

# Help, LORD!

## Psalm 12

Psalm 12 is a desperate cry for help, one that we need to study and apply in our times when spin doctors abound.

### Summary of the Text

David wastes no time beginning with “Help [or “Save”], Yahweh!” (v. 1). The godly man is nowhere to be found, meaning there is no one steadfast (*chasid*) standing for the truth. It’s not that the faithful have vanished into thin air, but that they have capitulated with those who speak empty things, flattery, and with a double heart (“heart and a heart”, v. 2). He therefore prays that God would stop the lips and tongues of all who flatter and boast, who predict their triumph because their lips are their own, answerable to no one (vv. 3-4). But God sees the oppression of the poor, hears the sighing of the needy, and arises to deliver them to safety (v. 5). His words are pure like silver refined seven times in the furnace (v. 6). He will keep His word and save His people from this generation to forever, even though the wicked flock and strut when vileness is exalted (vv. 7-8).

### A Litany of Lies

David describes a directory of dishonesty, and a society shaped by lies where the faithful cannot be found (v. 1). These dishonest people speak empty words calculated not to mean anything (“They speak idly/falsely/vainly/emptily”), or at least not anything true that matters. Flattery is insincere praise which is spoken because you want something. Sometimes it’s to be well thought of by the one you are flattering. Sometimes you want praise or a favor in return: I manipulatively scratch your back, you scratch mine. This is how politicians, bureaucrats, and corrupt businessmen promote one another. It’s just easier to go along with false things being said or done rather than tell the truth and strain your relationship, friendship, damage your reputation, or lose your peace of mind and even your job. G.K. Chesterton said Satan fell by the force of gravity, and Jesus called the devil the father of lies: “When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar, and the father of it” (Jn. 8:44). Lying is easy and what we do apart from tenaciously loving the God of truth. Thomas Sowell said, “When you want to help people, you tell them the truth. When you want to help yourself, you tell them what they want to hear.” Dishonest and hollow words help no one. David points out that the godly man has ceased. It’s possible for Christians to act this way with devastating effects. Jesus said “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men” (Matt. 5:13). Lying happens in every place, but David speaks of the lies rotting the foundations of society, lies that end up oppressing the poor and needy (v. 5). Lying governors, lying justices, lying congressmen, lying elders, flattering priests, cowardly pastors, these all speak deceptively out of double hearts (v. 2). They know the truth but speak as if they don’t because they don’t want to deal with the results. What legislator wants to tell his constituents to buckle up for a few years and consider getting a second job rather than promise more handouts? What pastor wants to tell a husband that if he doesn’t lead sacrificially his marriage will disintegrate? What teacher wants to tell parents their kid is lazy? Only those who love the truth and know God hears and will help. Those committed to dishonesty ultimately believe there will be no reckoning: “Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?” (v. 4). This is the foundational lie beneath all the others.

# Help, LORD!

## Psalm 12

### Pure Words

This sorry situation provides the context for the pure words of the Lord. It sets up His great deliverance. He sees the oppression of the poor and hears the groaning of the needy and responds: “Now I will rise up” (v. 5). God may delay but He will not forget. His words contrast with the words of men. Their words are self-serving and unreliable, but His words are refined seven times (cf. Dan. 3:19), pure and unalloyed. Those who trust in Him and make His words their own will be preserved from this generation forever (v. 7). It’s not just that those who trust in God are momentarily relieved; their deliverance endures beyond their time. Stalwart Christians have clung to His words and transformed the world, overcoming the words of the doubled-hearted. Cerinthus was a Gnostic and popular false teacher in the first century who opposed the apostle John and taught Jesus was not really God in the flesh but a mere man. He also denied that God created the physical world, but the early church stood on the truth and was preserved (1 Jn. 2:22-23). In the fourth century the priest and ascetic Arius taught that Jesus was created by the Father and therefore not equal to Him. He provoked Athanasius to stand *contra mundum*, against him and the world, and the ecumenical Council of Nicaea met in 325 AD to affirm that Jesus is “very God of very God, begotten not made, of one substance (*homoousian*) with the Father.” Before Luther posted his 95 Theses in Wittenberg, he went to Rome in 1511 on business of his Augustinian order where he found priests living and worshipping immorally, shameless papal courtiers, and a city that was overall “a sink of iniquity.” He was halfway up a staircase, believed to be from the house of Pilate, which he climbed on his knees to receive an indulgence to free him from 1000 years of penance, when the words “The just shall live by faith” came into his mind. He went back to Wittenberg where six years later he began publicly challenging and then denouncing the church’s corruption. The pure words of the Lord preserve the godly in every age.

### Paradox of Hope

David finishes this psalm telling us that it isn’t over: “The wicked prowl on every side, when vileness is exalted among the sons of men” (v. 8). In other words, God will arise, but He hasn’t yet, which is why the “Help, LORD!” in verse one is a real-time cry. He did not have the luxury of looking back on this deliverance yet but instead looked forward to it. This is our fundamental disposition looking forward to the great hope of resurrection: “For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance” (Rom. 8:24-25).

### Conclusion

Put this psalm to work. First, call on God, your only Savior, to save. The publican couldn’t pray any words and was heard (Lk. 18:13). *Help, Lord!* is a faithful prayer. Second, discipline yourself and your children for lying, and be no flatterer. Remember you will give an account for your words (Matt. 12:36). And last, remember that God loves to deliver and preserve His people when they call on Him in faith. Faith is the master key to unlock every door in God’s blessed house.