

When the Faithful Vanish

Psalm 12 (KJV)

1 Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. **2** They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. **3** The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things: **4** Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us? **5** 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. **6** The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. **7** Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. **8** The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

Origin of This Psalm

This psalm is another one where there isn't a clear event in the life of David that is pointed to. Some scholars seem to think that is it one where he has faced deceit and dishonesty in his court after he was the king. In fact, from historical study, we could derive the fact that he probably had to deal with more deception and dishonesty than we could even imagine.

Our world today is filled with liars and false flatterers and there are times that the righteous hardly know who to trust.

Psalm 12 continues with the similar themes that Psalm 10 and 11 have:

Psalm 10—The wicked use their words to boast and sneer.

Psalm 11—The wicked use their words to tear down the moral and social formations of society.

Psalm 12—The wicked use their words on dishonesty and flattery to get what they want.

I hope you are picking up on a pattern here through these psalms... God is serious about what I say and whether I am using my words to edify or to destroy.

Solomon knew about flattery (Prov. 26:28; 28:23; 29:5).

Daniel noted that flattery would be a tool of the wicked world ruler (Dan. 11:32). Jude defined flattery as being something ungodly (v. 16).

Here is where we need the holiness that comes through instruction... Guard your tongue!

One of the things that this Psalm speaks to is a betrayal that comes through deception.

An Illustration from World

On June 6, 1944, the US and her allies sent 150,000 troops to attack the coast of Normandy. It is a date in history that is commonly referred to as D-Day. While there were many casualties, it could have been much worse than what it was. One of the reasons it was prevented was because of the operation that started before the attack ever began.

Operation Fortitude was what enabled the invasion to take place. It worked on a system of spies who had infiltrated the German military system. The Americans, along with the British and French, managed to gain the confidence of German spies and they became double agents. Our spies fed the Germans information that caused them to think that we would attack in Calais and Norway rather than Normandy. To this date it remains the most successful, but sophisticated effort at espionage our nation has ever undertaken.

The US and her allies used dummy tanks, ships, and armies to fool the Germans. They even used carrier pigeons that the Germans thought belonged to them to carry information in this historic battle. Tar Robertson oversaw the spies and he managed to create what some call an "army of liars" to win the battle. While we can be thankful that our nation managed to shut off the impact of a madman, it was accomplished with great deception that in end spelled great peril for the Germans.

That is the action that David is hinting at that takes place in this psalm. Flattery, deception, double-tongues and double-hearts.

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For this psalm, I am using John Phillips outline from his very dependable commentary on the Psalms, Exploring the Psalms, Volume One, Psalms 1-88 (p. 92).

Before moving into the psalm, we look to a word in the superscription, Sheminith. This word is also found in the superscription in Psalm 6 and has one other reference in 1 Chronicles 15:21. Its literal meaning is “the eighth division.”

Because it is attached to 1 Chronicles, we find that there is an order of worship that Israel participated in that required of them to hold a special place for those “righteous worshippers.” These were apparently those men who were literally in a cut above all the rest of those who were involved in the worship procession and service.

Whether we are comfortable making this analogy or not, there are still people who fill that same role of being worshippers of a higher calling and a higher devotion. The memorial of worship from Mary and her alabaster box is a NT example of the behavior that separates the classes of worshippers from the general to those who are highly devoted to the Lord.

Furthermore, we see that in Psalm 6 and Psalm 12 that there are some unique connections to when we need worshippers who are a cut above the rest of the crowd. Psalm 6 dealt with the conscience that had been so troubled by sin and the need of confession to set it right. Now David is making his appeal again in another situation.

David is experiencing a moment where it seems like that the faithful, the holy, the righteous, the elect, are nowhere to be found and he longs for the “eighth division” of worshippers to show up. There is something very powerful that happens when you engage that “eighth division” of worshippers. It falls into two categories that they can usher in with their worship: Repentance and Revival.

Increasingly, the sinful culture of society and the sophisticated culture of the sanctuary is doing its best to squeeze the life out of holy and devoted worshippers. This need not be so among us! If you have a desire to live a life of

half-hearted devotion, that is a personal choice, but please don't attempt to scorn the devotion of the "eighth division" of true worshippers, because their presence fights against sin and the vanishing presence of the faithful!

Just in passing, most scholars feel like this group was made up of men. However, there was another corresponding division that was made up of women and we see that in the previous verse in 1 Chronicles 15:20. They are called the Alamoth and they are mentioned in Psalm 46, which is associated with refuge. Further it is noted that these women were those who played the timbrels.

The context of 1 Chronicles 15 was when the Ark was being taken from the house of Obed-edom to go back to Jerusalem. Three groups of worshippers were involved in escorting it back to Zion: The Levites, the Sheminith, and the Alamoth.

That same group still needs to be in the presence of the church, those who bear the Word and those special "eighth division" worshippers!

David's Appeal

Psalm 12:1-4 (KJV)

1 Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. **2** They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. **3** The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things: **4** Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?

This psalm is one that falls into the category of a prayer. That prayer is speaking specifically for deliverance from deception (cf. 12:2; speak vanity, flattering lips, a double heart). That same prayer should be prayed by all saints of the Lord.

Much of the deception that makes its way into our minds is through the voices from the outside that are not submitted to a Scriptural filter nor any discerning of spirits. We need both of those elements in our lives.

The Man of God is Gone from the Earth

Here are some questions for us to consider:

What would it be like if all of the sudden those people whom you have considered as holy and godly were to disappear from your world?

What would it be like to walk into this church and see groups of ungodly and unholy people?

What would it be like to walk into a house of worship where you expected to hear the songs of Zion and instead they had been replaced with country/western, Top-40 secular songs, rhythm and blues, or heavy metal?

What would it be like to walk into this church and you would expect prayer coming from the mouths of good saints of God, but instead you heard coarse, uncouth, gutter language pouring out?

That is some idea of what David was trying to express with this psalm. He was looking for the holy, he was looking for the faithful... but the faithful had vanished!

David is crying out to the Lord, "Help!" Here is something we need to understand about the world and the spirit of the age; its goal has always been to free this world of influence of the righteous. That is a common thread all the way through the Scriptures.

On the other hand, we have to know that the godly, those who had been faithful to the Lord, were not out of the picture. God will always have a remnant of the faithful who are devoted to Him.

Elijah would come along about 150 years later and would have the same difficulty:

1 Kings 19:10 (KJV) And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

The Lord responded back to him:

1 Kings 19:18 (KJV) Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

There are times that we can have the same mentality and think the faithful have vanished, but God always has someone who is willing to make the challenging commitments and do His will.

But David felt like the man of God had left the earth.

The Man of Guile Is Great on The Earth

Just like he thought the man of God had left... He knew the man of guile was great on the earth. All of this we gather from David's description of these people.

The wicked disobey God with their tongues. They gain power through flattery, deception, and wicked schemes.

Proverbs 26:24-26 (KJV)

24 He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him;
25 When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart. **26** Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation.

James also painted a picture of what these people look like too:

James 3:10-12 (KJV)

10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. **11** Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? **12** Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

They use their tongues to work with guile, their tongues are sly, their words are shrewd, and there is a wiliness about the way they live.

The enemies of the righteous are presented in several ways throughout the psalms:

Power
Greed
Injustice
Jealousy
Opportunists

I wondered what David could have had specifically in his mind when he was writing this psalm:

He could have been thinking of the deadliness of Doeg and the murdered priests of Nob (1 Sam. 21-22).

He could have been thinking of the men of Ziph and Keilah who betrayed him into the hand of Saul (1 Sam. 23).

He could have been thinking of the outlaws surrounding him in the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22).

David was so overcome that he had no spiritual energy left in the tank. He had lost his strength to fight... in Psalm 11, the encouragement was to stay and fight... but in Psalm 12 that was all gone. All that was left in him was a pleading sense of the Spirit... Help!, he cries out.

Where will a church drift to when the anchors of godly and righteous people are no longer there? That is a chilling question to consider... Although you must never forget that God will have a remnant to serve him!

I can remember years ago, hearing a message preached by Pastor Phil White called The Remnant of His Heritage. Brother Ken Raggio and I have had countless conversations over the last 20 years about God having a remnant group of believers no matter how difficult times may seem for the American church.

There are times when it appears that holiness has fallen on hard times and difficult days, but it is still the order of the day.

David is noting that the guile of these men are all over the earth. But for all their flattery and deception that pours off their tongue and through their lips, the Lord has a remedy for it. His remedy is that he will cut off the flattering lips and proud tongues.

David's Assurance

Psalm 12:5-6 (KJV)

5 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. **6** The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

No matter how bad it looked for David, the Lord gave him some assurance that was great and was guaranteed.

We find in verse 5 the power of prayer. These poor and needy have cried out to the Lord in their distress.

“Fear ye, whosever ye be, that do wrong the poor; you have power and wealth, and the favor of the judges, but they have the strongest weapons of all, sighings and groanings, which fetch help from heaven for them. These weapons dig down houses, throw up foundations, overthrow whole nations.” – Chrysostom

Put that into a spiritual context and think of the enemies that oppose the church in the waning hours of this dispensation:

Liberalism

Secularism

Pluralism

Materialism

Lukewarm

Prayerless

Swimming in spiritual mediocrity

Great lack of commitment

All those enemies can put saints on their knees in pleading prayer and God can send a revival that will tear down the houses of the enemy, uproot the foundations, and obliterate spiritual strongholds.

Oppressed and sighing... That sums up the existence of some preachers and saints in this hour, but it all began to turn when they cried out for the Lord to help them.

Its guaranteed...

That assurance was great, but it was also guaranteed... It was great because it responded to prayer, but it was guaranteed because it was the Word of the Lord.

There is a huge contrast between the words of the Lord versus the words of the wicked (v. 6-7). In verse 6, the words of the Lord are pure, tried, and purified. Value that Word of the Lord you have in your Bible.

Truth is always the antidote for deception. The enemies of David were deceivers. Deception is one of the tools of the trade for the devil in the end times. The parable of the wheat and the tares is a graphic picture the Lord used in Matthew 13 to demonstrate it.

The seed, which implies life, was sown by the devil and his workers among the wheat. Some may ask why the Lord does not start pulling out the dangerous tares from His wheat. He does not because it is not time yet. The devil is limited; he can't tear up the wheat, because God will not let him.

So, the devil will do his best to tell people that the real wheat is not really the wheat. But the truth is this, the wheat knows what the wheat really is... furthermore they know what the tares are... If you have the Holy Ghost and a commitment to the Lord and His Word, it will be hard for you to be deceived.

Evangelist Martyn Ballestero has a very good blog. Back on November 9, 2014 he wrote an article, "You Say You Want to Go to Heaven? I'm Not Really Convinced." He then gave a summary of what the tares of this day look like:

They miss church.
They love sports more than they love God.
They don't have a teachable spirit.
They don't pay their tithes.
Their prayer life is dead.
They don't worship anymore.
They look at someone else and they are married.
They have become hateful.
They have become rebellious.
They never come to the altar anymore.
They say, "God knows my heart, I don't have to convince a preacher!"

He concludes with... If you are going to make it to heaven, you must change...

If ever we needed a passion and hunger for the Word of the Lord, it is in these days that we are living in now! The Word can pull out the deception the devil throws in your direction! In the New Testament, the word "deception" occurs nineteen times, always in connection with the devil and his work.

Our assurance in our Lord is guaranteed by His Word... Pure.. Tried... Effective!
There should be nothing more valuable to me than the Word of the Lord.

David's Armor

Psalm 12:7-8 (KJV)

7 Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. **8** The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

The Nature of It

Here is a portion of David's armor, he is kept... preserved forever. Even though the saints of God have been marked, scorned, and stigmatized all throughout history, the Lord will honor them forever!

When we put on the armor of God, there is great security that comes from it.

The Need for It

Why would we have need of this armor, this keeping of the Lord? Because there are some commentators (Samuel Terrien, etc.) who suggest that this psalm is one that stands against the astrologers, magicians, and sorcerers of the false religions of idolatry around David.

Let them talk... Let them strut about... Let them be exalted, but keep your armor on by the Spirit!

The Faithful Haven't Vanished!

If there is a closing note of encouragement, it would be this: The faithful have not vanished! Under fire... yes! Sometimes overwhelmed... yes! But they have never vanished and they will extend their days into eternity.

It's the Church Triumphant!