

PSALM 12

I. BIBLICAL TEXT

To the chief Musician upon Sheminith, A Psalm of David.
For the choir director; upon an eight-stringed lyre. [NASB]

Stanza 1

1 Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases to be, for the faithful disappear from among the sons of men. 2 They speak falsehood to one another; with flattering lips and with a double heart they speak.

Stanza 2

3 May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that speaks great things; 4 Who have said, "With our tongue we will prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?"

Stanza 3

5 "Because of the devastation of the afflicted, because of the groaning of the needy, Now I will arise," says the Lord; "I will set him in the safety for which he longs." 6 The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times.

Stanza 4

7 You, O Lord, will keep them; You will preserve him from this generation forever. 8 The wicked strut about on every side when vileness is exalted among the sons of men.

II. INTRODUCTION

A. TYPE OF PSALM

1. ONE OF THE LAMENTATIONS—[more than 60]
 - a. Some call it a community lament.
 - Some modern translations begin with "Help us"
 - b. Others say it is individual—by David alone
 - LXX begins with "Help me"
2. DIRECTION GIVEN TO CHOIR DIRECTOR
 - a. Upon 'Sheminith'
 1. Instruction for two Psalms—this one and Psalm 12
 2. Hebrew term for 'eighth'
 - a. Referring to musical instruments
 1. Possibly an 8-stringed instrument
 2. Or a deep tone—an octave lower—a bass tone

- b. Probably meaning—‘low-pitched lyres’

B. AUTHORSHIP

- DAVID—ATTRIBUTED IN HEADING

C. OCCASION

1. Unknown
2. Some say while David was in Saul’s court

D. THEMES

- The War of Words
- The Power of propaganda
- The Pride of the tongue
- The Lord Rescues and Guards the Afflicted and Needy

E. STRUCTURE

1. POSSIBLY: FOUR STANZAS—each stanza containing two verses
2. POSSIBLY: CHIASTIC PATTERN—A-B-C-C-B-A

A (verse 1): Help us, Lord, for there are no faithful among the **sons of men**.

B (verse 2): Everyone **speaks lies** and flattery.

C (verses 3–4): The **Lord should** cut off the lying boasters.

C’ (verse 5): The **Lord responds**, “I will now arise and protect the despoiled.”

B’ (verse 6): The Lord **speaks the truth**, pure and refined.

A’ (verses 7–8): Protect us, Lord, for evil is everywhere among the **sons of men**.

3. CHIASTIC PATTERN WITHIN VERSES

- o **Verses 3-4:** lips—tongue—tongue—lips

F. OUTLINES

1. PROPAGANDA—vs—TRUTH
 - o Propaganda—vv 1-4
 - o Countervailing truth—5-6
 - o Continued protection against prevailing evil—7-8
2. GOD RESCUES AND GUARDS THE AFFLICTED AND NEEDY
 - o Prayer for deliverance—1-4
 - o Assurance of deliverance—5

- o Confidence in God's word—6-8

G. BIBLICAL CONTEXT

1. CONTINUES THEME OF PSALM 11
 - a. Extends cry heard in Ps 11:1-3
 - b. Continues theme of the godly seeking refuge in God
2. **NOT** THE FIRST PSALM TO CONTAIN AN ANSWER FROM GOD
 - a. See God's answer in verse 5
 - b. Already done in Psalm 2:6-8
 - c. Other examples [later]—Ps 81:6-16—Ps 95:9-11

III. EXPOSITION

Stanzas 1-2—verses 1-4—The Propaganda of Boastful and Ungodly People

Stanza 1

1 Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases to be, for the faithful disappear from among the sons of men. 2 They speak falsehood to one another; with flattering lips and with a double heart they speak.

Verse 1

Help!—emphatic cry

Exclamation without object—makes it an outcry

'yasha' = 'save'—used 47 times in Psalms

Verb from which noun 'savior' derives—related to name Joshua—Jesus

Psalmist is not just in the minority—He is alone

There are no godly men around

The godly ceases to be—David is the only godly one around

The 'faithful' disappear

Luther called them the 'Amen people'

Literally = faithfulness

So this might refer to those previously faithful—who now abandon David—and God

Disappear = have vanished

Sons of men—Hebrew expression for all humanity

In all humanity—there is no one faithful/godly

Verse 2—manipulating not communicating

False talk—literally emptiness—KJV more accurate: ‘vanity’

Not just lies—but insincerity and irresponsible talk

Lie to one another

Not only do they try to deceive the godly

Everyone deceives everyone else—complete anarchy!

Suggests—it is easier to be deceived when one practices deceit

Then one cannot distinguish the truth

Flattering lips = ‘lips of smoothness’ = smooth talk

Deadly because it gives pleasure—people become addicted to its comfort

Double talk = literally ‘a heart and a heart’

Heart is the core of being—the mind

Traces source back to being ‘double-minded’

Not just hypocritical—but also unstable

The double-minded man—Jas 1:8

Implication—the deceiver himself is deceived by himself—divided character

Another word picture = forked tongue

With their lips they flatter—with their hearts they deceive

Stanza 2

3 *May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that speaks great things;* **4** *Who have said, “With our tongue we will prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?”*

Stanza 2—begins with flattery but focuses on boasters

Verse 3

May the Lord cut it off

Does not underestimate power of this propaganda

Powerful enough that only God can stop it

Cut off = karath = eradicate—annihilate—put stop to—silence

Tongue speaking great things

Jas 3:5—*So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things.*

s.

Daniel describes fourth beast—with 10 horns, plus one with an eye

Dan 7:20—it had—*mouth uttering great boasts*

Dan 7:25—it even—*will speak out against the Most High*

Peter warns against false prophets

II Pe 2:18—*speaking out arrogant words of vanity*

Verse 4

Three boastful statements

We will win

We are our own masters

Nobody is over us

With our tongues we will prevail

Pride in oratory—like the Sophists

Confidence in power to overwhelm with artillery of words

Stanza 3

5 *“Because of the devastation of the afflicted, because of the groaning of the needy, Now I will arise,” says the Lord; “I will set him in the safety for which he longs.”* 6 *The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times.*

Stanza 3—the countervailing truth

Verse 5—the Lord answers!

The safety for which he longs = pants/puffs

Picture—of running after breathlessly

Safety = noun—derived from ‘Help’ [save]—in verse 1

So God answers the original call for help here

Verse 6

The words of the Lord = sayings

Could imply promises

Contrasted with words in vv1-4

Pure—genuine/truth—vs—empty/false

Silver—worth much—vs worthless tokens

Tried in furnace—becomes purer/stronger—vs—implied destruction of dross

Refined seven times

Dan 3:19—like fire heated 7 times hotter for Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego

Stanza 4

7 You, O Lord, will keep them; You will preserve him from this generation forever. 8 The wicked strut about on every side when vileness is exalted among the sons of men.

Stanza 4—continued protection against prevailing evil

Verse 7

Lord, keep them—probably refers to His sayings/words/promises

Whereas guard *him*—literally ‘whom’—could mean ‘us’—is to protect the righteous

Generation = breed—or circle—this kind of persons

Verse 8

Returns to opening theme

Wicked strut—openly flaunt—not prowling

Vileness—has two meanings

Cheapness—Jer 15:19—contrasts it—‘worthless’ vs ‘precious’

Shameful excess—Pr 23:20 = gluttonous

Irony—that which is worthless is elevated among sons of men

Two truths

Vileness/wickedness will continue

But the righteous will be guarded in the end

Mt 24:12-13—*Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.*