

Psalm 12

Last time we looked at the first verse of Psalm 12. We began to explore a bunch of different concepts that are all woven through this psalm. This psalm is a climax that incorporates many of the elements that we've seen in previous psalms, and shines a new light on them. And many of these are really very basic, fundamental principles, found throughout the OT, as well as the NT. And so we're going to be looking at a lot of other passages that weave in many of these same threads. We're going to be looking back at many of the passages that we looked at last time as we go through the later verses of this psalm.

Last time we were focused on understanding who the godly and faithful were, those who David mentions in verse 1, that are perishing. And we found that the godly and faithful are those same people that David has been talking about over the last few psalms. He's used several different terms to refer to them, but they are that group of people whose hearts are prepared for salvation. They are trusting in the LORD and the LORD alone to deliver them from their oppressors. And they are called the prepared or upright in heart.

In Psalm 10 David introduced this concept of the preparation of the heart that must take place in the oppressed before their salvation comes. And there David was crying out to God to ask him why he did not grant them salvation. He knew that the poor and needy were being oppressed, and he asked God why he didn't deliver them, why he didn't judge their persecutors. And David concluded that something needed to happen before that deliverance could come. The hearts of all of the oppressed had to be prepared to cry out to the LORD for deliverance. Israel as a nation had done that and been delivered from their national enemies. They were seeking to God to grant them the national salvation that had been given them through David. But they had yet to all seek God for deliverance from the oppression that took place in their midst. And so that was why perfect salvation from every oppressor could not come yet.

And so in Psalm 12, when David begins crying out that the godly and faithful, the prepared and upright, and ceasing, its a very bad thing. It is the opposite direction from what needs to happen before salvation can come.

From Psalm 11 we learned that David and his enemies understood that the upright in heart are as the foundations of salvation. It is to them that salvation must ultimately come. And as long as the godly are few, the wicked are not in danger of God's wrath being poured out and deliverance appearing. And so the wicked began persecuting and murdering all of the upright, that they might prevent the oppressed from wholly becoming upright, and thereby prevent salvation and judgement from ever coming.

In Psalm 12 David is crying out to God because it seems like the wicked are succeeding in that. They are murdering the faithful, and in fact David believes that there is a danger that all of the godly will be destroyed. And David knows that if that happens the foundations of salvation will indeed be destroyed. But realizing that the LORD is the true foundation of salvation, he cries out to him to intervene, and to preserve a godly seed upon the earth.

Verse 2

What David sees is the opposite of faithfulness and godliness. And his focus is not their actions, this is something that is first manifest in their speech.

It is the froward speech of his enemies that David is seeing spread to many in Israel. And it is for their evil words that he is crying out to God for help.

VANITY

The first thing that he says of their words is that they are vanity. They're just vain. They're meaningless.

This is something that he's said before, of the words of his persecutors, back in Psalm 4. You'll recall that we looked at Psalm 4 last time, because it is the first place in the Bible that uses the term "godly".

Here is what David said of his enemies there:

Psalms 4:2 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.

And so David pointed out how his enemies loved vanity, and sought after leasing, falsehood. And now David is seeing those same attributes that were in his enemies spreading. And he knows that this is the speech of oppressors, and so the oppressors are increasing, and the godly are diminishing. They're in danger of being utterly destroyed by their persecutors. But there is hope from the next verse:

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

And so the LORD has set apart the godly for himself, and when they call he will hear. And so last time we observed that this gives David great hope that God will finally answer him on this matter of perfect salvation for all of the oppressed, because the godly are at stake, and it is for their sakes that he cries out. And when he cries out for the godly he knows that God will hear. That's quite a contrast to the speech of the wicked. He says that the wicked speak vanity, they love vanity, meaningless, worthless talk. They speak words that cannot profit them, but when David cries out to God, when the godly call on the LORD, their words are not vain. They do profit, for God does hear.

Now there was also another aspect to this love of vanity there. Remember that back in Psalm 4 the national salvation had not yet come to Israel fully, because their savior, the LORD's anointed, David, had not yet been delivered from the rebels. And so these men that David was pleading with there were men who were rebelling against God and against his chosen king, through whom that salvation from the enemies of Israel had, and would, come. And so in rejecting David, they were also rejecting God. And David was telling them that by doing that they would end up being on the wrong end of deliverance. If they were standing in the way of God's chosen savior, God would have no choice but to destroy them that his salvation of Israel might come:

Psalms 5:6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

And so David was warning them, that in rebelling against him they were rebelling against God. And I don't know whether they really turned from God to idols, but I do believe that it is implied there that that is what they are doing, in effect. They're rebelling against God, and turning to idols instead.

Because the term vanity is often used to refer to idols. The false gods are often called vanity and falsehood in the Bible.

And so he's not just referring to their lies there in Psalm 4, but also implying that it is as if they were turning from God to idols in their rebellion. They aren't following him and his chosen, they're following their own words, which are vanity and falsehood, just as an idol is.

So they were as idolaters. They were in danger of being just as the enemies of Israel, just as the heathen, and being destroyed with the heathen because they were standing in the way of salvation.

In fact, you'll recall that God even went so far as to call them Cush, the father of the kingdoms of darkness, the father of that great mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.

And so in calling their words vanity he is comparing their words to the idols of the heathen.

And so for example, the first time that the term vanity is used in the Bible is in Deuteronomy 32:

Deuteronomy 32:21 They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their **vanities**: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

And so what David was saying in Psalm 4 is that they were speaking words that, like idols, cannot profit. But when the godly cry out to God, their words do profit, and their God, the true God, hears them.

And so that was a huge contrast there between the rebellious and the godly, the children of God and the children of men.

And it was a contrast that was manifest in their speech. The ungodly spoke falsehood and vanity, words that were worthless, flatteries that they didn't really mean.

And so we can see why David is so concerned here when he sees these people increasing, and the godly decreasing. Because if the oppressed turn to vain words, if they turn from truth and faithfulness unto falsehood, they will be turning from that which can save them, to vanity that cannot. It will be just as if they were turning from God to idols.

And what happened to those who rebelled against God and turned to vanity in Psalm 4? In Psalm 7 God lumped them in with the heathen and those that would be judged and destroyed when salvation comes.

And so David is seeing that more and more of the people are becoming as those who will be judged and destroyed when salvation is revealed, and not as those who are to be saved.

And that's the exact opposite of what must happen. The hearts of the people need to be prepared and faithful and upright before God, before his salvation can come, that the oppressed might be saved.

And so again David sees that salvation is in jeopardy. The wicked are preparing the people to be more worthy of judgement, not more ready for salvation. And they are destroying the few who are prepared.

Again, in Psalm 10 David described the persecutors of the poor and needy of Israel:

Psalms 10:7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and **vanity**.

And so the oppressors of the people would speak mischief and fraud, and they would speak vanity. Words that they didn't mean, to deceive the simple, to bless the covetous while wishing a curse to his soul, that they might slay the upright.

And David is seeing more and more people becoming like that. More and more people who speak vanity. Who don't really mean what they say. Their word is worthless. They deceive and are fraudulent.

These are the type of people that the oppressed need to be delivered from, and yet instead of following God, being faithful to him, walking before him in truth as his children, and speaking words before him that do profit, crying out to him knowing that he will hear them, they're doing the opposite. The people are becoming more and more like their oppressors. They are becoming more like their persecutors. And those that are refusing to comply are being slain by the wicked, that the righteous might be utterly cut off, and with them the hope of salvation, and fear of judgement.

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

NEIGHBOUR

It is one thing when you are dishonest with some fool you meet on the street. Or you're sometimes not quite upright in your business. Or you aren't completely honest at a political rally. But these people are dishonest with their own neighbors.

He's lying to his neighbor, and yet he's got to live beside this guy. Speaking vanity with them doesn't make for a very good neighborhood. That sounds like something that would breed gangs and violence and feuds.

And keep in mind, that in Israel their neighbors would often have been relatives, more or less closely related to them. Your closest neighbors were usually your brethren. And so the fact that they are speaking vanity with their neighbors means that the whole culture has degraded so far, that there is even dishonesty among the members of each of the families in the different tribes. And so this is no small thing, this is at a very advanced stage.

If they don't speak truth with their neighbors and their brethren, who do they speak truth with? Basically David is saying that nobody can trust anybody anymore, they can't trust their own family, they can't trust their own neighbors.

Yet it said:

Exodus 20:16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy **neighbour**.

Now, that's not exactly what they're doing, but they are lying to their neighbors. So they may not be bearing false witness against their neighbor in court, but they are bearing false witness *to* their neighbor.

Leviticus 19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy **neighbour** as thyself: I am the LORD.

So they are supposed to be loving their neighbor as themselves, but they aren't, they're speaking vanity with them.

Proverbs 24:28 Be not a witness against thy **neighbour** without cause; and deceive not with thy lips.

29 Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.

And so what these people are doing is rewarding evil for evil. They are being lied to and oppressed, and so they are becoming vain and deceptive too. And Solomon would later advise there in Proverbs, don't do that. Don't deceive your neighbor with your lips, just because he is wicked. Don't be like him.

Several times we've looked at what Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple:

1 Kings 8:31 If any man trespass against his **neighbour**, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house:
32 Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness.

And so what these people are doing, is what Solomon would later ask God to bring judgement on them for, returning it upon their own heads. And so the people are become such as are worthy of judgement, not prepared for salvation. "They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak."

FLATTERING

So they are flatterers, they have flattering lips. They speak vanity, something that they don't really mean, say something about their neighbor that they don't really believe, it isn't true, it's just flattery.

This again is something that David saw before in his enemies:

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.

And so this is what David saw in his enemies that God had to destroy to bring salvation, and now those who should be the heirs of salvation are becoming like them. They're flattering too. They are becoming like their oppressors, and yet their salvation cannot come until they are upright and faithful and true and godly.

So in their attempt, perhaps, to save themselves, they are actually making themselves a roadblock to the one hope of salvation. They're leaving the foundation of salvation that God has laid, and being snared and taken with the wicked.

DOUBLE HEART

David says that the people all speak with flattering lips, and a double heart.

Now, when we talked about faith, one definition of faith was singleness of heart. Being faithful to one master, not trying to serve two masters.

Faith is believing what God said, and living consistently with that, not being consistent sometimes and sometimes not. Inconsistency is a sign of little faith. Christ called his disciples "ye of little faith" on many occasions, because their thoughts and actions were inconsistent with what they claimed to believe about Christ.

And so to have a double heart is the opposite of faith. And here in this psalm David is clearly contrasting faithfulness and godliness, with those that have a double heart. Their heart isn't faithful. They speak flattery and vanity. Their word is no good. They may tell you something one day, but they're unstable, and the next day they may go back on their word. "Yeah, I know I said that, but..." They're of double heart.

When David was anointed king over Israel, it says in 1 Chronicles 12:33 that among those that came to anoint him were:

1 Chronicles 12:33 Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: they were not of **double heart**.

And so these men of Zebulun came to anoint David king with all their heart. They weren't for David today but against him tomorrow. They weren't of double heart. They were of single heart. They were serving David only, and faithfully.

And also it's saying that they were serving him in unity. Zebulun, as a tribe, was not of double heart. All of Zebulun, all fifty thousand of them, had one heart, they wanted one thing. They were come as one, to anoint David.

So David had fifty thousand staunch supporters. In fact, it says just a few verses later in the same chapter:

1 Chronicles 12:38 All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect **heart** to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one **heart** to make David king.

So all Israel had one heart, and it was after the LORD's anointed.

But now David looks around, and doesn't know who can be trusted. He knows that he is safe personally, that God will overthrow all of his enemies, but after he is dead, David fears that his posterity isn't going to have that kind of support. The people are now of double heart, and may choose a different king, destroying the seed through which their Savior must come. And so the fact that the people are of double heart is doubly bad. It not only means that they aren't prepared for salvation, but that they're unlikely to be loyal to David's children, those through whom the seed which must ultimately bring perfect salvation must come. And so we talked about that last time, how David saw this oppression as a legitimate threat to his posterity, and that he feared that the children of men would completely overpower his children and utterly destroy them, and with them the seed that would one day be their Savior. And so here is another thing that would concern David in that regard. The people are no longer faithful and loyal. They're of double heart, and there's no guarantee that they'll be loyal to his throne after he is dead. There is no guarantee that they'll unite around his seed.

So the double heartedness of the people is a very bad thing.

And David has been talking about the heart, his heart, the hearts of his enemies, etc., throughout Psalms. The heart has been an recurring theme.

Psalms 4:3 But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.

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

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

So David advised his enemies to stop rebelling against God, but instead cease from sin and stand in awe. To commune with their own heart, decide what they believed, and then put their trust wholly in the LORD.

He was telling them to trust in God, to cease their rebellion against his anointed, to be of single heart and not of double heart.

And so he told them to search their heart, to commune with their own heart, and see that there was unfaithfulness in it. To see their inconsistency, and to trust God fully, in all things.

And he explained what the result of this would be, that David had experienced in his own life:

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

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

So those who were of single heart, who communed with their own heart and put their trust fully in the LORD, they would be blessed. God would put gladness in their heart. He would show them good.

So there David advised the rebels to consider their own hearts and put their trust in God. In essence to stop being of double heart.

And if they did that they'd receive blessing.

Well, now those that didn't heed that advice and continued to oppose David have largely been destroyed. But instead of the people seeing that and trusting God with singleness of heart, they've become double hearted.

And in doing that they are forgoing the blessing that God would give those of single heart. God would lift up the light of his countenance upon them and put unmatched joy in their hearts.

But by becoming double hearted the people are forgoing God's blessing of salvation, and becoming such as will be destroyed, not those to whom the LORD gives gladness:

Psalms 7:10 My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in **heart**.

So again, salvation cannot come with the people like this. They need to be of single heart, of upright heart, faithful and godly, those who God has set apart for himself, who he will hear when they call to him for salvation.

And so the present state of the people is such that they cannot be saved. And David sees even the remaining godly being threatened with destruction from the wicked, that the foundation of salvation might be utterly destroyed:

Psalms 11:2 For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in **heart**.

3 If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

And so the wicked are targeting the faithful, the upright in heart, thinking that they can destroy them, and in doing so destroy the foundations of salvation.

But there is one man that they cannot destroy. They may think that they can destroy David, but they can't. They've tried, and failed. And God has promised David perfect salvation. Any of them that turn back against him God will destroy.

But even if they can't destroy David, they know that David will only live so long. And David knows it, too.

And so David fears that once he is gone, then the children of men will not just punish, but utterly destroy his seed, through which the Savior must come.

And so David has decided that he is going to use the rest of his life to seek God's intervention, that God would uphold the foundations, that the perfect salvation might not be prevented.

David is seeing more and more evidence that the wicked will be successful in destroying the foundations if God doesn't act. The people are becoming less faithful and godly, and because they're of double heart, they won't be faithful to his throne after he is gone. The throne to which the Savior must ultimately be the heir.

Instead of becoming more upright, as must happen before salvation comes, they're becoming less upright in heart. Their hearts are becoming more and more like the hearts of their oppressors.

David talked a lot about the hearts of the wicked in Psalm 10. He talked about how the wicked would boast of his heart's desire and bless the covetous so that they could get what they wanted. He talked about how they'd say in their heart that they'd never be in adversity, that God didn't see their wickedness, that he'd forgotten, that he wouldn't require it.

And the oppressed are becoming more and more like that. They're basically agreeing with the wicked, that it doesn't seem like God is going to judge the oppressors. It does indeed seem like he must have forgotten, that he doesn't see their distress or the wickedness of their oppressors, that he's never going to require it of them.

So the oppressed have basically decided that the wicked must be right, and that they should just do their best to fend for themselves, through vanity and deceit. Through becoming just like their oppressors.

But they're forgetting something.

You see, David didn't end Psalm 10 talking about the heart of the wicked, he ended it talking about the heart of the humble. And this is what the oppressed who are becoming double hearted are forgetting:

Psalms 10:17 LORD, thou *hast heard* the desire of the humble: thou *wilt* prepare their **heart**, thou *wilt* cause thine ear to hear:

18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

God *has* heard them. He has heard them.

But he's waiting for something. He's waiting until he has prepared all of their hearts, and they cry out to him with all their heart for salvation. And that is when he's going to bring judgement for them.

And so what they must do is submit to God, to his preparation of their heart, and then their salvation will come.

But instead they are doing the exact opposite. They're caving to the wicked. And in doing that, they are discarding God's promised salvation.

The irony is that by acquiescing to the wicked and essentially acknowledging that it doesn't seem like God is ever going to save them, they're keeping the salvation from coming.

The wicked said God wasn't going to bring salvation. But God said that he would if only all of the oppressed would ask him. And the oppressed are saying no, they're siding with the wicked.

They're agreeing, and saying God's salvation isn't coming either.

And you know what God does?

He agrees with them. He just agrees with them. Nope, your salvation isn't coming, since you won't prepare your heart to receive it.

God is like that. He enjoys irony. And when your expectation from him is that he won't save you, when you think he's not going to do good by you, he'll happily oblige. You'll find that throughout scripture.

People often forget that God is no softy. He plays hard-ball. He plays rough. We like to focus on his mercy, because it's such a wonderful thing, but we shouldn't lose sight of the rest of God's character in the process. Often people blow God's mercy and love way out of proportions, forgetting that, yes, he wants to save everybody, but he's also just itching to judge and destroy those who refuse that salvation.

Some wonderful uplifting teaching today, huh? It's going to get better. But it's going to get worse first.

So the hearts of the oppressed are becoming just like the hearts of the oppressors. They're assuming that God's salvation isn't coming, just like the wicked are. And as a result, they're right, they aren't going to receive it.

But what David sees is that there is a real danger that it isn't just this generation that is forfeiting salvation. There is a danger that they'll destroy all of the godly seed, and then salvation won't ever be able to come at all. And the oppressed of Israel will never be able to be saved.

And so David is begging God to intervene, to uphold the godly, the foundations of salvation, that one day the Savior might come.

This is exactly what they later did to Christ, but through it they brought salvation to the Gentiles.

Verse 3

David sees the judgement coming.

Now, it's easy to see this and say, "Oh, that's a good thing." But there's two sides to it.

On the one hand we see the wicked being judged, which is great. The problem is that so many of those who should be heirs of that salvation are those that have flattering lips that will be cut off.

And so more than being an encouragement, this is a warning. A warning to those who would turn from the right way, a warning to the godly and faithful, a warning to the righteous. And a warning to those who are becoming vain flatterers to turn from their wickedness, lest they be destroyed with their oppressors.

Just as David warned his enemies in Psalm 4, before judgement came, he's warning all of the unfaithful that judgement is coming, and they should cease to be of double heart. They should cease to have flattering lips, lest their lips be cut off.

Before we go further let's just pause a moment to consider this verse. Imagine what that would be like acted out: "The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things."

That's downright gruesome isn't it?

To take a knife and cut off the front of somebody's face, and grab their tongue and lay it on the chopping block and take a hatchet and whack that thing off. So now they have no lips, you can see their gums and their teeth, all bloody and red, and their mouth is full of blood from their tongue being cut out, and they can't even hardly scream because their choking to death.

Sounds like something from a horror movie.

Well, that's what God has planned for those who speak with flattering lips and a double heart. You know, nothing short of hate could make somebody want to do that to you. Let me tell you, God hates the wicked. He hates them with a passion. So much that he describes in passages throughout the Bible how he's going to mutilate their bodies when he comes to bring salvation to his servants.

You say, "Oh that's horrible, how could you say that. How could you say that God is like that. How could you love a God like that."

No. What's horrible is knowing that judgement is coming, and refusing to warn those who will receive it if they don't repent. What's horrible is knowing that God has provided a way of salvation and turning from it and rebelling against him, and rejecting him in favor of becoming like those wicked men who are persecuting you. What's horrible is refusing to love a God who will bring salvation and deliverance, and who warns us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

In verse 2 David described the people as speaking with flattering lips and a double heart. And he's warning them that God's going to cut off all flattering lips. Which means that those of flattering lips cannot be saved.

That's a warning to all the people.

And it's also a plea to God, to do something, so that there will be a remnant who can receive that salvation when it comes. Because right now it looks like they are all becoming such as whose lips will be cut off, not such as will be saved.

TONGUE

David also says that God will cut off the tongue that speaks proud things.

And again, this is how David has described his oppressors. They had flattering tongues.

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**.

And so the enemies of David, the persecutors of the savior of Israel, were unfaithful, and had flattering tongues.

And so this is what those who tried to stand in the way of God's salvation were like. And yet those to whom that salvation would come are becoming just like them. So that they too now stand in the way of salvation.

Instead of becoming faithful and upright, as they must before perfect salvation comes, the people are now becoming flatters as well, and unfaithful.

PROUD

Why is this? Why is this happening? Why are the persecuted becoming like their persecutors? Why are the oppressed becoming like their oppressors?

He gives us a hint here, in how he describes their tongue. He calls it "the tongue that speaketh proud things."

David is focussing on their words, because their tongue exposes what is in their heart. They speak vanity, so we know they are unfaithful. They have a proud tongue, a tongue that speaks proud things, and so from that we know that there is pride in their heart.

If you think back, this is exactly what David's premise was in Psalm 10. He began Psalm 10 talking about the pride of the wicked:

Psalms 10:2 The wicked in his **pride** doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.

It is pride that causes the wicked to persecute the poor. It is pride that is causing all of this oppression.

And so pride is the ultimate evil here. It is the ultimate cause of all of this oppression, from which the people must be delivered. It is the acting out of the pride of the wicked that necessitates salvation from persecution.

In other words, if it wasn't for pride, salvation wouldn't be necessary at all. There wouldn't be any oppression, there wouldn't be any persecution.

And so the pride of the people, far from bringing them deliverance, just creates more oppression and wickedness. Oh, it makes the salvation even more needful. But at the same time it prevents that salvation from coming, because it isn't being sought from the only one who can bring it.

And so we see the utter foolishness of pride in the face of oppression. It doesn't bring salvation. It threatens salvation from ever coming.

3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth.

And so David could see the pride of the wicked in their words and actions. He knew it was in pride that they persecuted the poor, because that pride led them to be boastful. They would boast of their heart's desire.

4 The wicked, through the **pride** of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.

And because of that pride David was able to build up an argument that the wicked would not seek after God. The wicked would not repent, he could not be turned from his wicked way, the only way to end his oppression was to destroy him.

And now the oppressed are becoming prideful. That means that they won't seek after God either.

And what must happen for salvation to come? The oppressed must seek after God. They must cry out to him with a perfect heart.

And so yet again we see that the state of the oppressed precludes their salvation from coming. When the oppressed are proud they cannot be saved, because they will not seek God, they will not cry out to him for salvation.

Do you see how dastardly wonderful the plan of the wicked is? Do you see how thoroughly they are destroying the foundations of salvation?

Were the wicked once to succeed, were all of the godly to perish, there would be no turning back. The people would never, in their pride, seek God. And so if once those that sought him were to fail from among men, he could never be found of them, and salvation could never come.

David sees that salvation is hanging by a thread. The wicked are corrupting the hearts of the people, and those that they can't corrupt they are killing.

But God, in his mercy, has provided an intercessor. He's granted one man among them perfect salvation. Him the wicked cannot destroy. And it is he who here intercedes for the people,

seeking that God, who is that true foundation for salvation, would confirm and uphold the foundations of the upright men in the earth.

Verse 4

Now remember that this is not just what the oppressors are saying, but such is the speech of all the people. This is what those that are oppressed are saying.

All of the people are becoming vain talkers and double-hearted. They are all speaking with a proud tongue.

And this is why. They think that they will be able to prevail that way. They've stopped looking to the LORD for deliverance, and instead think that they can talk their way to salvation.

After all, isn't that how their oppressors have gotten their power, with flattering lips and deception? So they can take control the same way.

And so they say, "With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?"

Their reasoning is that they can win with crooked speech, they can win with their own lips, because nobody can take that from them. They might be able to take their money and their land and everything else, but the oppressor can't take their voice. Their lips are their own, and they'll use them. They'll say whatever they need to, to win.

And so, who can be lord over them? They've got their own lips and they can speak their own mind, and they can deliver themselves by their own cunning.

In so saying, they've rejected the deliverance of God. They've rejected the LORD's chosen savior, they've rejected his salvation.

And they've replaced it with a salvation from oppression that they think they can work for themselves, through fast talking.

And in refusing to acknowledge that they are subject to anyone, that they answer to any lord over them, they've rejected David. They've rejected his throne. They've rejected his seed.

They've rejected the one the LORD anointed to be their national savior. God brought them that deliverance through David, and promised to bring perfect salvation through his seed, but now those who would be saved have rejected both David and his seed.

That's foolishness. It's utter foolishness. What can result but the loss of that salvation from their enemies? That's what will happen, not the procurement of perfect salvation, but a loss of that peace that they do now have.

What they're advocating basically borders on anarchy, which isn't likely to induce a strong national defense.

So again, what the people are doing, in essence, is throwing their lot in with the rebels, those that have stood in the way of salvation.

And so the only way that perfect salvation can come, or even their current salvation be maintained, is for such people to be destroyed, just as the rebels were.

But these proud boasters don't think that anybody can destroy them. They think that they are unstoppable. They believe that they have something that nobody can take from them: their proud, flattering lips.

And God's response to that is to laugh. Just laugh.

That's pretty easy to take care of. Just cut the man's lips off. Now cut his proud tongue out, too. OK. Problem taken care of. He can't prevail with that anymore.

So God says, "You think that your lips are your own? Well they're not, they're mine, and when I come bringing salvation I'll cut 'em out if you think that."

God's not much of a flatterer is he?

But you see, this is not what God wants to do. These are the people who God wants to bring salvation to. They are the ones who need that perfect deliverance. And God isn't going to bring judgement just to cut off the flattering lips of the oppressors. He's going to bring it to save the oppressed.

And he can only do that if there are some godly, upright oppressed people that he can deliver. He's promised that he'd do that when all of the oppressed of Israel were crying out to him with perfect heart for salvation.

And so he is going to have to step in and do something, to preserve a righteous seed. Because if he doesn't the faithful will fail, and salvation will be cut off, forever.

And so here David cries out, with a warning to the people, which is also a plea to God, that he must act if he wants some oppressed people to deliver in the day of salvation, instead of having to cut off all of their lips.

PREVAIL

The wicked are saying that they'll prevail with their tongue.

To prevail against someone is to gain the upper hand, and get up above them and overcome them.

And so the people are saying that they think they can prevail, they think that they can deliver themselves from their oppressors, they think that they can overcome their persecutors.

That sheds a new light on the end of Psalm 9:

Psalms 9:16 The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion. Selah.

How true is that! These wicked who think that they can bring salvation to themselves are surely being snared in the work of their own hands, because in doing so they are standing in the way of that salvation, preventing it from coming, and putting the very foundations of it in jeopardy for future generations.

17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.

God will arise and bring deliverance. And then such wicked men will be destroyed.

19 Arise, O LORD; let not man **prevail**: let the heathen be judged in thy sight.

20 Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah.

David asked that man might not prevail, because that would lead to destruction of salvation.

So there David was asking God to judge the heathen, all the nations that forget God, that thought that they could prevail against his anointed.

The nations thought that they could destroy David, and prevail against the LORD's salvation. But David asked the LORD to maintain his cause, and not let man prevail.

At that time David was speaking of the enemies of Israel. But now the nation of Israel itself is starting to match this description.

The people are starting to think that they can prevail, that the LORD isn't bringing salvation, so they can overthrow his anointed and bring it themselves.

The wicked are saying that *man* will be the one that prevails and gains deliverance, not God. They are becoming like the other nations of the wicked who shall be turned into hell, and find out too late that they are but men, and that God will deliver his people.

And so unfortunately now David's request that God prevent man from prevailing applies to the nation of Israel, too.

God must prevent them from prevailing, from bringing their own salvation, because in doing so they would be destroying the foundations of his salvation.

And they wouldn't actually be bringing their own salvation, because their solution to wickedness and pride, and the oppression that results from it is—even more wickedness and pride and deception. Which will naturally result in more oppression, not less.

Their "salvation" won't make things better, it will make things even worse. And in the process it is likely that the foundations of true salvation, the godly seed through which the LORD's Savior will ultimately come, will be destroyed.

So just as in Psalm 9, David must beg God to arise, and not let man prevail, or the salvation will be destroyed.

Verse 5

Finally the LORD responds to David's cry. This is the third Psalm that David has been wrestling with this topic, and he's figured some things out, and he knows that God has heard the cry of the humble, but up to now God hasn't given him a direct response. Now he is.

And this isn't just an explanation of why salvation isn't coming, or what God has been doing about preserving the foundations behind the scenes that David hasn't seen.

No, God is actually on the move. He's actually taking action. He is responding with action to David's request, and is now arising to save salvation.

ARISE

This is the fifth time (and here in verse 5, nonetheless), that the word "arise" has been used in the book of Psalms.

Psalms 3:7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

So that's what God does after he rips your lips off, he breaks your teeth out as well, and then busts your jaw.

So there David was asking God to arise and save him, having already smitten so many of his enemies, not to let them prevail in the end.

Sort of like now David has been delivered and Israel from so many enemies and oppressors, but yet now the foundations of salvation are in jeopardy, so David is asking God to arise and preserve them, and not let the wicked prevail in the end after all.

Psalms 7:6 Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded.

And so David asked God to bring judgement in anger matching the rage of his enemies. God had commanded the judgement, and so David was looking to him to bring it. Much like now David is looking to God to uphold the foundations of that *salvation* which he has promised.

Psalms 9:19 Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight.

And so David was asking God to maintain his cause and not let man prevail over him, but to judge the heathen.

And we observed above how that that is now again what David asks of God, to not let man prevail in an attempt to bring his own salvation, at the expense of seed through which the LORD's salvation must come.

Psalms 10:12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble.

And so David asked God to become the sworn protector of the poor and needy, and not to forget the cry of the humble.

And now here in Psalm 12 David has continued that cry, begging God to stand up and uphold those foundations of salvation, to uphold the upright in heart.

So four times David has asked God to arise. But this fifth use of the word arise is different. Because this time it isn't David talking. It isn't David asking God to arise, it is God speaking, and saying "now *will I* arise."

Those previous four times David asked God to arise, and never got that response. Sure, the LORD delivered David and maintained his cause, but he didn't say "now will I arise."

God responded to David, but he didn't arise and bring complete fulfillment of that salvation that David was asking for. Perfect salvation is yet to come. God hasn't destroyed all the wicked, he hasn't slain all of the nations, and thrown them into hell. He hasn't brought that salvation in its ultimate perfection yet. All of the things he did for David were just precursors, allegories, of that ultimate judgement.

And so David is still looking for a more complete judgement, a more perfect salvation. He is still looking for the ultimate Savior to come from his seed.

And so though God heard David, and responded, when David asked him to arise, he didn't arise in his full fury and pour out his judgement and bring perfect salvation.

But now David is asking God to arise, not to bring complete judgement, or perfect salvation, at this time. David is just asking God to uphold the foundations so that the seed through which the Savior will someday come will not be destroyed.

David is just asking God to uphold the upright and godly in the earth, that one day the people's hearts might be all prepared, their Savior might come, and salvation might be perfected.

And so now David asks God to arise and do *that*, and God doesn't respond in part only. God says, "now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him."

And so God is taking action, intervening on behalf of the godly, and doing something, something new, to preserve them, and upholding the foundations.

This is not merely some partial, allegorical fulfillment of David's request. God is now arising to do something to the full, in its perfection.

God's going to arise and uphold the foundations of salvation, not someday, not sometime in the future, but now, "now will I arise, saith the LORD."

OPPRESSION

So God is now going to act on the behalf of the oppressed. "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy."

Now, this concept of the oppression of the poor was something that was introduced in Psalm 9, and then developed more in Psalm 10.

And so the term "oppress" has only been used 3 times so far in Psalms, although in the last few chapters it's played a huge role.

The first time the term was used is in Psalm 9:9:

Psalms 9:9 The LORD also will be a refuge for the **oppressed**, a refuge in times of trouble.

So David was speaking of how God would be a refuge for the oppressed in times of trouble. And now they are in a time of trouble, and they need God to be their refuge.

And David knew that God would be. He had confidence in that, back in Psalm 9. But in the following psalms he's been trying to reconcile that with the fact that he sees the oppressed going through times of trouble, and it seems that God is standing afar off.

And so he asked God at the start of Psalm 10:

Psalms 10:1 Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?

And David has struggled with that question, without coming to a firm conclusion. He understands why God hasn't brought perfect salvation yet. God hasn't destroyed the wicked yet because he's waiting until he has prepared all of the people's hearts, so that they can be saved. But although David understands that perfect salvation can't come yet, he's still struggling with the fact that it looks like the wicked are going to try to prevent it entirely, by destroying the foundations in the mean time. And David can't see exactly what God is doing to stop them. And so David ended Psalm 10 saying:

Psalms 10:17 LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:

18 To judge the fatherless and the **oppressed**, that the man of the earth may no more **oppress**.

So he knew that the day of deliverance was coming, and it was in God's hands. But he still sees salvation threatened and doesn't see God doing anything about it.

God has promised to be the refuge for the oppressed in times of trouble, and now a time of trouble is here, and it looks like the oppressed are going to be tricked into destroying the hope of their salvation. It doesn't seem like God is helping them, that he's being their refuge.

And so this is the last piece of the puzzle for David. What is God doing right now on behalf of the oppressed?

And now God says, "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him."

So God is finally acting on the behalf of the oppressed. We're finally going to see what God is going to do to preserve the foundations in the earth.

POOR

So God's about to do something for the oppressed. And he calls them here, the poor and needy. Now, David has been talking about the oppressed, and calling them the poor and needy, since Psalm 9. But here in Psalm 12, he's been focusing not on the poor and needy, and not on the oppressed in general, but he's been focussed on the godly and faithful, those who, if destroyed, hope of salvation would perish with them.

But God doesn't say, "for the godly and faithful, now will I arise." God didn't say, I'm going to arise to save the foundations. I'm going to save only the prepared and upright in heart.

God said that he is arising for the sake of the poor and needy, because of the oppression that they're having to endure.

And so God's response is not to say that he's going to deliver the godly and faithful from the hands of their persecutors. But rather that he's going to do something for the sake of all of the poor and needy who are oppressed.

That's really what David has been seeking here. Perfect salvation for all of the oppressed. Now, God's not bringing that salvation, but he is doing something, because of oppression generally. In other words, God still has all of the oppressed in mind here. He's still got the goal of perfect salvation from oppression in mind. He wants to end all oppression. And so his actions are to that end, to secure the hope of that perfect salvation, that all oppression might end.

So what God is doing is on behalf of all of the oppressed.

It is still oppression itself that God is acting against, and that David is seeking respite from. All oppression, the oppression of all the poor, not just the slaying of the upright.

At the end of Psalm 9 David said:

Psalms 9:17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

18 For the **needy** shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the **poor** shall not perish for ever.

19 Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight.

20 Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah.

And so David was looking forward there to a time when the needy wouldn't be forgotten before God, when the expectation of the poor would come, and the wicked would be destroyed and turned into hell.

And that time is not yet. But God is going to ensure that it comes. He is going to act now, for the oppression of the poor and the sighing of the needy. He's going to make their hope of deliverance secure, and shore up the foundations.

SET

But what exactly is he going to do? Well, it says here first that he's going to set them in safety. You may remember that in Psalm 4 it talked about God setting certain people apart for himself:

Psalms 4:3 But know that the LORD hath **set** apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.

So David said that the LORD had set apart him that was godly. And because of that David knew that the LORD would hear his cry, because the LORD hears the cry of the godly, because he's set them apart for himself. They are his people, his children.

And so now God says that he's going to set the poor and needy in safety from their oppressors. So how might he do that? It seems that it's hearkening back to Psalm 4 here, where it tells us what getting set apart is. It is when you are godly. And so we might guess that God's means of setting the oppressed in safety, would be to make him godly, and then he'd be set apart unto God.

Then the oppressed would be safe, their salvation would be safe, because then they would cry out to God, and God would hear them, because they are godly.

And indeed, David ended Psalm 4 saying:

Psalms 4:8 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in **safety**.

And so David had safety, he received that perfect salvation from God, because of his godliness. And so now God can set the oppressed in safety by making him godly, setting him apart, and hearing his cry, preserving his seed, until the day of perfect salvation comes.

PUFFETH

God tells us exactly what he is setting them in safety from. "I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him."

The term puffeth is only used twice in the OT. And guess where the other time is? You might remember, it was in Psalm 10:

Psalms 10:5 His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he **puffeth** at them.

So in Psalm 10 David described the wicked who persecute the poor, saying that he was a proud boaster, who never thought on God, and wouldn't fear his enemies, he'd just puff at them. In the next verse it said:

6 He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity.

So the wicked would refuse to believe that anybody, any enemy of theirs, whether God or man, could overcome them. They thought that they were invincible.

They didn't believe that they'd ever be in adversity, that they'd ever have trouble from their adversaries.

They'd just puff at their enemies. In their pride they'd just boast and talk about how much better they were, and how they'd win and prevail. They'd just boast about how great they were.

And it called that puffing at his enemies.

You might think of it kind of like a toad. When he's threatened he makes himself look as big and scary as possible, so his enemy will leave him alone.

So that's what the wicked are doing. They're puffing themselves up with a bunch of boasting and vain talk.

And the goal of that is to convince everybody that they're the man. That they can't be beaten. That they are the one that they should look to for salvation.

Remember that in Psalm 10 it talked about how they would bless the covetous. So their boasting is partly to scare their enemies, and partly to deceive the simple into following them.

But now God is going to do something to set the poor and needy in safety from him that puffeth at him.

The wicked are puffing at them to put them in fear, and make them leave the hope of salvation from the LORD, and follow them instead. To deceive them into believing that this proud boaster can bring them deliverance, instead of God.

And those that he can't fool, he tries to scare into line by his puffing at him. And who he can't scare he seeks to destroy.

But God is going to stop that. He's going to set the oppressed in safety from those that puff at them.

So how's he going to do that?

Verse 6

Amen David; God just said something wonderful. Yes, that's great. It's great that he's said he's going to do something.

So what's he going to do, how's he going to perform it?

Verse 7

OK, but how? How's he going to preserve the oppressed? What has he done?

Verse 8

Huh? Wait, that's the end? It's over? What did God do? How is God going to preserve the righteous?

Here we are, where everything is coming to a climax, kind of like in Psalm 7, except this time God actually says that he has arisen to begin the work, and what happens? All that build-up and lead-up and then nothing? All God does is tell David something that he already knows, that he's going to uphold the foundations? But how? How is he going to do it? What action has he arisen to take? You don't arise and awake to battle and then do nothing.

So we'll stop there, and pick up here next time.

Kidding, kidding.

So what did God do? He said he was going to arise and set them in safety, but what did he actually do?

The only thing it records here that God actually did, is speak. He just spoke. Just spoke the word. That's all.

But let's not miss that. Because it isn't insignificant. It's powerful. I mean, that's how God created the worlds. He just spoke them into existence. The worlds were framed by the word of God.

And so God's word is a very powerful thing.

So could it be, that the word itself is the thing that God has done, is the action he took on behalf of the righteous?

It's the only way to make sense out of this Psalm.

And it would explain why verse 6 here is talking about the words of the LORD.

In this verse God is explaining, through David, how his word will set the oppressed in safety, and preserve hope of salvation.

And over the next couple studies we'll begin to look at that in depth. We're going to go through a lot of passages throughout scripture that help to tie all of this together, some of which we've already begun to look at but haven't quite gotten the full picture yet.

And so we'll go through this verse in depth and understand what it is saying, and then I think we'll go back through the whole Psalm again, and look at it in light of this.

We're not going to even try to start in on it today, because there is so much here, and I don't just want to rush through any of it.

We're going to see how this is a very pivotal passage, in Psalms, and in the OT as a whole. I think you're going to be in awe of the enormity of it by the time we get through here. It's one of the most important passages in the entire Bible. It's very fundamental. Or should I say, foundational.