

PSALMS: DIARIES OF GODLY OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS

Psalm Thirty-Nine: Effectively Conquering Habitual Sins

(Psalm 39:1-13)

I. Introduction

- A. The Bible reveals that gluttony is a sin, Dt. 21:20-21. It also teaches that it is wrong to hold to a habit that controls us like an addiction of any kind, cf. 1 Cor. 6:12; 5:11b. Yet even Christians struggle with habitual sin in these areas, let alone a **host of other** habitual sins!
- B. David habitually struggled with the misuse of his speech when he was in the presence of certain kinds of very provocative, evil people! His own best attempts to control himself and not sin were doomed until he learned to involve the Lord in a certain way to gain victory over it!
- C. His victory in breaking an habitual sin in Psalm 39:1-13 is instructive for our similar struggles as well:

II. Effectively Conquering Habitual Sins, Psalm 39:1-13.

- A. David struggled with the sin of misusing his speech every time he was in the presence of a certain kind of provocative, evil personality: accordingly, he described how he at first unsuccessfully tried to solve his sin problem in Psalm 39:1-3:
 1. David planned to keep a watch over his ways, to keep his speech under control when he was in the presence of the provocative sinner that always tempted him to say what was wrong, Ps. 39:1.
 2. His decision was to say nothing, to avoid sinning by avoiding talking altogether, Ps. 39:1b.
 3. However, the problem David faced the next time he encountered the difficult party was that keeping silent kept him from doing good, for in the next interaction, he would have been better off saying something that would have made the situation more wholesome, Ps. 39:2b.
 4. As the complicated situation frustrated David, his mental pain at having made his initial vow to stay silent stirred him emotionally into a lather, Ps. 39:2c.
 5. Thus, when he finally could not contain himself anymore and actually spoke, he was so upset that he sinned when he spoke like he had done many times before, Ps. 39:3!
 6. **Obviously, it was useless for David to try to solve his speech control problem HIMSELF in the presence of such provocative people!**
- B. Thereupon, David asked **God** for help, a help that turned out to be almost **TOO** effective, Ps. 39:4-13!
 1. Having failed to overcome his habitual sin with the tongue before a certain provocative party, David asked God in prayer to make known to him how transitory and thus meaningless was this earthly life so that he would no more sin, Ps. 39:4. **Apparently, David was struggling with his opponent over a pride issue that involved only this life: David felt that were he to see the superior value of righteousness that was eternal versus pride that had token value only in this fleeting life, he would be motivated to stop sinning!**
 2. God really **obliged** David, and so ministered that it **scared** David, Ps. 39:5-13!
 - a. God let David consider that his life was but a mere handbreadth in length compared to eternity, v. 5a.
 - b. In fact, man's life is but a vapor that, once breathed out, disappears almost as soon as it is seen, v. 5b.
 - c. David notes that though man bustles about heaping up wealth for fame or fortune, he lives for such a short while that he doesn't know who will inherit what he bustled about to acquire, Ps. 39:6!
 - d. Made aware of his mortality, David looked to God as Master to save him from habitual sin, 39:7-8.
 - e. He noted that viewing his transitoriness in view of eternity's values had cured David of his desire to commit his habitual sin, Ps. 39:9. He realized that **God** had shut his mouth from sinning!
 - f. However, in realizing his mortality due to God's work to keep David from sinning, David struggled with depression over how short was his life's span, Ps. 39:10-13: continuing to note how futile is this life if considered in itself, David begged God to stop impressing him with his transitoriness as he felt like he was about to **expire**, Ps. 39:10-12,13!

Lesson: *Victory over habitual sin does not come by our trying to control ourselves, for the root cause of habitual sin is a godless preoccupation of valuing life in the TEMPORAL that caters to the lusts of the eyes, the flesh and the pride of life (1 Jn. 2:14-16), leading to sin. Victory over habitual sin comes from God's reminding us how futile is life if considered only in itself, and that causes the believer to shift his values away from seeking fulfillment in this life to pleasing the eternal God, 1 Jn. 2:17!*