

What's The Walk of Faith Like?

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[0 : 0 0] This summer we've been preaching through the Psalms, and today we're ready for Psalm 12. It's another Psalm of David, according to the Shimoneh. It's a Messianic Psalm, looking forward to God's vengeance one great day.

Psalm 12. As I read this, we do so trusting that God's Word is inspired, it is inerrant, it's infallible, it's clear, and it's sufficient for His people.

After I'm done reading, I'll say this is the Word of the Lord. You can say thanks be to God. Psalm 12. Help, Lord, for no faithful one remains.

The loyal have disappeared from the human race. They lie to one another, they speak with flattering lips and deceptive hearts. May the Lord cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaks boastfully.

They say through our tongues we have power. Our lips are our own. Who can be our master? Because of the devastation of the needy and the groaning of the poor, I will now rise up, says the Lord.

[1 : 1 7] I will provide safety for the one who longs for it. The words of the Lord are pure words, like refined silver in an earthen furnace, purified seven times.

Verse 7. You, Lord, will guard us. You will protect us from this generation forever. The wicked prowl all around, and what is worthless is exalted by the human race.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Pray.

Pray. Lord, your word is purified like silver seven times through the furnace.

There's no impurity, no imperfections in your word. Lord, we pray, Lord, by the power of your Holy Spirit, you will minister your word to your people today, for our good and for your glory.

[2 : 3 7] Amen. Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, I want to talk with you today about what the walk of faith is like.

I think Psalm 12 shows us the walk of faith is not what many would hope or expect. So what is the walk of faith like?

I want to share with you a story. It's a true story that I heard just this week from a little missionary book. Take place in Egypt, and the main character's name is Ramsey.

Ramsey wore the federal Egyptian uniform, and he held a respected position within the National Postal Service.

If you wanted to mail something into Egypt, it will go through Ramsey's office. Ramsey dreamed of owning a car himself one day, and part of his culture was acceptable to use some of the perks of your high position.

[3 : 4 8] So when packages would come through, he would shake them, and he'd try to see what's inside the package. Many times he would open them and help himself to whatever it was that was intended for someone else.

Culturally, Ramsey was Muslim, lying, stealing. These were normal parts of society. To not do it would be weird and accepted. It was a normal part of his walk to steal and to lie about it.

This culture in which Ramsey lives could be described in these words from Psalm 12. Everyone lies to his neighbor, verse 2.

They say, Who is Lord over us? Verse 4. Well, this one particular parcel was intended for a Christian who worked as a school teacher.

Ramsey shook it. He thought there were some stacks of cash inside. That's what it felt like. So he opened it up, and he was disappointed because it was a New Testament.

[4 : 49] It was the Bible. Well, there's that Christian living in this Muslim country full of corruption that never received his package, never got the pure word of God. And it felt to that Christian teacher that wickedness is all around.

The wicked walk on every side, and what is vile is exalted. Verse 8. Those verses describe Denver Metro, Colorado, USA, just as much as Muslim Egypt.

Everyone seems to lie to their neighbor. Everyone's attitude seems to be, who is Lord over me. The wicked walk on every side of every Christian, it feels.

And vileness is exalted in the land. So what is the walk of faith like for you and for me? First observation from Psalm 12 is that your walk of faith, it will be filled with lament.

You want to walk following Christ, this walk of faith? You should expect it to be filled with lament. Lament is to grieve, to weep, to bewail, to mourn, to express sorrow with cries from your soul.

[6 : 10] It's to cast up pain-induced complaints toward God. Have you lamented recently? I looked up how many psalms of lament are there?

There are 42 psalms of lament. Well, you know how many psalms there are total, 150. 42 out of 150, that's about one-third of the psalms are giving followers of God, believers, ways to pray through lament.

If, to the extent of the psalms are the prayer book and the song book of God's people, which they are, that's about one-third of the emotions we will feel in the Christian life.

It's common for it to be lament. It's that common. Well, what is it that the psalmist laments? Three things I see here. In verse 1, he laments the feeling of loneliness.

To walk as a believer feels very lonely many times, doesn't it? He's praying, Lord, only you can save me.

[7 : 20] I'm all alone. In verse 1, he says, Help, Lord. Save, for no one is faithful anymore. Those of faith have all vanished from mankind.

He laments the feeling of loneliness. Number two, he laments that it's not just the words of the people all around him. It's their hearts. He says, Lord, everyone's speech and hearts seem evil all the time.

Verse 2, Everyone lies to his neighbor and they speak with flattering lips and a double heart. To flatter is to confirm your good opinion to yourself.

It's to tell someone what you know they want to hear, to praise and exalt them in their own estimation. And it's always for malicious and tense. That's the double heart behind flattery.

Proverbs 29.5 says, A man that flatters his neighbor spreads a net for their feet. Don't fall for it. And the truth is that if God were not pleased to dwell inside of you and me by grace, our hearts are prone toward evil.

[8 : 33] We're prone to deceive and to want to be greedy and envious and then use our tongues to get that. That's the bent of every one of our hearts as well.

And it's lamentable. It's lamentable when we feel it and experience it and suffer it from another and when I see that bent in my own heart, I want to lament it all, don't you? The third thing he's lamenting in this psalm in verse 4 is that this evil is directly toward God.

He says, Lord, they boast against you. Don't you see it? In verse 4, they have said, with our tongues we will prevail. Our lips are our own. Who is Lord over us?

They have no thought for God. God. Why would the Lord allow Christians or followers of God in any generation to experience so much sadness and so much lament as we walk this life on earth?

Getting to know you and the hardest times you've been through in your life, you've also shared those times of deepest lament have been the times when God taught me the most to pray.

[9 : 47] Isn't that your testimony? Lament, sadness in my heart, it puts me down on my knees in prayer. It's not the fun way to learn it, but God makes his people depend on him.

He makes us cry out and pray. Lament drives prayer. Even though we're justified by our own flesh, we would not turn to God in prayer so often unless he made us feel that lament so deeply.

It's gracious. John Bunyan felt this. He said, the truths that I know best I have learned on my knees. I never know a thing well till it is burned into my heart by prayer.

prayer. So what's the walk of faith like? The walk of faith will be filled with lament. But that lament drives us to pray.

Amen? The second way we can answer that question is this. while the walk of faith is hard and sad it will feel like lament maybe a third of the time the Lord will continue to fuel your walk of faith by his word.

[11 : 09] This is one of the promises in Psalm 12. It will be hard but the Lord will fuel your walk of faith. He will feed energize and increase your faith as you walk with him and he will do that by his word.

The word of God is trustworthy. This is the witness David is bearing. He's saying I've tested it it's true hear my witness believers.

The word of God you can trust. God will not deceive you. Do you see the contrast? See the problem in this Psalm that's getting to David is the deceitfulness of man.

It's their tongues their lips their words. That's the problem. Look at the contrast in verse 6. Yahweh's words are flawless words.

Yahweh's words are refined like silver in a clay furnace seven times over. You can trust the word of God.

[12 : 12] To purify silver you would take you would take that chunk that mineral you would slide it into a furnace these clay furnaces on the ground would get extremely hot so that it would melt and the dirt would separate from the fine metal and then you would pull it out let it cool remove the dirt and do it a second time removing more impurities.

It would not take seven times till you had pure silver. Seven is the number of completion. We know this. So to say the word of God is that trustworthy there is nothing impure in what God has given his people.

His word is purified and it's precious. You can trust God's word. We not only read God's word we must meditate we must let it be our fuel we must take it in so that it can energize and sustain and increase our faith.

Thomas Brooks one of the Puritans he wrote this remember that it is not hasty reading of God's word but serious meditation on holy and heavenly truths that makes them prove sweet and profitable to the soul.

It is not the mere touching of the flower by the bee that gathers honey but her abiding for a time on the flower that draws out the sweet. Stay with God's word meditate upon God's word receive his heavenly truth as that sweetness as you take it in soak it up let it be your fuel to walk with him.

[13:50] Well not only is God's word trustworthy he also fuels you through his word because his word is extremely personal in his word he gives you himself. Notice this in verse 5 because of the oppression of the weak and because of the groaning of the needy I will now arise says the Lord I will set him in safety from those who malign or puff at him.

The Lord's word is personal he pledges himself he personally hears your cry and he personally rises up to come to save. That's the source of our energy it's God coming in through his word by faith to dwell with his people and to sustain and preserve and save you once again.

the beauty of Hebrew poetry in verse 5 is that there's some puffing going on. Now who does the puffing different interpreters have taken different ways I think both are part of that beautiful Hebrew poetry so you need to hear them both.

On one hand the Lord says I will set him in safety from those who are puffing at you you know picture like a dog slobbering and salivating breathing in and out through their nose coming to devour you God will save you from that but I also like how the Christian Standard Bible has translated I think it handles the Hebrew very well also which puts it this way God says I will provide safety for the one who longs for it or puffs or breathes it in I'm panting like a deer as the other psalm says for God to come save me so God's word is trustworthy God's word is personal and God specifically pledges himself to preserve your walk of faith look at verse seven you will preserve them you will keep them Yahweh David as the king of Israel he knows his limits he's just a man he can't fight all the evil that seems to have spread throughout the whole kingdom it has to be the Lord to preserve his own people and he trusts and he prays you will do this

Yahweh because you've promised to do this the Lord will continue to fuel your walk of faith by his word so stay in his word number three we see in Psalm 12 that it is impossible to walk by faith unless God preserves you did you notice how this Psalm ends in verse 8 it ends with even more lament begins with lament and it ends with lament the wicked walk on every side when what is vile is exalted among the sons of man if we follow the history of redemption throughout the Old Testament it only gets worse for the next generation after David throughout the Old Testament we hear cries of lament Jeremiah's whole preaching ministry was a ministry of lamentation they're lamenting the failure of the vineyard the failure of God's old covenant people to bear the fruit that

[17:17] God requires of them in Micah 7 2 we read that the faithful have been swept from the land hear the similarity there is not one upright person that remains Micah wrote everyone lies in wait to shed blood they each hunt each other with nets it's impossible for God's people to walk with him and to please him and to bear the fruit unless God himself puts it in them the Lord Jesus when he came to the earth as the son of the owner of the vineyard he explained why a righteous walk is impossible in our human condition under the curse of Adam the first federal head in Matthew 12 33 Jesus said either make the tree good and its fruit good or make the tree bad and its fruit bad for the tree is known by its fruit you brood of vipers how can you speak good when you are evil for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks have you lamented the words that have come out of your mouth recently

I have that's even more convicting because it's the overflow of my heart I need the Lord to purify my heart Jesus said the good person out of his good treasure brings forth good and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil I tell you on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak for by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned in the first coming Jesus comes to bring grace and to accomplish that that work that he can offer freely to all will have faith in him but he's warning even in that first coming there is a greater judgment and the second coming of God is the day when psalm 12 will finally be fulfilled the vengeance of the Lord will be poured out the wrath of God will be upon those whose unclean heart is exposed by their unclean words you need a clean heart before

Christ returns the walk of faith is impossible by our own strength but even in psalm 12 the Lord promises I am faithful forever look at verse 7 one more time I will preserve them this is referring to the people of God who have faith in God and he says from this generation forever every generation that rises up and is evil within that there has been a remnant a people set apart for the Lord that receive him by faith and he promises to preserve you it's impossible for us to walk by faith unless he does well here's the good news from psalm 12 it is possible for you and me to walk by faith because the Lord Jesus Christ has made this lament his own it is possible for you and me to walk by faith because

Jesus came to the earth and the lament in psalm 12 he made it his own in verse 5 we read that it's because of the oppression of the weak because of the groaning of the needy the Lord says I will now arise the Lord arose in the fullness of time and he came to earth and he took on flesh and he had compassion on the multitudes that were groaning and needy and the Lord Jesus Christ he arose to experience even the sting of deceit the lament in verse two is flattering lips and a double heart in Matthew 15 verse 8 and 9 quoting Isaiah 29 13 Jesus said they draw near to me with their mouth and they honor me with their lips but their heart is far from me in vain do they worship me teaching as doctrine rules made by men Jesus saw their double heart he saw their flattering lips he felt that sting and he lamented it the

Lord Jesus Christ also arose from heaven to experience the screech of evil men boasting that there's no Lord over us we just heard the passage in Matthew 21 Jeremy read Jesus telling this parable of God's people the vineyard and the father the owner of the venue saying I will send my own son and in Matthew 21 37 finally he sent his son to them saying they will respect my son but when the tenants saw the son they said to themselves this is the heir come let us kill him and have his inheritance and they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him Jesus came with all the authority of heaven he declared to them I am the promised Messiah I am God and they said we will have no Lord over us they carried him out and killed him the very son of God the Lord Jesus Christ arose to experience the burn of loneliness in verse one he laments there is no one faithful his was a wicked and faithless generation that same crowd that had cried

[23 : 00] Hosanna very soon started crying crucify him even the disciples John Gill commented they were faithless one betrayed him another denied him all forsook him and fled and even at his death they lost all hope in Jesus our Lord Jesus experienced deceit boasting loneliness holiness and you and I are the ones guilty of every one of those toward him had he left us on our own we read in Ephesians 2 2 that you church once walked according to the course of this world but our Lord Jesus Christ in the words of Hebrews 12 to the author and perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame the Lord Jesus was cut off and buried but then the Lord

Jesus arose and he is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God in verse 3 of Psalm 12 the psalmist asked for God to take justice into his own hands he says Lord may you cut off all flattering lips and a boasting tongue David's a warrior and a king in ancient times and this was a practice that continued all the way up until the Roman Empire maybe later you capture your enemy and you cut off their tongues usually it was it was to make an example to others here's someone who practiced treason they spoke out against the kingdom cut off their tongue a person who would speak blasphemy against God that's what they deserve that very tongue will be cut off you can never speak blasphemy again it's a show of force when a person's tongue was cut off normally they would not bleed to death right away but in those ancient times they would often become infected and swell up making it very difficult for them to swallow or eat and so they would die eventually

David's prayer for the Lord to cut off the tongues of the wicked is not answered and David doesn't take matters into his own hands with the sword and do that for God either I've meditated on how did that part of this psalm get fulfilled if ever maybe you're a little bit ahead of me you process faster why did the Lord not cut off the tongues of the wicked it's because he's coming again and on that day when he returns you know what happens every knee shall bow what's the next part every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord amen he fulfills Psalm 12 my last encouragement to you is that the Lord who walked by faith who made this lament his own he calls you and me to follow him the Lord walked on earth by faith according to his human nature and he calls you and me to follow him trusting his word maybe some of you have had to be in sales or been a recruiter and it's very hard to not pull a bait and switch on people when you're recruiting you promise something better something good and you under deliver you notice how

Jesus invites you and me to follow him Luke 9 23 if anyone would come after me let him deny himself take up his cross daily and follow me God is real God deals with truth Psalm 12 a psalm of lament is real it's for real people like you and me and so you can go to God because there's no bait and switch he's up front it's going to be full of lament it's going to be a cross daily follow me Yahweh's words are flawless words as refined in a clay furnace purified seven times and God's word says in Romans 8 1 there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus and who walk according to his spirit Romans 6 4

Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the father why so that you and I may walk in newness of life I started off telling you about Ramsey who took away that package so the Christian school teacher never could get his Bible well Ramsey's name was changed to keep him safe by the Bible International League Bible League International and Ramsey didn't just throw that package in the trash he kept this New Testament and he started reading it from the very beginning of the cover so he read through the gospel according to Matthew then he read through the gospel the life and work of Jesus according to Mark then Luke by the time he got to the gospel according to John the fourth time he changed his reason for wanting to read it at first he was wanting to mock and just understand this is what Christians believe how crazy by the fourth time he said this is what

[28 : 46] I believe I do believe Jesus is the son of God how could he not be what I just read and then he kept reading to get his question answered because he knew if Jesus is the son of God but I'm a sinner I'm full of vileness my lips are deceiving there's no hope for a person like me how could I ever be saved and this burden was not lifted but he kept reading God's word finally the Lord by his Holy Spirit answered Ramsey's question when he got to Acts 16 30 that Philippian jailer who put these believers in prison a corrupt government official just like him he asked that question what can a person like me do to be saved and they preached the gospel to him believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved well Ramsey got saved by faith in Christ he looked up that

Christian school teacher's address found some other Christians bought a copy of the New Testament from them gave it to that Christian apologized to him joined the Christian fellowship in Egypt and now he is one of the biggest distributors of Bibles he gives out New Testaments to Egyptian Muslims as much as the Bible League International can supply him with he is giving them out so that more people can hear the good word this is the word of God purified seven times over and it is enough for God to use to save a person like me of course he can save you that is Ramsey's testimony and that is why we are here church 2 Corinthians 6 16 the word of God says that you Christians you are the temple of the living God even as God said I will dwell in them and I will walk in them I will be their God and they will be my people it's through the word of God he walks with us he ministers among his church we just sang and we exhort each other speak oh

Lord till your church is built and the earth is filled with your glory and by grace we'll stand on your promises and by faith we will walk as you walk with us you can walk by faith because the Lord walks with his people he feeds his people he ministers to us by his word and so as we read in Hebrews 12 1 and 2 let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us walk no let us run with endurance the race that is set before us looking to Jesus Christ the author and the anchor of our faith amen amen let us spend some time in prayer praising the Lord trusting him thanking him that he turns our lament into a fulfilled promise that we rest in by faith yet again today amen amen amen amen amen