life...

If God is in control of all our days... If the days of our lives are nothing more than the breath of His hand... Then really, what is the point of everything that we do?

It really does add up... Does it really add up to nothing? Your wealth... Your acceptance by other people... Your achievements... The thing you prize in your life... All our energy that we've put into these things...

[20 : 34] That we think will bring us the satisfaction that we really crave... All the time we spend... We spend worrying about what people think of us... All the energy we've put into trying to be somebody...

Has it all been a waste of time? All the time... If we realise that...

Immediately in the moment... We're bound to feel... It kind of rocks you, doesn't it? It kind of shakes you...

It's like... This is what it's like... The discipline... It's like God is getting hold of you... And He's grabbing hold of you... And He's shaking you... And He's going... Wake up! Wake up!

Wake up! Wake up! Wake up! And we can feel... In the moment... Even a little bit despondent...

Like... What's going on? What's happening to me?

[21 : 35] That I'm now seeing this differently? He's... That's how... I think that's how David feels... He's just realised... All his attempts... All the energy he's putting into his life... Perhaps it's been...

Amounted to nothing... And it's shaking him to the very core... And so what is the answer then? What is the point...

When we look at... See... The only answer... As we realise that we've done that in our lives... The only answer... Is actually how... David responds...

Have mercy on me... Look what he says... His only hope now... If everything he's put... His trust in... Won't get him anything that he needs... His own... The only thing he can do... Is to put his hope... In the living God... And plead with him... To deliver him...

[22 : 32] And to have mercy on his soul... The only possible response... Is to find meaning in... Life with God... To... He... He will turn...

That meaningless life... And fill it full of meaning... Full of purpose... Make everything that we do... Count for something...

And so... That's exactly what David does... If he runs it... He puts his hope in God... Says... Deliver me from sin... And pleads with... For mercy... Look verse 7...

Now... Lord... What do I look for... My hope... My hope... Is in you... My only hope... That's the only...

That's all we've got left... If everything else is taken away... If life is a... Breath... And a vapor... That disappears... The only thing we've got left... Is you Lord... My only hope... Is in you...

[23 : 25] To turn... Away... So I can turn away... From my sin... And David asks... To be delivered from his sin... And he cries out for mercy... He wants...

He asks for mercy... Remove the discipline... I get it now... I totally get it... You... Verse 10...

Remove your scourge from me... Verse 12... Hear my prayer... Listen to my cry...

Be not deaf to my weeping... Verse 13... Look away from me... That I may enjoy life again... Don't... That... Whatever the thing is... That you needed to do... You've done it... Look...

Take your angry gaze... Look away from me... Remove that hand of discipline... Have mercy... He pleads to God... You notice here... David doesn't just accept...

The discipline... And think... Oh well... You know... I'm going through a rough time... That's just the way life is going to be... It's just hard... I've just got to... Keep going with this now...

[24 : 21] Forever... And just accept it... No he pleads... He pleads with God... Remove it... Please God... And we don't know how long this went on for...

He could have been... We don't know how long he was disciplined for... We don't know how hard the suffering was... He could have been pleading with God for months... For years... Remove it... Please God...

Turn your gaze away from him... I might just smile and rejoice... And have joy and peace... And contentment... And rejoice in you again... Because now I get it... My life... All the things that I had worked before...

Meaningless... I know that I only find meaning... And hope... And peace... In you... It's important for us to know... Yes...

God does use the situations in life... To bring change... So we might see him... And see ourselves with real clarity... But that doesn't mean... We can't petition and ask God...

[25 : 13] To end our struggles... It's good and right... And it shows that David has faith... When he keeps going to him... Because he believes in the power of prayer... That he can ask...

Boldly for help... For mercy... In his situation... And the basis of it all... Is what God has done for him... And done for God's people...

In the past... That have gone before him... Verse 12... You see what he says... I will dwell with you... As a foreigner... A stranger... How? As all my ancestors were...

The reason... The reason... David completed with God... Is because he's one of God's people...

Chosen as one of his children... God has welcomed him in... Once a foreigner...

But now a member of the family... That is the truth for us... That is the basis... Upon which we can plead... To the living God...

[26 : 08] We have been chosen... By God... God... God has been hospitable to us... He has brought us into his family... We have been welcomed in as strangers... And so we can appear...

Just like David... When we're going through a rough time... Now I don't know... And I'm not telling you that he is... But maybe he could be using it to discipline us...

Maybe... Something we may only be able to look back on in the future... But if it is... What it says is... We don't just accept it... We pray to God for help...

For mercy... For relief... And we pray that he would... In the process... That he would show us more of our... Use it to show us more of ourselves...

So that we would depend on him more... Show us more of himself... And that we would know his love... And his character... And have intimacy with him through it...

[27 : 04] Knowing that he loves and cares for us... And only wants the best for us... Knowing that Jesus... Suffered... Jesus suffered...

Not to be disciplined... But when you're going through something... You're not going through a God who doesn't understand suffering... But a God who suffered much more than us...

A God who suffered emotionally... Who suffered physically... Who suffered spiritually... And so when you're going through that... You have someone holding your hand... Right by the side of you...

Jesus... The creator of the universe... With you... All the time... Who knows intimately... What it means to suffer as a human being... We don't just accept it...

But we pray to God for mercy... How do we respond to God's discipline? How do we respond?

[27 : 58] How do you respond this morning? It's a difficult thing to assess... Because as I said...

We can't always tell... What is discipline and what's not... But we can look back... In our lives... And see how God... Has used the big events in our life...

To shape and change us... And mould and fashion us... Into being more like Jesus... We need to make sure... That we go to God with our complaints... And not go elsewhere first...

We don't want to damage... God's reputation... We have to have that godly attitude... That David has... Surely... That kind of... Repentance... Because we turn to God... For the answers... That's the repentance...

That we see here... He's under discipline... For something he's done... But he turns to God... For the answers... Not... He doesn't look to some philosophy... In the world... To make sense of everything... The reality is...

David finds that... His life... Without God... Means nothing... But with God... It means everything... Because it's hope in God... This psalm...

[29 : 01] Describes my experience... And... You know... Actually now... I read this psalm... I look back at that... And think... As hard as that was... I wouldn't change it...

I wouldn't change it... I wouldn't change it... It was tragic... It was months of hardship... But it shook me... And it woke me up...

That my life really... Was... Without meaning... Because Christ wasn't there... It was nothing... And that the only thing... I could do...

The only thing I did... After months of having... The gospel exclaimed... Was being able to say... My hope is in you... My only hope is in you... Where do I look? Where do I go?

I can't go anywhere else... I can only come to you... Because you've showed... How fleeting... It was without you... And found meaning...

[29 : 58] And peace and satisfaction... Just by knowing him... And... Maybe you've... Had something similar... Maybe there's... Kind of... Suffering in your life... You're going through right now...

And... You know... His desire through it all... Is to make you more like him... I know that's hard to... I know... I know... That in the middle of it...

That is hard to accept... I know that... And you think... How... How can this be... How can God use this... I know that that's hard... And I've...

I say that I know... Because... I've experienced it... And it'll happen to me again... And I'll be thinking... Exactly the same thing as you... If you're going through something... Will all of a sudden... Go through something...

That is hard... And it's not easy... To see what God is doing... But one thing... Can I... One thing... To do... Is don't stop hoping in God...

[30 : 53] To... To... To... To use it... And to bless you through it... Don't stop petitioning... And asking him for help... Don't stop pleading... Don't stop trusting... He can make you rejoice again...

Your life's not meaningless... With Jesus... Nothing is wasted... In your life... No second of the day... Is wasted...

By God... The things that you go through today... The way that you persevere in faith... That you put your hope in here... Hope in him... That is a good work...

That in eternity... Will be rewarded... You're not a stranger... Or a foreigner anymore... Because you belong to Jesus... And you'll always belong to him...

You're a citizen of heaven... God is your father... And he loves you... So keep going... Persevere... I hope that we can continue to say...

[31 : 54] My only hope is in you... Let me pray... Let me pray...

Almighty God... We just come to you today... There's so much... That we think about our lives...

And... You know the areas of life... Where we put... We look to other things for... To trust other things... And put our hope in other things...

There's so many areas of life... Where we look back... Where we know we suffer... Where we have suffered... And it was hard and difficult... And... There's times when we...

There's things that... Where we never know... The reason... We have had to go through things...

And there's things that we wish... Hadn't have happened... We have regret... And...

[32 : 51] And... And it's hard to cling on... Sometimes to the truth... That you do work... Things for good in our life... That... And we can't see the reason... And so I pray...

I plead with you this morning... Actually Lord God... That you would... That you would fill... Us here this morning... And not just us here... But all those of us...

That are away on holiday... That you would fill us as a church... That you would fill us with hope... In the midst of trial... And tribulation... That you would...

Fill us with a knowledge of your grace... And mercy and kindness... That you would fill us with... An awareness of the ways... That we've tried to find meaning...

In other things apart from you... And that you would fill us with a... A godly attitude... That we would muzzle our mouth... And not misrepresent you... But that we would bring our complaints... To you all the time...

[33 : 46] And that you would give us... That you would give us... This way of living... That we find our... Our meaning... Our purpose... And our hope... We find it only in Jesus...

And so I pray that you'd bless... This psalm and this... Time together to us this morning... We ask for this in the name of Christ... Amen...