

Psalm 12

To the chief Musician upon Sheminith, A Psalm of David.

“Psalm 12”: The oppression of the righteous by the wicked is especially felt in the realm of vain and proud speech (verse 2-5), but the righteous find comfort in the pure and valued Word of God (verse 6).

Verses 1-8: Men’s words do hurt, but the Lord’s words heal. These thoughts preoccupy David (in Psalm 12). The psalm begins and ends with the reality of the current reign of the wicked. Yet amidst this very black setting, the gemstone truth (of verse 5), shines all the more brightly. These 8 verses are characterized by subtle repetitions and bold contrasts. In the development of Psalm 12, David provides a model for passing a spiritual hearing test, in that genuine disciples listen to and properly respond to two radically different sources of speech.

(1) Surviving the Propaganda of Depraved Speech (12:1-4).

A. By Prayer 12:1-2);

B. By Petition (12:3-4).

(2) Security in the Protection of Divine Speech (12:5-8).

A. Its Divine Promises (12:5);

B. Its Divine Purity (12:6);

C. Its Divine Perseverance (12:7-8).

Psalm 12:1 "Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men."

“For the godly man ceaseth”: His words and phraseology are deliberately hyperbolic, yet David’s perception indeed was that the pious have perished!

David cried for the Lord, because he said the godly man is no more. It seems that he has described our generation more than all the rest. Society has fallen into such a state of degradation today that it is even as it was in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. Even in the time of Noah, when God looked down and was sorry that He had ever made man, it was not as bad as the day we live in. Sometimes I feel like Elijah did when he thought he was the only one left who loved and obeyed God. We know from the Scriptures, that God told him there were still thousands that had not bowed their knee to Baal. I am sure there are thousands, even today, who love and obey God. I can surely say they are not in the majority however. Even many in the church have compromised to the extent that God would find many of them wanting, if they were weighed in the balance. To know what our society is today (we must read 2 Timothy chapter 3). I will give part of it here. To get the full picture, read it all.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents,

unthankful, unholy," "Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good," "Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;" "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

The only answer is God. Help Lord! The faithful are becoming fewer and fewer. We are outnumbered by the world. Don't give up. Read your Word and pray for God's help. He will help you. The main thing is, to stay in the Bible and draw your strength from God.

Verses 2-4: These smooth-talking sinners verbally abuse the remnant (verses 2-3), and verbally defy their Sovereign (verse 4).

Psalm 12:2 "They speak vanity every one with his neighbor: [with] flattering lips [and] with a double heart do they speak."

That which is false and a lie, either doctrinal or practical. What was not according to the word of God, and was vain and empty, frothy, filthy, and corrupt. And which no godly and faithful man would do. And this being done in common, by the generality of men, one with another, shows the degeneracy of the age, and supports the complaint before made. They speak even;

"With flattering lips": As Cain did to Abel, Joab to Amasa, the Herodians to Christ, Judas to his Master, false teachers to those that are simple, or hypocrites to God himself. When they draw nigh to him only with their lips. And all formal professors to the churches of Christ, when they profess themselves to be what they are not. And this is a further proof of the justness of the above complaint.

"And with a double heart do they speak": Such are double minded men, who say one thing, and mean another. Their words are not to be depended upon; as there is no faithfulness in them. The Chinese reckon a man of "two hearts", as they call him, a very wicked man, and none more remote from honesty.

Most of the time, flattery is like a con game. I will brag on you, so that I can get what I want from you. Another way to say a double heart, would be to say two faced.

Proverbs 26:28 "A lying tongue hateth [those that are] afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin."

Psalm 12:3 "The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, [and] the tongue that speaketh proud things:"

"The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips": Here is a call for death in the light of sin. On the obnoxious sin of lying lips (compare Psalms 5:9; Isa. 30:10; Dan. 11:32; Rom. 3:13).

Not only does God not like flattering lips and proud statements, but people are turned off by that kind of person as well. I always wonder what they are up to, when flattery begins. Pride comes just before a fall.

James 1:26 "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion [is] vain."

It is a very dangerous thing to have a tongue that is not controlled by the Holy Spirit of God. I will give one more Scripture on the evil tongue, and then go on.

James 3:5 "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

The tongue is the vilest part of our body, until we turn our tongue over to God. Let God control your tongue, and it will speak life and not death.

Psalm 12:4 "Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips [are] our own: who [is] lord over us?"

By raising and spreading slanders and evil reports concerning him, where by both, Saul will be highly and implacably enraged against David and the hearts of the people alienated from him. Which was indeed a very likely way to prevail against him, and that by their tongues only.

"Our lips are our own": I.e. at our own disposal to speak what we please.

"Who is lord over us": Who can control or restrain us? This was not the language of their mouths, for they were Israelites, that owned a God above them, and they were subjects of Saul. But the language of their actions, scripture often tells us not only what men do actually say, but what they would say if they dared, or what their actions mean (as Psalm 94:7; Mal. 1:12-13; 2:17). They take as great a liberty in their speech as if they believed there was no God or man superior to them". Because neither the fear of God, nor the reverence of men, can keep them from speaking whatsoever they please, or what they suppose makes for their interest.

Life and death are in the power of the tongue.

James 3:8-9 "But the tongue can no man tame; [it is] an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God."

If God does not rule our tongue, we are evil to the core. In Isaiah, there is the most beautiful suggestion of how to purify unclean lips, in all the Bible.

Isaiah 6:5-7 "Then said I, Woe [is] me! for I am undone; because I [am] a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, [which] he

had taken with the tongs from off the altar:" "And he laid [it] upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

In the very next verse, we see why it was necessary for him to have clean and truthful lips.

Isaiah 6:8 "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here [am] I; send me."

Psalm 12:5 "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set [him] in safety [from him that] puffeth at him."

The ungodly having been threatened, a promise of assistance is made to the righteous whom they oppress. God declares that, in response to the many calls made upon him (Psalms 3:7; 7:6; 9:19; 10:12), he will "now," at last, "arise". Interpose on behalf of the oppressed, and deliver them (compare Exodus 3:7-8).

"I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him": This is a possible meaning; but it is perhaps better to render, with Hengstenberg and Cheyne: "I will place him in the safety for which he sighs," or "pants."

We know that the Lord is longsuffering to those who are living in sin. We also know that He listens and hears the prayers of His own. Sometimes it seems to us, that God is taking a long time to hear and answer our prayer. God is not controlled by time as we are, but is in fact the Controller of time. We are God's children, and He will fight our battles for us. He is never so far away that He does not hear our cry.

1 Samuel 8:20 "That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles."

It is not our place to fight our enemies, God fights for us.

Psalm 12:6 "The words of the LORD [are] pure words: [as] silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."

"Pure ... purified": The Lord's perfect words present a most radical contrast with the profane words of arrogant sinners. The purity of God's Person assures the purity of His promises (compare Psalms 19:7-10).

The psalmist contrasts the vain "words" of people with "pure" words of the Lord (119:140; Prov. 30:5). God's words are "as silver" that is passed through fire seven times when the greatest possible purity is desired. The dross is consumed, and only the bright, precious metal remains. In the same way, God's words are free from all error and unfaithfulness.

Notice in the following Scripture that, God cannot lie.

Titus 1:2 "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;"

Jesus not only spoke the truth, but is in fact, the Truth. Man does not understand the Godliness that is contained in absolute truth, because man was born in flesh whose human nature it is to lie. Silver that is tried in the fire is pure silver. It has no trash at all in it. The seven times, as we know, means that it is spiritually complete. The Truth of God needs no improvement. If we were looking into the hidden message in this Scripture, we would see that redemption (silver), that has been tried by fire and made pure is the type of redemption a person must have to please God. Man may lie but God will not and cannot lie, because He is the Truth.

Verses 7-8: The hostile realities of verse 8 call for the heavenly resources of verse 7.

Psalm 12:7 "Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever."

That is, the persons referred to (in Psalm 12:5). The poor and the needy who were suffering from the wrongs inflicted on them. The idea is, that God would guard and defend them. They were safe in his hands (compare Psalm 37:3-7).

"From this generation": This generation, or this race of detractors, flatterers, and oppressors. The idea is, that that entire generation was eminently wicked, and that none but God could deliver the poor and the needy from their designs.

"Forever": That is, "constantly," or as long as they would need the divine protection. God would not interpose and save them from the "present" trouble, and then leave them to the designs of their enemies. But he would "always" interpose as often as there was any need of his help. That is, they were now and would be at all times, entirely safe. They had nothing to fear, for God was their refuge and their help.

We spoke earlier in this lesson, about the evil generation you and I are living in. We are in a world that is full of sin. The only protection we have is the hedge that the Lord builds around us and protects us with. We are in the world with these evil people, but we must not be influenced by them. We must be stayed upon God. We must put on our battle armor to fight the devil and His crowd.

Ephesians 6:10-17 "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places]." "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;" "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;" "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"

2 Samuel 22:3 "The God of my rock; in him will I trust: [he is] my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my savior; thou savest me from violence."

One of the promises God has made to the righteous, is that He will protect and keep us unto the end. The fact that we have been adopted in to the family of God, assures us of our Fathers care and attention.

Psalm 12:8 "The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted."

They fill all places, and go about boldly and securely, seeking to deceive, corrupt, and destroy others. Being neither afraid nor ashamed to discover themselves.

"When the vilest of men are exalted": To places of trust and power. Who, instead of putting the laws in execution against vice and injustice, and punishing the wicked according to their deserts. Patronize and protect them, or give them countenance and support by their own example.

We are living in an evil world. The leaders are also evil in some cases. This world is not the home of those who are believers. We are just passing through (this wilderness), on our way to the Promised Land (heaven). We are like Abraham, looking for a city whose maker is God. Let the evil have the world, I will take heaven.

Psalm 12 Questions

1. In verse 1, David said who ceaseth?
2. Our society is so evil today that it could be compared with what time in the Bible?
3. When God looked down and saw the evil in Noah's day, what did He wish?
4. Elijah saw the evil around him and thought he was the only what?
5. If God were to weigh many in the church today, he would find them _____.
6. Where, in the Bible, do we find a description of our day?
7. How is the only way for the true followers today, to stay true?
8. What is flattery most of the time?
9. What is another way to say a double heart?
10. A flattering mouth worketh _____.
11. What is the vilest part of the body?
12. When God controls your tongue, it speaks _____ not _____.

13. Life and death is in the power of the _____.
14. What man can tame the tongue?
15. Where is the most beautiful Scripture in the Bible on purifying the tongue?
16. What cleansed Isaiah's lips?
17. Why was it necessary for Isaiah to have clean and truthful lips?
18. God is not controlled by time as we are, He is the _____ of time.
19. Who fights the battles for the believers?
20. Where do we find the Scripture that says, God, that cannot lie?
21. What kind of silver has been tried in the fire?
22. What does the seven times indicate?
23. What is the spiritual message in verse 6?
24. What protection does the believer have from this evil world we live in?
25. Describe the armor of the Christian.
26. What is the sword of the Spirit?
27. 2 Samuel 22:3 says, whom will I trust?
28. This world is not the _____ of the Christian.
29. We are looking for a _____ whose maker is _____.