

PM Psalm 12 "The Faithful have vanished"

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[0 : 00] Page 542, Psalm 12. Actually.

Psalm 12. Save, O Lord, for the godly one is gone, for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man. Every one utters lies to his neighbour with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.

May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts. Those who say, with our tongue we will prevail. Our lips are with us, who is master over us?

Because the poor are plundered and because the needy groan, I will now arise, says the Lord. I will place him in the safety for which he longs. The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.

You, O Lord, will keep them. You will guard us from this generation forever. On every side the wicked prowl as vileness is exalted among the children of men.

[1 : 34] Amen. I'd like, if I may, just to read that psalm again, Psalm 12.

So if you've got your Bibles there, we'll be referring to it as we share this evening's message. Let's read it as we share this evening's message.

We will prevail. Our lips are with us, who is master over us. Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan, I will now arise, says the Lord.

I will place him in the safety for which he longs. The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.

You, O Lord, will keep them. You will guard us from this generation forever. On every side the wicked prowl as vileness is exalted amongst the children of man.

[3 : 00] This is a psalm of lament. I love the honesty that we find in the psalms.

David just bursts out and says, right from get-go, Save, O Lord, for the godly one is gone. For the faithful have vanished from among the children of men.

He looks out on Israel in his generation. He laments the moral and spiritual state of the people and of the overall nation of Israel.

And it causes him to cry out to the Lord. He particularly laments in this psalm the use of language which drew me to it.

The use of language in reference to empty talk that has no substance, no foundation. In fact, no truth. Just flattery and smooth talking lies.

[4 : 08] And we see from verse 2 that this problem is not occasional. It's pervasive. Look at verse 2 again. Everyone utters lies to his neighbor with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.

Having a double heart, of course, means having a deceitful and treacherous heart. So Psalm 12 is a psalm of lament that would be particularly appropriate in the circumstances David describes in the psalm that precedes it.

In Psalm 11 verse 3, David writes, If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? The answer is, we can pray.

Confident that God always keeps his promises. There's a stark contrast in Psalm 12 between the flattering tongues of the wicked and the flawless, totally honest words of the Lord.

Verse 2 and verse 6. And as I pondered these verses, George Orwell's novel 1984 came to mind. Has anyone read 1984?

[5 : 31] Orwell wrote this book in 1949, post-Second World War. And the story is set in a totalitarian, dystopian future vision of Great Britain.

Big Brother is the personification of an unseen monolithic leader of the party of Oceania. And the UK is simply known as Airstrip One.

Winston Smith is the main protagonist in this novel. And he was played by John Hurt in the 1984 film of the book. Winston is the kind of everyman sort of character, which readers and viewers can easily identify with.

And the main reason that this novel came to mind is because of the use of language in Oceania to control the general population. Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about.

So in the book, doublespeak is talked about. And this refers to three slogans of the ruling party. First slogan is that war is peace.

[6 : 43] Second one is freedom is slavery. And the third one is ignorance is strength. In Oceania, according to the party, 2 plus 2 equals 5.

Now you think to yourself, what? These statements are forms of euphemisms where an indirect expression is substituted for one considered to be too harsh or blunt.

Examples of this are terms like, that we have today, downsizing a business instead of layoffs and sackings. So it sounds better, doesn't it?

Then there's the term, the military term, for servicing the target. Servicing the target means a particular area for bombing.

But it doesn't sound nearly as bad, does it? Language is a very powerful thing. Then there's newspeak. In the novel, this refers to purposefully ambiguous and confusing language with restricted grammar and limited vocabulary.

[7 : 50] And this is designed to diminish the range and thought of the listeners. So it's designed to control the listeners in that way. Now, I've noticed in recent years that media news broadcasts have become more like light entertainment shows.

In which most of the so-called news, when I watch it for myself, is at best speculation. It's not news at all. It's the broadcaster speculating on what might happen or could happen, but it's not news.

Check it out for yourselves. The next time you're watching any news channel, check out how much of what they report is purely speculation rather than factual news.

In George Orwell's novel 1984, we come across doublethink. And this is to be conscious of complete truthfulness where telling carefully constructed lies.

It beggars belief that someone is arrested, goes and has his mugshot taken, and then puts it on his Facebook page or wherever it is as if it's some kind of badge of honour.

[9 : 03] I mean, it's crazy. The current government, for example, keeps telling us that by the year 2030, they're going to build 40 new hospitals, when they know that that's unlikely to happen.

Another example of this is the Labour opposition recently released the following poster asking this question. Do you think adults convicted of sexually abusing children should go to prison?

Question mark. And then after that, exclamation mark, they put Rishi Sunak, doesn't it? Now, I'm sorry, but I don't believe for one minute that Rishi Sunak would not want to see people who mess about and abuse children judged and dealt with.

But that's what they've put, and it's clearly not a truth. So, you see where this train of thought's going. The year 1984's long passed, but I can't help but see how language and rhetoric used by people in public life today and in the media is largely a mixture of either lies or flattery.

And that makes me think, well, that's why people are beginning to lose their confidence in politicians generally. I struggle to know who to vote for.

[10 : 23] It seems to me that we're fed a carefully constructed diet of news which limits our understanding of what's happening in the world as a whole. That's liberally dispersed by light entertainment and sport to keep the masses happy.

In 1984, it was to keep the masses happy. As believers, it's hard to look out on God's creation and fail to be moved by what we see and hear.

Initially, I was cynical about so-called global warming. But meteorological evidence would certainly indicate that the climate is changing. It's happening. And we as a species have been exploiting God's creation rather than caring for it.

As we were instructed to do in Genesis 1.26. In the world of politics, President Putin speaks about a special military operation.

What does that mean? It doesn't mean what it really is, which was an attack on an independent sovereign nation leading to war. How many young Ukrainian men and women, children, not to mention Russian troops, women and men, have been sacrificed in Putin's special military operation?

[11 : 42] And then there's fake news, which came to our notice during President Trump's presidency. And this concerns false and misleading information, which is presented as real news, often with the aim of damaging the reputation of individuals or organisations.

How often do we hear politicians of all persuasions making promises they can't keep, knowing the truth yet still going ahead?

And these references are referred to as hyperbolic exaggerations. But in reality, they're only lies. Being economic with the truth is simply lying by omission.

Sounds good. But that's what it is. This is a wonderful quote from a long-past Prime Minister of this country, Michael Foot. He's reputed to have said, In politics, when all else fails, tell the truth.

Wow. One commentator reflecting on Psalm 12 said, We live in a lie-infatuated world.

[12 : 57] We as believers have every course to lament. Sometimes the deception rests in what is unsaid. That's another ploy of the devil, I believe.

Warren Wiersbe writes that flattery is not communication, it's manipulation. So the flattery spoken of here is about having our ego stroked, and it especially influences people who desire to appear more important than they really are.

Flattery is used to influence and exploit such people. And friends, we can all be tempted in this way. So it's becoming increasingly difficult for Christians not to be influenced by these increasingly devious and deceitful practices.

Which is why I think Psalm 12 is so important to us today. So let's have a look at Psalm 12 under the following headings.

I'm not usually one for alliteration, and this is not my alliteration, so I've put my hand up to it. But it's a good alliteration anyway. So verse 1, the righteous, we're thinking about despairing words.

[14 : 12] Verse 2, verse 4, and verse 8, the wicked, deceptive words. And verses 5 to 7, the Lord, delivering words. So despairing words, deceptive words, and delivering words.

Perhaps the most basic of human prayers is simply to cry for help.

Help me, Lord. Save me, Lord. Deliver me, Lord. And here with David we have, Save, O Lord. Save, O Lord, for the godly one is gone, for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man.

So David comes to God with heartfelt urgency. He laments the spiritual state of Israel, God's chosen people, because they seem to have fallen into disbelief.

This cry from the heart must have been uttered at a critical moment in David's life and faith journey. I'm not sure what that was or when that was, but I'm sure a number of us here this evening have prayed in this way, as we too have faced the challenges and disappointments of this life.

[15 : 32] Help, Lord. Save me, Lord. The prophet Elijah felt the same as David, believing he was the only faithful prophet left.

Remember that? In 1 Kings 18 and 19. 1 Kings 18, 22. I, even, I only, am left a prophet of the Lord.

But Baal's prophets are 450 men. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. And I, even, I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away.

So Elijah was despondent. He was in despair, and he cries out to the Lord, I'm the only prophet left, Lord. But God answers Elijah, and assures him that there are 7,000 others who have not bowed the knee to so-called gods.

Isaiah 2, in Isaiah 57, verse 1, we read these words, The righteous man perishes, and no one lays it to heart. Devout men are taken away, while no one understands.

[16 : 48] The good news, friends, is, the Lord always maintains a remnant of those who will not bow the knee to Satan, but who remain faithful to the one true God.

And I believe there's been a winnowing out in the church. A winnowing out of those who habitually went to church, because that's what you did on a Sunday. To be replaced by those who want to be here, who love the Lord, and who want to worship the Lord.

And so there might be less in number, but I think the quality of the people who are still desiring to worship God is much more than it was when I was a child.

We went to church every Sunday, because that's what we did. Not necessarily because we as kids wanted to be there. I'm thankful now that my parents took me to church. But you see what I'm saying.

So I think as Christians, we've always been a minority. But through the indwelling Holy Spirit, we're enabled to be salt and light in the world.

[17 : 58] Matthew 5, 13. Jesus' words, You are the salt of the earth. But if salt has lost its saltiness, how shall its saltiness be restored?

It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world, Jesus said. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all the house.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. As believers, we might be a remnant here in Dumfries.

I don't know how many Christians there are in Dumfries. But God's always maintained a remnant. We must continue to pray that God will move by His Spirit in the heart and lives of those we come into contact with so that they might be drawn in to a faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So may we bear the power of the Holy Spirit, continue to act as a preservative, slowing down the putrefaction that we see all around us. May we have the courage to make a stand when it would not be popular to do so.

[19 : 20] And may we continue to reflect something of the light of Christ in the dark places of our world, not bowed by so-called political correctness and the evil which so evidently continues to flourish.

It doesn't take much light to light a darkened room. One little light can make a huge difference. So let's think about the next set of words, the deceptive words of the wicked, verses 2 to 4.

David writes, Everyone at us lies to his neighbour with flattering lips and a double heart they speak. With our tongue we will prevail. Our lips are with us. Who is master over us?

What an incredible post. Who is our master? We know that we live in a self-centred, self-righteous, self-fulfilling world, a me-first society.

I'm not sure who penned the words that I'm about to read to you, but they certainly are applicable today, as applicable today as the day they were written. It matters not how straight the gate, how charged with punishment the scroll.

[20 : 39] I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul. Those who deny God consider that they are the masters of their own destiny and are accountable to no one but themselves.

But there will come a day when they need to give account for the way that they've lived. Pride is the first of the so-called seven deadly sins and not without cause.

Be warned, this path, this wide road, ultimately leads to eternal destruction, as we sang in our psalm earlier. Jesus said, Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction.

And those who enter by it are many, but the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life. And those who find it are few. Thank God that you've been brought into his family.

Last year, we enjoyed a river cruise in France. And apart from the fact that we picked up COVID, we really enjoyed it. We didn't enjoy the last part of it once we got to Lyon and then on to Paris and London.

[21 : 52] But the river cruise was great. And we visited the wine region of France, the wine region, the town of Bourne. And I noticed the title on two roads in the town.

One was titled Rue Paradise. And the other Rue Enferz. Is that how you say it? Enferz. E-N-F-E-R-S. Enferz.

So we walked along the Rue Enferz first and discovered access was easy. The road was wide and full of shops and bars. Whilst Rue Paradis was narrow with steep steps and was full of all kinds of obstacles.

Rue Enferz means literally the road to hell. Rue Paradis means the road to heaven. Let's pray that we're all traveling the narrow way.

The Lord's way. So they're the deceptive words of the wicked. What about the delivering words of our God? Verse 5 to 7.

[23 : 01] In verse 3 and 4 David it's a prayer to the Lord that you would remove flatterers and liars boastful people who use their words to manipulate and prevail over others.

Verses 5 to 8 refers to the poor and needy mentioned many times in the Bible in both Old and New Testament. In the Old Testament the Israelites were instructed to look after these people and it's the same for us as believers today.

Deuteronomy 15 11 and 24 14 They will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you you shall open your hand to your brother to the needy and the poor in your land.

You shall not oppress a hired worker who is poor and needy lest he cry against you to the Lord and you be guilty of sin. And then Psalm 9 verse 18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.

This attitude towards the poor causes the Lord to arise and to look after these people and God cares for the poor and needy today and he exhorts us to do the same.

[24 : 22] verse 6 affirms that God means what he said. God's words are pure and flawless they are refined purified seven times.

There is no dross no lies no flattery and no insincerity in the words of our God. God's God's God's inspired word both the word made flesh the Lord Jesus Christ and the written word the Bible.

Thank God for his word. In contrast to those who recognize no authority out with themselves we as believers know that our lives are not our own.

we've been redeemed by the precious blood of God's sinless son our Lord and saviour Jesus the Christ. We're saved to be servants of God.

We are saved to serve. we are sojourners and exiles here on earth. Resident aliens in the world but not of the world writes Peter 1 Peter 2 11 and the Lord Jesus prays for us.

[25 : 39] Did you know Jesus prays for you and has prayed for you? John 17 15 Jesus prays Father I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one.

Verse 7 You O Lord will keep them that's verse 7 of the psalm You will guard us from this generation forever. God will protect his faithful followers for no matter how many promises God has made in his word they are yes in Christ and so through him the Amen is spoken by us to his glory.

Amen. Amen. Verse 8 sadly further describes the prevailing situation that we're currently living in.

On every side the wicked prowls as villainy is exalted among the children of man. 1 Peter 5 8 teaches that we are to be sober minded be watchful your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking for someone to devour and we thought about that this morning.

So let's bring these thoughts to a conclusion. As we look out on our society here in Scotland and the rest of the UK it's a challenge to myself should we not like David lament the state of our nation.

[27 : 08] Lamentation writes one commentator creates a space a space where communal and personal pain can be re-expressed seen and perhaps acknowledged and healed.

Let's remember to pray for the nation of Scotland that God would move in power and bring people back to himself. At all levels it seems there's corruption and dishonesty and lack of integrity and oh that God would move.

What a difference it would make if people if more people than those who are already serving in our government were believers. From 2016 to 2020 I was involved through the local NHS as a trained chaplaincy listener attached to Dalbeeti medical practice and to Gilbray medical practice.

Sadly due to restrictions of COVID this ministry stopped but the chaplaincy listening service created a space for referred clients doctors would refer patients to lament their situation by expressing their own pain which was often linked to loss and bereavement and relationship breakdown health issues redundancy financial pressures and addictions of various kinds things.

And through it I learned a very simple truth that actively listening to people can make a huge difference to them in their lives and to help them move forward with their lives.

[28 : 51] Now the new head of spiritual care at Dunfrees and Galloway Royal Infirmary Nathan has recently been trained in this ministry so I'm hopeful that it will be resurrected. But one commentator writes indeed the recovery of lamentation in our communal lives as church could lead to greater flowering and release from our own wounds and the woundedness of the community around us.

We are to be salt and light. The church of Jesus Christ today exists as it always has as a beleaguered minority in a thoroughly secularized society.

Charles B. Cosa in his book A Theology of the Cross suggests that issues currently confronting the church should be dealt with by the church reclaiming its biblical identity and by understanding and articulating who we are.

Claiming distinctiveness rather than seeking to conform to secular values. I believe in years to come and days to come this is going to be costly. because the world will want to close us down.

Those who seek to attack our faith by the use of flattering lips and lies who themselves acknowledge no authority other than themselves thereby denying God need to be made aware that our authority comes from God.

[30 : 19] God will fulfill his promises and will guard those who place their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. The words of the Lord which we find here in our Bibles are pure words.

They're reliable words. Jesus said heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away. Matthew 24 35.

Words that are true both now and true for all eternity. We don't need to make excuses for our faith to be brow beaten in our adoption of secular values which clearly go against the will and word of God.

Dale Ralph Davis writes in his commentary on Psalms 1 to 12, the title of which is fantastic for Yorkshiremen, I just think this title is great, The Way of the Righteous in the Muck of Life.

He titles these Psalms and Psalm 12 comes into that. He writes, it is from the word of God that the righteous person gets their signals for living and meditating on the word of God is the pursuit of pleasure.

[31 : 34] May we all find it to be so, remembering always the great cost of our salvation. Thank God for Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that he set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and deceit at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself so that you may not grow weary and faint-hearted. We have a wonderful gospel and a wonderful God.

May we not be browbeaten into adopting the values of the society in which we live. And the good news is one day he's coming again. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come. Amen.