

Psalms 39:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.

Analysis

I was dumb, I opened not my mouth—This echoes verse 2 but with crucial difference. Earlier, David restrained speech in the presence of the wicked; now 'illamtî lō' 'eptaḥ-pî (אָפֶתַח אֶפֶי לֹא, "I was mute, I did not open my mouth") expresses submission before God. The repetition emphasizes total silence—two verbs for the same action, creating rhetorical force.

Because thou didst it—These four words (כִּי אַתָּה עָשִׂיתָ, kî 'attāh 'āsîthā, "because thou didst it") are the turning point. David's silence before God isn't suppression but submission. He recognizes divine sovereignty even in suffering. The verb 'āsāh (עָשָׂה, to do/make) acknowledges God as active agent in David's affliction—not cruel, but purposeful. This is the opposite of v. 2's burning silence; this is the quietness of faith accepting what cannot be changed.

This verse captures the paradox of lament: David speaks to tell God he's silent! The prayer itself is speech, yet he describes it as muteness before divine sovereignty. Job exhibited this same pattern: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). Seeing God clearly produces humble silence, not because there are no questions but because we trust His wisdom. Jesus demonstrated ultimate submission: "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). This is the silence not of despair but of faith.

Historical Context

The psalm's context of physical affliction (v. 10) and divine discipline (v. 11) suggests David recognized his suffering as God's corrective hand, possibly related to his earlier sins. Unlike pagan fatalism that accepted blind fate, David's submission was relational—accepting discipline from a Father who uses suffering redemptively (Hebrews 12:5-11).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How is the silence of submission to God's will different from the silence of bitter resignation or suppressed anger?
2. What circumstances in your life require you to honestly say 'You did it' while still trusting God's goodness?
3. How does recognizing God's active sovereignty in your suffering change your prayer from complaint to trust?

Interlinear Text

נָ אֶלְמָתִי	ל א	אֶפְתַּח	פִּי	פִּי	אֶתְּ ה	עָשִׂיתָ:
I was dumb	H3808	I opened	not my mouth	H3588	H859	because thou didst
H481		H6605	H6310			H6213

Additional Cross-References

Job 2:10 (Parallel theme): But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

2 Samuel 16:10 (Parallel theme): And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org