

## Frail determination

*I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred.*

*My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue, LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.*

*Psalm 39:1-4*

The third chapter of the epistle of James issues numerous warnings about the dangers of the tongue, and we are right to heed those warnings. One way to avoid the sins of the tongue is to avoid speaking. James tells us earlier to be slow to speak and slow to wrath (James 1:19). As this psalm begins, this seems to be David's plan when he found himself in the presence of the wicked. We may also have similar thoughts when we find ourselves in a place where speaking up may draw the attacks of those present, which could eventually lead us into a quarrel with those of a different opinion. This may be an even greater temptation in our current age, when often people are not looking for open and honest discussion, but rather accusation and a reason to "cancel" others.

However, we see David taking this plan to the extreme, where he held his peace "even from good." Although he was steadfast in keeping his promise to himself, he describes his internal response to the situation as stirring his sorrow. When we know the truth, especially the truth that would ultimately benefit for good the life that would receive it, withholding that good from another will bring sorrow within. Yet there are times when we, as David, continue to hold our peace for the sake of peace, at least as we perceive it, and by doing so may end up sinning through not speaking. We withhold good from those that need to hear it, to avoid potential conflict. The reasons we rehearse in our minds may even seem legitimate, especially when based on prior experience with those involved. So how do we avoid stirring such sorrow and also the potential for strife?

For David, he finally broke silence and spoke, not to the wicked, but to the LORD. He needed God to adjust his perspective on his own frailty and vanity. He needed to recognize that time and opportunity were passing him once again, while he seemingly was controlling himself. He finally in verse seven concludes: "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee." Let us also with him recognize our need for humble prayer to the LORD for wisdom in such circumstances, understanding our own frailty, our end, and the preciousness of the time He has given, both to us and to those needing to hear of the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Then, when He opens our mouth, we can rest our hope in Him for the outcome.