

Psalm 12

We're not going to go very far today, just covering one verse. But this psalm involves some very fundamental principles that we find throughout scripture. So we don't want to run through it too fast without getting a good grasp of what is going on here. There are a lot of different threads that all get woven together in this chapter, and we don't want to miss any of them, because then we'll miss part of the finished picture. This is a very important OT passage. It brings a lot of different concepts together. And it is climactic here in David's quest for perfect salvation. So we're going to get a really good foundation for understanding it. And at the same time we're going to look at many other passages that have these same threads running through them. I say that we're just going through one verse today, we're really drawing on the larger context of the psalm somewhat, but we're just only going to look at verse 1 in depth. So you could sort of think of this as a part 1 of the psalm as a whole, and as we continue next time we're going to be picking up many of the same passages again, and looking at the next part of this.

In Psalm 10 David cried out to God, asking him why he stood afar off in times of trouble. Why he didn't save the poor and needy from their oppressors. God had delivered Israel from their national enemies through David, and to maintain their kingdom God had brought David perfect salvation from all of his enemies and oppressors, those that rose up against him. God had even promised David that when his enemies turned back against him in the future, he would be delivered from them. So David had received perfect salvation, from all of his enemies. But when he looked out on his subjects, the people of Israel, he knew that although they'd received deliverance from the national enemies of Israel, many of them were still being oppressed on an individual basis. There was still a need for individual salvation to come to Israel, in addition to national salvation. Every wicked oppressor was not yet cut off, every poor and oppressed person not yet delivered. So David was crying out to God and asking him why he didn't deliver all of the oppressed from their persecutors, why he allowed oppression to continue. Why did he put off the destruction of the all the oppressors?

And David didn't receive an answer from God in Psalm 10. God didn't tell David why he stands afar off, why he tarries in bringing that salvation. But David ended that psalm confident that God would indeed destroy all of the wicked one day, it was only a matter of time. David had demonstrated that they were worthy of it, and that it was the only way that their wickedness could be stopped, because they would refuse to repent. He had declared also how that it is God's very nature to bring judgement and deliverance. And so David knew that that time would come. But he was crying out to God, and asking him why he hadn't brought it yet, and how he could preserve the righteous in the mean time.

David concluded that there was in fact a prerequisite, something that was required of the oppressed, before they could be delivered. The hearts of all of the oppressed had to be prepared to receive that salvation. They had to all be seeking the LORD, and crying out to him and him alone for deliverance, with one accord. God's salvation would not come until the hearts of all of the people were prepared. And David knew that God himself would prepare their hearts, that when the time came, he might bring his salvation. He knew that God had heard their cry, and so he ended Psalm 10 saying: "LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear: To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress."

So David knew that God would bring his salvation, and would prepare his people to receive it, that it might come.

Then in Psalm 11 David spoke to the wicked, asking them why they continued to hunt his soul, to refuse to believe that he was a recipient of God's salvation. They refused to acknowledge that it was the LORD which was saving David because he was trusting in him. And so these wicked fools believed that they could still destroy David eventually. In fact, they continued to hunt and kill all of the upright in heart. And the implication was, that if they succeeded in destroying those whose hearts were prepared, God's salvation would be unable to come. Because salvation could not come to the oppressed until not just some of them, but all of them were upright in heart. And so David could see, and the wicked also understood, that they were attempting to destroy the very foundations of salvation.

But David realized that it was not just the upright in heart that are the foundations of salvation. That there is a foundation deeper than that, a more sure and steadfast foundation that upholds them. David said that the lowest foundation of that perfect salvation was the LORD God himself. And so, though David didn't know when salvation would come, or how God would act to uphold the upright in heart, he knew that one day God's fury would indeed be poured out upon his enemies. David knew that God might not always save the upright in heart from their persecutors, but that God was constantly working to prepare the hearts of each righteous person, trying and purifying them until they were perfectly upright. And so even as the wicked were taking away the bricks from the foundation of salvation, God was laying new ones in their place. The LORD loved the righteous, and would not suffer them to be utterly destroyed, he would maintain the foundation for their salvation.

Title

SHEMINITH

Psalm 6 also to the chief musician upon Sheminith.

According to Strong it is the feminine form of a word for eight. So he says it probably refers to an eight-stringed lyre.

1 Chronicles 15:21 talks about how some of the Levites were appointed to play music "with harps on the Sheminith to excel."

So it does indeed appear to be related to harps, stringed instruments.

I do wonder though whether it might actually be a musical term not in reference to the instruments themselves, but to a certain way in which they are to be played. A certain kind of tune or measure or something.

Anyway, David wrote this psalm specifically for those Levites that were appointed to play upon Sheminith.

Verse 1

So David begins this psalm as a prayer to God. He cries out, asking God to help. And once again, as in Psalm 10, David isn't crying out for his own sake, but for others.

This time David is crying out to God because the godly are ceasing. There are fewer and fewer faithful people.

David is asking God to act, or else the scheme of the wicked to destroy all of the upright in heart may indeed be successful.

This is truly urgent. Because if the wicked are successful, if the upright in heart are destroyed, salvation cannot come. The rest of the oppressed cannot be saved.

And yet David knows that God has promised to bring salvation to the oppressed along with his judgement on the wicked. And so he knows that the faithful must remain on this earth, for that judgement and deliverance to come.

And so knowing that God is the true foundation of that salvation, he's asking him to help, to act, to defend the godly, to keep the faithful from failing from the earth.

GODLY

From the very start of Psalms we've seen this contrast between the godly and the ungodly, the righteous and the wicked.

Psalms 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the **ungodly**, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

So David blessed those that did not follow the wicked and their ungodly counsel. And now he looks around and sees that there are hardly any who aren't doing just that. There are almost none who are not following the ungodly.

Psalm 1 ended talking about the ungodly as well:

Psalms 1:4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

So from the very first psalm we have been looking forward to a time when the righteous will flourish but the way of the ungodly will perish.

And now David fears that the exact opposite is going to happen. Instead of the ungodly perishing, it is the godly, the faithful, whose way is perishing.

But who are the godly? What exactly is godliness?

The term is used only 4 times in OT in the positive sense. It talks about the ungodly also, but it only uses the word "godly" 4 times.

The first time that the word "godly" is used, is in Psalm 4:

Psalms 4:1 Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

So in Psalm 4 David was crying out to God, just as he is here in Psalm 12.

He also has something to say to his persecutors:

2 O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah.

3 But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is **godly** for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.

An interesting thing to note here, is that David was confident that God was going to hear him, because of the godly. Because the LORD has set apart the godly for himself.

That's very relevant to Psalm 12, where David is again crying out, and he's invoking the godly as a reason that God should act. The godly are in distress, and that's why David is asking God for help.

And based on this verse in Psalm 4, it's looking well for David. He's found something that he's confident that God will always hear the cry for. He'll always listen when he's being called on to act on behalf of the godly.

And so David can have confidence that here in Psalm 12 he is going to get God's attention, he's going to get some kind of response, because the godly, those that God has set apart for himself, are at stake

It's also very relevant to the concept from Psalm 10, that God will only cause his ear to hear once all of the hearts of the oppressed are prepared, and are calling out to him alone for salvation.

If the godly are those whose hearts are prepared, then we have yet another assurance that God will indeed cause his ear to hear at that time. Because when the godly cry out, when God is called to act upon their behalf, God always hears.

And so when the time for that perfect salvation comes, and God has prepared their hearts, and the godly begin to cry out, God will surely hear, and bring judgement.

So the godly is another way of describing the upright, those whose hearts God has prepared.

So that's some good things to understand, that starts to tie all of this together here. But it still doesn't define exactly who the godly are.

The one thing that it does tell us about the godly in Psalm 4, is that God has set them apart for himself. So the godly are special, and God treats them specially, they are set apart.

But that doesn't tell us specifics about their character. We do know now that they are the upright in heart, the prepared, so that tells us some about them, but it doesn't really give us anything specific.

One thing that is pretty clear though is what the godly are not, what they do not do. They don't turn the glory of the LORD's anointed into shame, or love vanity and seek after leasing and falsehood, as David describes his persecutors doing in Psalm 4:2.

We also get some hints of what the godly might be like from the rest of Psalm 4:

4 Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.

So the godly are people who don't sin. They stand in awe of the work of God.

They don't walk in their own counsel or stand in the way of sinners or sit with the scornful, but instead they lay still upon their own bed in their own house, and commune and meditate upon the law of the LORD.

So they are like the blessed man described in Psalm 1.

5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.

The godly don't offer sacrifices for sins, they offer peace offerings and thank offerings.

And they put their trust in the LORD.

6 There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

The godly are seeking for good, but they know whence it will come. They await the LORD to lift up the light of his countenance. It is to him that they look for good, for salvation.

7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.

And God puts gladness into the heart of a godly man. More than you can get out of the things of this life.

8 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

And they don't worry, they lay down and sleep in peace, knowing that the LORD preserves them, and will make them to dwell safely.

So that gives us an idea of who the godly are, what they are like.

He also describes them as the faithful here in Psalm 12, and having studied faithfulness last time, that also gives us an idea of who the godly are, what they would be like.

So keep that in mind as we go through this passage from Malachi:

Malachi 2:10 Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?

11 Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.

"Children in whom is no faith." They've been unfaithful to God. They've left him for a strange god.

And not only that, but even though they know that God has created all of them, and that they should be one, they deal treacherously against one another.

So there again is a lack of faithfulness, toward their Creator, and toward their brethren. They're just unfaithful all around.

12 The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts.

13 And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand.

Remember that Psalm 4 said that they should offer sacrifices of righteousness, not sob story sin offerings. The godly don't have to come and cry at the altar.

14 Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

God doesn't trust them or accept their sacrifices anymore, because they're unfaithful. They deal treacherously, they're traitors, they betray one another. They're duplicitous, and can't be trusted. They're unfaithful to one another, they break even the marriage covenant, and so God doesn't trust them to keep his covenant or be faithful to him either.

15 And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a **godly** seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.

They have been unfaithful to their wives. God made them one, and yet they weren't one, they were behaving as two.

And it says that God made them one, that he might seek a godly seed.

And so the unity, the oneness, the faithfulness between a man and his wife, God says that he put that in place so that the seed would be godly.

And so we're beginning to see how there is a connection between godliness and faithfulness.

It says that they were one in flesh, that's what it says in Genesis, that they will be one flesh. But they aren't one spirit. They are still two different people. And he points that out here.

But although they are two, God declared them to be one, said that their flesh was one. And so he expects their spirit, their whole soul, to be faithful to that oneness.

And by being unfaithful, they are showing not only a lack of faith toward their wife, but a lack of faith toward what God said, when he proclaimed them one flesh. They aren't living out God's pronouncement of truth, that they were one flesh.

And so what he's saying is, that God created marriage between one man and one woman, to be a picture of faithfulness for us, to be a demonstration of faith, that he might seek a godly seed.

What is implied here, is that godliness is faithfulness between a man and God. Being faithful to who God is, in who you are. It is a oneness, a unity, between you and God.

It is having the character of God. Being like God in your thoughts and actions. It is a singleness, a faithfulness, between your character and God's character.

It is behaving as God would, as if you were one with God, even though in spirit you are not. Just as in marriage you behave as one, when you are actually two different people.

And the result of that, the result of the unity in marriage, is that a seed is produced that is after your character. They have your genes, your likeness. They have features that are similar to yours.

And that's what God wants from them. Faithfulness in their marriage that a seed might be produced that not only reflects the character of their father and mother, but of him as well.

If the child doesn't have the character, the features, the genes of one of the members of the marriage covenant, then they're a bastard.

And that's not what God wants. He wants a seed that is faithful to the marriage covenant, they are the result of that unity between his parents as declared by that covenant.

Because what God wants is a seed that is faithful to his covenant, and has his character reflected in them, so that there is a faithfulness between them and his covenant with them.

And so godliness is being as a child of God. Having a character that reflects God's character. A faithfulness, a oneness between the character of God and your character.

Godliness is being faithful to God's covenant in your character, so that there is no question that we are his children, not bastards. Not children born of a strange god, outside of the covenant.

And so godliness is faithfulness. To be godly, is to have faith.

The difference is, that godliness is a specific measure of faith. It isn't just general faithfulness in everything that you do, you are true to whatever is asked of you. It is faithfulness toward God.

And not just any faithfulness toward God, but perfect faithfulness. Not just faith in one promise of God, one truth, but faith of the entire character of God, to be faithful to his whole character, in all points to be like him.

So godliness is perfect faithfulness to God's character, as a child born of his covenant. And it is that perfect faithfulness that is an attribute of the upright in heart, who must receive God's perfect salvation.

And here in Psalm 12 David is crying out because those people are vanishing, being destroyed by the wicked.

"Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men."
How then can salvation come?

We went through Malachi chapter 2, where Malachi spoke of faithfulness between a man and his wife, and the seed that that produced, which would be a faithful seed, one that reflected their character and attributes, and not a bastard that wasn't faithful to both of them, who wasn't like one of them, who wasn't the result of faithfulness to the covenant.

And Malachi's prophecy compared that to godliness, and how the marriage covenant is a picture that God has given us of faithfulness between a man and God, faithfulness to his covenant, that they might be a faithful seed, that reflected God's character and attributes, and not like a bastard that wasn't faithful to God's nature, who wasn't the result of faithfulness to his covenant.

This is the OT basis that Christ was drawing on when he was talking about being born again. Nicodemus should have understood it. It was the latest most up-to-date prophecy. It had been around for a few hundred years, so they should have understood it perfectly.

And so that's why Christ expected Nicodemus to understand what he was talking about when he was talking about being born again.

John 3:3 *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

So Nicodemus was caught of guard by that and was thinking too literally. So Christ is going to explain how a second physical birth wouldn't do anything for you, you've already had that, it is a spiritual birth that you need, in addition to that:

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

So Jesus says, "Don't marvel at this. You already know this stuff. I'm just talking about the spiritual rebirth. That's all I'm saying."

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

Jesus said, "I'm just telling you stuff that you already know. I thought you'd already know all this. What do you mean 'how can these things be?'"

This was something that they should have understood from Malachi 2, that godliness had to come through being born under God's covenant, after his likeness. So that his character would be in you, and you would be a child of God, godly, one with him, faithful to him and his character and his truth in all points.

And that had to happen through a rebirth of the person, that took place under God's covenant, that would make God that person's Father, not just in name, but in faithfulness. His likeness and his character would be seen in them. They would be indeed the children of God.

They would be one with him in spirit, through a unity of their spirit and his Spirit, just as two people come together and are one flesh, despite still being two separate people.

And so Jesus was just bringing up OT principles, and expected them to understand, but they didn't.

And so we can see why perfect salvation didn't come during Christ's ministry on this earth. The hearts of the people weren't prepared. Even the scholars who should have been teaching and leading the people, didn't even understand what was necessary for that salvation to come, or how godliness and faithfulness would come to Israel.

And so since the leaders of the people didn't understand that salvation, the hearts of the people weren't prepared to receive it.

Israel didn't receive the perfect salvation when their Redeemer came. But they will:

Romans 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away **ungodliness** from Jacob:

27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

He's quoting from Isaiah 59 there. Which we'll look at in a moment, if you want to begin turning there.

But first look at what he says here. The Deliverer will come and turn away ungodliness from Jacob. And so there is going to be a time, still in the future, when Christ will come, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob. And then they will all be godly, prepared to receive the salvation, and it will come.

Then it says that this is God's covenant with them. So again, as in Malachi, godliness is associated with a covenant. In Malachi he gave the marriage covenant as a picture of God's covenant. They were unfaithful to his covenant, and as a result their seed was ungodly, they weren't behaving as God's children.

But there is a time in the future when God will make a new covenant with them, and at that time they will be faithful to that covenant, and ungodliness will be turned away from Jacob.

Isaiah 59:1 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

This reminds us of Psalm 10, where David talked about God's vengeance and how he would judge the wicked. Judgement and salvation are part of God's nature.

And yet David was crying out because judgement wasn't coming. And his conclusion there was that judgement wasn't coming because they weren't seeking for it with a perfect heart, they weren't crying out to God and him alone for deliverance.

And so here in Isaiah 59 God says that he is always ready to save, but it is the sin of Israel that keeps that salvation from coming.

3 For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

These are the same kinds of problems that David was crying out for. There were wicked persecutors who were deceiving and slaying the poor and needy.

And Isaiah is speaking of people who have blood on their hands, and are liars.

4 None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

So these are the same problems that David has been dealing with in Psalms. His oppressors and those that are trying to destroy the upright in heart that salvation might be prevented from coming, they are unjust murderers who go around speaking flattery and falsehood.

12 For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them;

13 In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

Children in whom is no faith. They certainly aren't godly. They aren't children after God's own heart, they are departing way from him.

14 And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

15 Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.

This is the same place David is at now in Psalm 12. He is seeing the godly failing. Not only are there many wicked oppressors, but they are slaying the righteous seed.

16 And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

17 For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke.

18 According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence.

And so salvation will come to them. God will bring it. There is no man among them that he can use to bring perfect salvation, as he used David to bring national salvation. In the end he's going to bring salvation himself, not through a mere man.

And yet there is the prophecy of the seed, the Christ, the Messiah, that God promised that he would raise up from among David's children.

So how do we reconcile that? The only way that you can do that is to believe in a Messiah who is from the seed of David, and yet is God himself.

Only Jesus Christ can fulfill that.

Now, this salvation that he's talking about is still in the future. It hasn't come yet. It isn't going to come until the end of the tribulation.

19 So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.

And now the part that Paul quoted in Romans:

20 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.

Notice that this is a little bit different than how Paul quoted it. Here it says that he will come to those that turn from transgression in Jacob. But Paul said that he would turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

So Paul was saying he would turn them, but there it said that he would come to those who were turned.

That might seem contradictory, but it's not. Paul is just emphasizing that those who turn from transgression will be those who are turned from ungodliness by Christ.

And so when he comes the Redeemer will come to save those who he has turned and prepared for salvation.

FAITHFUL

We talked about faith and faithfulness in depth last time. And now we've covered that some more, in talking about godliness as well.

The faithful are those who are just, they don't have a double-standard in the law, they speak constantly, they are of a pure and single heart.

David described his enemies' unfaithfulness in Psalm 5:

Psalms 5:9 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.

So they were flatterers, you couldn't trust what they said. They'd say one thing and mean another. They weren't faithful in what they said. They were duplicitous.

And we're going to see that that is exactly the same thing that David is going to bring up in Psalm 12. Unfaithfulness in their words, being double-tongued, speaking evil.

David sees more and more people acting this way, and few truly faithful left.

So the Christ must turn ungodliness from Israel before he can save them.

And of course he himself must be godly and faithful. Which, remember, is one reason that David is concerned. Because if the godly and faithful fail there is no seed for Christ to come through. When Christ was born he had to be a faithful and godly seed. And so some faithful and godly and upright had to be preserved somewhere, in order for Christ to come.

Christ had to be faithful. There are several ways that Christ had to be faithful. First, he had to be a faithful prophet:

Numbers 12:6 And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.

7 My servant Moses is not so, who is **faithful** in all mine house.

8 With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

And so Moses was faithful in all God's house. And it was prophesied that the Christ would be like him:

Deuteronomy 18:18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

And so faithfulness could not fail. If it did, how could that faithful prophet rise up from among them?

Christ also had to be a faithful priest:

1 Samuel 2:35 And I will raise me up a **faithful** priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.

Now God told this to Eli, speaking of Samuel. But it was also prophetic of Christ. And so a faithful priest had to come.

I know it's obvious to us that Christ must be faithful, but that's because we're so familiar with the NT. In the OT there were many saviors of Israel who weren't faithful or godly. Samson. Jephthah. Gideon.

But there was a prophecy of that Savior who would come, who would bring perfect and perpetual salvation to Israel. And he would be faithful. That was specifically prophesied. And so there must always be a faithful seed, from which that Savior can arise.

And also we know that he would only come once the people's hearts are prepared to faith and godliness as well.

And when he appears, when he comes bringing that salvation, he will be coming to those who he has turned from ungodliness. If there are any that aren't faithful and godly, they are oppressors who will be judged and destroyed, not the oppressed who will be saved.

This is something that Jesus warned them of during his earthly ministry:

Matthew 24:45 Who then is a **faithful** and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

So the faithful man who has been distributing meat to the Jews, the household of God, will be blessed when his Lord returns. He will reign with Christ.

But listen to what happens to the unfaithful man:

48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;
49 And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

This man is unfaithful. He's evil, and in fact, he's an oppressor, that is smiting his brethren. And instead of distributing meat to those in need as the other man was, he's feasting while smiting them and letting them go hungry.

50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,
51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

*This man certainly was a hypocrite. He had no faith. He said one thing, he said he served God, but he didn't live a godly life, as a child of God would. And because of that, he'll be judged for persecuting his brethren when Christ returns, and he'll be damned, and not allowed to enter his eternal kingdom. We see this again in Matthew 25:14-30, where Christ tells the parable of the talents. And two of the men are told, "Well done, thou good and **faithful** servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." But the man who hid the money*

Matthew 25:24 *Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:*

25 *And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.*
26 *His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:*
27 *Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.*
28 *Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.*
29 *For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.*
30 *And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

And so this man was counted unfaithful, and he was damned. The reason he was unfaithful wasn't that he lost the money. It was that he knew something about God, but didn't frame his actions to match that knowledge. And that is a lack of faith. Faith is when you know something and believe it such that your actions match up with that unseen truth. But this man had a lack of faith, and because he was unfaithful, he was cast out of the kingdom.

And so we see why David is so distressed here. It is only the faithful that will be saved. And he sees the faithful failing from among men. And yet they cannot be allowed to fail, because if they do, then there will be no foundations of salvation left, nobody left to be saved, and no godly upright seed through which the Savior can ultimately come.

FAIL

So David said that the faithful *fail* from among the children of men.

He sees them disappearing. They're failing. There's ceasing to be any more.

Now this is something that is especially painful for David to see. We might wonder why David cares so much about personal salvation for all Israel, seeing that he's already received it. None of the oppression that goes on hurts him.

But in truth it does hurt him. And not just because he's experienced persecution himself and can relate to it.

It hurts David because it effects David's posterity, and the posterity of his kingdom.

Consider what David commanded to his son Solomon before his death:

1 Kings 2:1 Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying,

2 I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man;

3 And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself:

4 That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not **fail** thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel.

So God had promised David that his children would not fail from the throne of Israel as long as they were walking in the ways of the LORD. As long as they were godly and faithful.

But now David sees the godly and faithful failing from among men. And while it isn't a threat to him personally, it does threaten his kingdom. If the faithful fail from among his children, then they may also fail from the throne.

God has promised to preserve David's kingdom to his seed, but only as long as his seed is upright. And so if the faithful fail his kingdom is in jeopardy, that his seed would lose the throne.

And David also knew that it was through his seed that perfect salvation must eventually come. And so they could not fail, if the faithful would fail from among his seed, and his seed should lose the throne, than the foundations would be destroyed.

Acts 2:30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

And so David knew that the Christ, the bringer of perfect salvation to all Israel, would come from his children.

2 Samuel 7:8 Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel:

9 And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth.

10 Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime,

11 And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house.

12 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:

15 But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.

16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

And so David knew that there was a seed who should come, whose throne would be established forever. And he knows that his throne must continue until that occurs. And he knows that God has only promised to continue his throne as long as his children are faithful.

And so when David sees the faithful failing, he sees the foundation of salvation being destroyed. Not just because the upright are being destroyed, but because the seed that should bring that salvation is threatened. The throne that will bring that salvation is threatened.

And so David sees and feels very acutely how urgent it is that God act, that he uphold those foundations, or else salvation cannot come.

And so he cries out: "Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men."

Now he said that the faithful were failing in the earth, they were ceasing to exist. That sheds a special light on this prophecy of Christ in Isaiah:

*Isaiah 42:4 He shall not **fail** nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.*

So the faithful have seemed to fail at times, but when their Savior comes bringing salvation, he will not fail. He will set judgement in the earth. And even the isles will wait for his law.

Quite a contrast to the hopes of the wicked. They want the faithful to fail. Well, they're not going to. Their Savior is going to come, and he is not going to fail. He will bring judgement.

Another passage that all of this will help us to understand is Hebrews 12. The whole book of Hebrews really. Because it is written to the Jews, this preservation of an upright seed really makes up a big part of its message. This is just one example:

Hebrews 12:12 *Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;*

13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

*15 Looking diligently lest any man **fail** of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*

16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

So Paul was admonishing the Hebrews to look at those around them, and to lift up the hands that were hanging down, confirm the feeble knees, and make straight paths for their feet. He told them to look diligently lest any of them were failing of the grace of God. Lest any of them were being defiled.

Paul is telling them to carefully guard each other against anything that would turn them from faithfulness and godliness.

Because in turning aside into the way of sinners, they are selling their birthright for a morsel of meat.

There is a time of the giving out of inheritances coming. We've touched on that a few weeks ago. And only those that remain in the faith, only those that are upright, only those that do not fail of the grace of God, will be saved.

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, but their tears will not cause the Lord to repent, he will cast those that turn aside into outer darkness.

And so in Hebrews Paul admonishes the children of Israel not to allow any of them to fail of the grace of God. Earlier in the book he points out how they must all receive that salvation together, and then if many of them are unworthy, then none of them will receive it, because then the salvation cannot come, or else those that are unworthy must be cut off. And so Paul admonishes them to look diligently that none of their brethren fail of the grace of God, but that they all with one accord remain faithful and upright, that their salvation might come, and that they might receive the inheritance.

CHILDREN OF MEN

Now, when he says “children of men” what is the significance of that?

Sometimes its easy to overlook that sort of thing. But every word and phrase is important.

We also saw David use this phrase in Psalm 11:4:

Psalms 11:4 The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

Now, anytime that you see the same word or phrase used twice within just a few verses or chapters from one another like that, that's a big clue that it is significant.

Especially when it is a phrase that is only used a few times in scripture, if two of those times are very close together, you can be doubly sure that God had a reason for that.

And the term “children of men” is used only 23 times in scripture, so this must be significant.

We didn't look at it when we went through Psalm 11, although I did do some background research on it, because it just wasn't fitting into the flow of things without making it too long. So we'll look at it closer now, both as it is used here and in Psalm 11.

We can actually get some insight before we even look up other passages that talk about the “children of men.” Just by considering what it means.

It's a way of referring to mankind that really emphasizes their mere humanity. They are the children of men, not of gods, not of God.

And that's something that is very clear in their behavior as David lays it out in Psalm 12, they are ungodly. Those that are godly, that behave as the children of God would, they are ceasing. They're vanishing.

And all you are left with is men that behave as men. Not as the children of God would.

So that's a big part of what he's saying here.

But let's confirm that by looking at some other passages where the phrase "children of men" is used:

Genesis 11:1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

Now, God had commanded them to replenish the earth, and yet they did the exact opposite, they all congregated in one place.

So they were rebellious, they weren't obeying God's command, they weren't behaving as his children, but the children of men.

And they said that this tower would reach unto heaven. And yet it says that the LORD came down to see it.

So it's like God coming down to see the tower of blocks that little Jonny built. "Let's go see this little tower the children of men are building."

He's mocking them, mocking their humanity. Because they may think they can build this great tower, they may think that they can rebel against his commandments, but they can't. They're still mere men, and they cannot contend with him if he wants to knock their little tower of blocks down.

6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

This is very like Psalm 11 where he said:

Psalms 11:4 The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

So God is in heaven, but he sees upon earth the children of men. Just as he came down from heaven to see the tower of Babel.

And again, Solomon would later pray at the dedication of the temple:

1 Kings 8:38 What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house:

39 Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the **children of men**;))

40 That they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers.

And so again, he speaks of God in heaven, and in his temple, and seeing the children of men, an knowing their hearts.

When Saul was hunting David, David said this to Saul:

1 Samuel 26:19 Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if they be the **children of men**, cursed be they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods.

So David said to Saul, that if it was God who directed Saul to take David, then David would gladly seek God's forgiveness through sacrifice, for whatever wrong he had done, that he might not die.

But if it was mere men who were stirring Saul up against David, then might God curse them instead of him.

And so again in calling them children of men, mere sons of Adam, it is contrasting that with God, and godliness. These men certainly aren't the children of God, they aren't godly, when they seek the life of their brother.

We actually just read one place that the phrase "children of men" is used, as God was promising David the preservation of his throne:

2 Samuel 7:14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the **children of men**:

15 But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.

So God would chasten David's seed with the rod of the children of men, but he would not himself act against him, to take away his mercy from him.

So there again is a sort of a contrast between God and the children of men.

Now, this passage is especially important. David has said that the faithful are failing from among the children of men. And we know that the implication is that if godliness fails from David's house, his throne and salvation itself would be in jeopardy.

And now we see that the unfaithfulness of the children of men isn't just an indirect threat to David's posterity, it is actually a direct threat.

David sees these people as a direct threat to the future of his throne. He is calling them the children of men because that's what God called those that would punish his seed if their faithfulness failed.

And so David sees in these oppressors those who will oppress his children if their faithfulness wavers, which looks like what is preparing to happen, the faithful are going to fail.

And so David sees the ingredients for that, not just the lack of faithfulness, but he sees that the children of men will increase their oppression as a punishment for it, and that instead of perfect

salvation, it looks like a loss of even that national salvation that Israel had been given is what is coming.

And so David is implying how salvation is doubly threatened here, not just by those prepared for it perishing, but by the persecutors multiplying who are a threat to the throne which the Christ who will bring that salvation must one day inherit.

And so David is reminding God, by his choice of words here, not only that the faithful and godly are perishing, which is bad enough, but that the children of men, the rebellious who are not as children of God, are multiplying, and that God promised that he would not take his mercy from David's seed, but would preserve his throne until the Savior should come.

So David is seeing that the seeds are being sown for his children, after his death, to fail from the throne, and those that God said he would use to punish them are growing stronger and stronger in oppression. And so David is reminding God of his promise to be merciful to his son, because if he doesn't act, and the throne is utterly dissolved, the salvation cannot come. Because it must come through David's seed who will be an heir to that throne.

So David is pulling out all the stops to express the urgency of the situation, how precarious the foundations of salvation are, and how if God does not act and uphold them they will crumble.

So salvation is threatened in the following ways:

- The faithful and godly, the prepared and upright in heart, are ceasing. And they must increase to encompass all of the oppressed before salvation can come.
- David's children may be affected by this as well. And they must remain faithful or else they will fail from the throne, and yet they must maintain the throne until the seed, the Savior comes.
- The children of men are increasing, their oppression is becoming worse. And they are the ones who will punish David's seed if their faithfulness wavers, and yet if David's seed is cut off by oppression the Savior, the seed would be cut off.

So this is a serious situation.

But David has reasons that God should act and uphold the foundations of salvation:

- The godly, those that the LORD has set apart for himself, are those that are perishing. In persecuting them they are touching those that God has said are his.
- As he pointed out in Psalm 11, the LORD is the ultimate foundation of salvation. He has promised it and so he must preserve the foundations until he brings it to pass.
- He has promised not to take his mercy from David's son when the children of men oppressed him. And so he must make provision to preserve some godly people, and not allow the oppressors to become so strong that David's seed is cut off by them.

And so by bringing this up David is giving greater urgency to his cry for help, while at the same time also giving God another reason to act.

God has promised mercy to David's son, so he must provide some way to preserve the faithful, at least among David's children, that they might not be cut off before the Savior should come from among them.

And that is a promise that God has made to him. So David is begging God to act, to not forget that promise, to uphold the foundations of salvation.

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