

PSALM 12

**1 (To the chief Musician upon Sheminith, A Psalm of David.)
Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from
among the children of men.**

The meaning of these opening words is this: Jehovah, save me and others of thy chosen people, from the subtlety, deception and rage of wicked men. Psalm 31:23 captures the idea when it says the Lord **preserveth the faithful**. Almighty God protects those that are **peaceable and faithful in Israel**. (2 Samuel 20:19). No human help will work, so divine help is implored.

When the Psalmist speaks of the godly man that ceaseth, he speaks of those who **hope in the Lord** (Psalm 31:24) and are servants **that trusteth in the Lord God**. (Psalm 86:2). Barnes gives this outlook: *The word used here properly denotes the "merciful" man - חַסִּיד chásîyd. It is a term applied to the righteous, because it is a prominent trait in the character of a pious man that he is merciful, kind, benignant. Hence, the general character is often denoted by the special characteristic; in the same way as we speak of a pious man as a good man, a just man, a righteous man.* The same word is often rendered "saints" or "holy" throughout the Bible.

These people just described **fail from among the children of men**. Sounding the depths of this phenomenon is overwhelming. To be sure, this condition prevails today, in spades! Much of the remainder of this Psalm fleshes out this societal condition. Commentators do a woeful job of explaining this failure; many don't address it at all when discussing this verse. In what has to be one of the understatements of all time, The Treasury of David – which is usually quite verbose – says this: *[M]en*

have lost not only serious piety, but even common honesty, in their words and dealings with men. You think?!

Looking around for other Bible passages that shed light, we land on Isaiah 57:1: **The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.**

This language also calls to mind Elijah's declaration that **the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left.** (1 Kings 19:14). But, Paul writes, **what saith the answer of God unto (Elijah)? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.** (Romans 11:4, 5).

2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: *with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.*

If this doesn't describe today's society, then I will throw in with you. Falsehoods flow freely and frequently. The official White House spokesperson – an avowed lesbian – makes a living lying. She wakes up lying; she lies all day long, often in front of the media and their cameras and microphones; and, she goes to sleep lying. And she is nothing more than the tip of the lying iceberg; a symbolic representative of a filthy and dishonest people. **And if (my enemy) come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it.** (Psalm 41:6). Paul perhaps had this verse, and others like it, in mind when he enjoined those at the church in Ephesus: **Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.** (Ephesians 4:25).

Flattering lips, or smooth talking, is their weapon of choice. The Hebrew here is “lips of smoothness”, to make smooth or to shape, as an artisan does as with a plane. **For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a twoedged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell.** (Proverbs 5:3-5). **A man that flattereth his neighbor spreadeth a net for his feet.** (Proverbs 29:5).

They do all this with, or because of, a double heart. They pretend to be speaking and acting from a kind and upright heart when they really have a cruel and deceitful heart. Catch this interesting concept reflected in Deuteronomy 25:13: **Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small.** *And with a double heart - Margin, as in Hebrew, "a heart and a heart," that is, as it were, with two hearts, one that gives utterance to the words, and the other that retains a different sentiment. Thus, in Deuteronomy 25:13, the phrase in Hebrew, "a stone and a stone" means, as it is translated, "divers weights" - one stone or weight to buy with, and another to sell with. So the flatterer. He has one heart to give utterance to the words which he uses toward his neighbor, and another that conceals his real purpose or design. No confidence, therefore, could be placed in such persons.* (Barnes). **For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away.** (Job 32:22).

3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things:

How often do we speak of pride in this church? It is a dangerous thing to be avoided at all cost. Here, we read of prideful talk. Flattering lips are those that speak one thing when they mean quite another in their hearts. And we read of tongues that speak proud things, or great things, boasting of what they have done or what they will do. Daniel gives us a

good sample when describing the fourth beast; he had **a mouth that spake very great things**. (Daniel 7:20).

When all the dust settles, the Lord will cut off all such boasting and deceitful talk. The notion behind this cutting off is a separation or excommunication. **[T]hat soul shall be cut off from his people[.]** (Genesis 17:14). **[I] will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.** (Leviticus 20:6).

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

This is a continuation of verse 3 and gives us specific “proud things” therein referenced. And what are those “proud things?” It is the boast of those in authority or has the ear of those in authority; that is those who are running human government. It’s as if they were telling the masses, “I say it, and therefore it is the truth and you must believe us.” Said otherwise, these oppressors are boasting that they will win in the end, and their tongues are the instruments by which they will obtain a victory.

And who is lord over us, they brag. Who has any right to control or restrain us, or call us to account. The essence of all their talking is this: **But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible.** (Malachi 1:12). And this: **Yet they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.** (Psalm 94:7).

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.

Here we consider the “poor” and the “needy”; in other words, the people of God, the chosen remnant of mankind. In due season, the Lord will hear his elect ones, who cry day and night unto him, and though he

bear long with their oppressors, yet will he (in reality) avenge them speedily.

That avenging is simply this: God will have his people dwell in safety, both temporal and spiritual, from those who breathe out threatening and slaughter. The puffing mentioned in this verse seems to be best captured by Barnes commentary:

[T]he persons referred to as oppressing the poor and needy, "puffed" at them; that is, they looked upon them with contempt, and felt that with a puff of their breath they could blow them away. They regarded them as insignificant and worthless. By this construction, also, the connection with the main statement will be best preserved - that the injury referred to in the psalm was done by "words," by the breath of the mouth - thus indicating that by a "word" or a "breath" they could destroy them.

The same language is found at Psalm 10:5: **His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.** This captures the haughty attitude and arrogance of the wicked, with their nose high in the air, snorting out contempt, disdaining God.

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

Drowning in an ocean of lies how nice is it to surely know there are pure, honest, truthful and sound words to rely on, that being the words of the Lord? This is the solid rock, the firm foundation of which we sing. **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** (John 1:1).

The purity of the Lord's words contrast with those of mankind whose words are filled with vanity, lies, deceit, fraud, falsehoods, nuance, folly and/or uncertainty.

And of the purification of these majestic words of the Lord, consider this from The Treasury of David:

For truth, certainty, holiness, faithfulness, the words of the Lord are pure as well-refined silver. In the original there is an allusion to the most severely-purifying process known to the ancients, through which silver was passed when the greatest possible purity was desired; the dross was all consumed, and only the bright and precious metal remained; so clear and free from all alloy of error or unfaithfulness is the book of the words of the Lord. The Bible has passed through the furnace of persecution, literary criticism, philosophic doubt, and scientific discovery, and has lost nothing but those human interpretations which clung to it as alloy to precious ore.

And as to the seven times, we understand that to mean the purification process has occurred very often, "seven" denoting in Scripture a complete or perfect number. The process was repeated resulting in divine words that are perfectly pure.

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

What's the "them?" Some say the oppressed "poor" (people of God) discussed in verse 5; others say the "words" of verse 6. Why not both?

Truly the words of the Lord have been and will be preserved forever. **Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.** (Matthew 24:35).

Likewise, the elect of God are secure in eternal life. **Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: and even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.** (Isaiah 46:3, 4). **My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.** (John 10:27-29). In those three verses, we find no less than eight statements of absolute fact, including the double security of being tightly held and protected in the hand of both the Savior and the Father! And dozens more Bible verses could be advanced on this point.

8 The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

As this was being composed, the headline story had to do with the baby-murdering Speaker of the House, one Nancy Pelosi's husband being assaulted in the middle of the night at their San Francisco-area mansion. It's hard to imagine people more vile than the Pelosi clan and their ilk. But such people are everywhere in this nation, all around us, building their pathetic fortunes off the backs of the downtrodden and being exalted to the various high places in government, education, business, media and the like.

When those in earthly power are vile, their underlings will be no better. Indeed, in this democratic form of government we find ourselves in, the underlings put the vile in power. That is to say, the leaders mirror the masses. And when the wicked are on "every side", they fill all places and they are neither restrained nor punished but go boldly and securely where they please. They grow worse and worse and prosper in and by their wickedness.

And worse: These people are exalted, as Benson says, *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.*

And this word translated “vilest” occurs nowhere else in Scripture and conveys the idea of a shaking or trembling as when one shakes a rug resulting in the ridding of dirt and so on that is vile, abject, despised and worthless. Those are they that are exalted in this world.

In sum, this Psalm is a cry for help amidst evil men, and as such should be a matter near and dear to us in our present situation. The Psalm assures us God will cut off flattering lips. Charles Spurgeon describes that finality, saying --

They will not be able to continue speaking falsely and proudly for ever; a shovelful of earth from the grave-digger’s spade will silence them, and a terrible display of God’s justice will make them speechless for ever.

And on that happy note, this interesting Psalm ends.

Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein. (Hosea 14:9).

We have been through some deep waters. We must through much tribulation enter His kingdom. How could it be otherwise, seeing we are now in a territory which is under His curse? This land is not our rest – because it is polluted. (Micah 2:10).

The word “tribulation” comes from the Latin “tribulum”, which was a threshing tool used by the Romans to separate wheat from the chaff. You catch the drift. Yet afflictions do not come upon all the saints in the same form, or to the same degree. God is sovereign in this as in all things, and he knows what will best promote the spiritual needs of his people.

Take comfort in this: Afflictions are not all that the Lord sends his people. He daily loads them with his benefits. (Psalm 68:19). There are many more sunny days that cloudy and though our memories are fickle, we do well to recall “the former days” when we endured a “great fight of afflictions.” (Hebrews 10:32). Indeed, we are commanded to “remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee.” (Deuteronomy 8:2). Sit down from time to time and review God’s previous dealings with this church; his powerful interventions and gracious gifts. Those memories will comfort and stay your hearts in the midst of any trouble.

How may I know that I am one of that favored company for whom the incarnate Son of God offered Himself a sacrifice for sin? What clear and conclusive evidence do I possess that I am among the “sanctified?” **How do I know I’ m saved?** Answer to these weighty questions is furnished in the verses which we are now to ponder. (Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews*, p. 349).

Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he has said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, **I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.** (Hebrews 10:15-17).

[T]he laws of God are written on the Christian’ s heart, so that it becomes his very “nature” to serve, obey, please, honor, and glorify God. (Pink, p. 352).

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul[.]
(Psalm 19:7).



The Church!

And having an high priest over the house of God[.] (Hebrews 10:21).

When it is said that Christ is “over the house of God,” it is His headship, lordship, authority, which is in view. The Lord Christ presides over the persons, duties, and worship of believers. In that all their acceptable worship is of His appointment; in that He assists the worshippers by His Spirit for the performance of every duty; in that He directs the government of the church, ordains its officers, and administers its laws; in that He makes their service acceptable with God. He is King of Zion, wielding the scepter, protecting the interests of His church, and, according to His pleasure, overthrowing its enemies. It is the Lord who adds to the church those who are to be saved. He is the alone Head, and as the wife is to be subject to her husband in all things, so the members of Christ’s mystical body are to own no other Lord. From Him we are to take our orders; unto Him we must yet render an account. (Pink, p. 359).