

I. Psalm 12 Man's Words Vs God's Words.

Our culture is obsessed with weaponizing speech. As we have become more secular, gracious speech has disappeared.

In politics and civil discourse, it is not unusual to label our opponents idiots, Nazis, White Supremacists, Racists, Homophobes, Haters, Misogynists, etc. etc.

For example, at a recent SCOTUS protest the pro death crowd chanted—

“Racist, fascist, anti-gay, Christian fascists go away!”

That's on the national level. But what about the personal? We have all been the object of slander and gossip—sometimes maliciously at other times sincerely.

Slander and gossip split more churches than any other sin.

Slander, cruel speech, critical speech, and condescending speech ruin more marriages than all other sin combined.

Not only have we been the victims of slander and gossip but we have all participated in these sins.

This was David's predicament when he wrote Psalm 12. It is a prayer for deliverance from the wicked speech of enemies that opposed him.

1 Save, O LORD, for the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man. **2** Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.

3 May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts, **4** those who say, “With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us; who is master over us?”

5 “Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan, I will now arise,” says the LORD; “I will place him in the safety for which he longs.” 6 The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.

7 You, O LORD, will keep them; you will guard us from this generation forever. 8 On every side the wicked prowls, as vilest is exalted among the children of man.

God’s response in Vs 3-5 is the heart of this Psalm. Thesis: **Trust in God’s word rather than man’s words.**

The four movements of this Psalm are 1. Words Weaponized, 2. Words Praying, 3. Words of God, 4. Words of hope...

A. Vs 1-2, WORDS WEAPONIZED.

1 Save, O LORD, for the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man. 2 Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.

Three kinds of sinful speech concern David—lies (slander), flattery or (double-heart), & boasting.

The motives behind this speech are control, dominance, or power. Vs 4, “*With our tongues we will prevail, our lips are with us; who is master over us?*”

These people understand the principle in Proverbs—“*Life and death are in the power of the tongue.*”

That is why the ninth commandment reads.

Ex 20:18 “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

Words are deadly. To emphasize this fact exactly seven texts in Psalms and Proverbs describe words as weapons of war. The Bible describes them as spears, arrows, clubs, knives, or swords.

Ps 55 predicting Judas betrayal;

"His speech was smooth as butter, yet war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords" (Psalm 55:21).

While hiding in the cave from Saul, David wrote Ps 57;

"My soul is in the midst of lions; I lie down amid fiery beasts— the children of man, whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords" (Psalm 57:4).

After Saul sent men to David's house to kill him; David wrote Ps 59.

"There they are, bellowing with their mouths with swords in their lips— for "Who," they think, "will hear us?"" (Psalm 59:7).

In Ps 64 David described his persecutors as those—

"Who whet their tongues like swords, who aim bitter words like arrows" (Psalm 64:3).

Three Proverbs continue this analogy.

"There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts..." (Proverbs 12:18).

"A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a war club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow" (Proverbs 25:18).

"There are those whose teeth are swords, whose fangs are knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, the needy from among mankind" (Proverbs 30:14).

David wrote Psalm 12 because persecution usually starts with slander... That was Jesus' point in the Beatitudes—

“Blessed are you when others revile (insult, despise, disparage) you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.” (Matthew 5:11).

How did David experience this in a way that provoked Psalm 12?

Saul was intensely jealous of David and bad-mouthed him.

Saul tried to turn his son, David’s best friend, Jonathan against him and kill him.

Doeg the Edomite betrayed David to Saul.

The people of Ziph betrayed David to Saul (1 Sam. 23).

Jesus was like David. His enemies also attacked him with words.

They accused Jesus of casting out Satan by the power of Satan.

They slandered him before Pilate.

59 Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, **60** but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward **61** and said, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.’ ” (Matthew 26:59-62).

The Roman soldiers mocked and ridiculed him.

“And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him” (Matthew 27:30–31).

Even the Jewish, who had followed and honored him, turned on him and derided him.

“And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross”” (Matthew 27:39–40).

The Chief Priests, the Rulers, and one of the thieves also insulted him.

“So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him...”

And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.”

(Matthew 27:41–44).

How has the world treated the church throughout history? Jesus said, “*If they hated me, they will also hate you*” (John 15).

First century Rome accused the early church of practicing cannibalism.

When Rome caught fire, Nero slandered the Christians. He blamed it on the early church.

Nothing has changed. It is the same today. You will be called a racist, a homophobe, a white supremacist, misogynist, a hater, a Nazi, a fundamentalist, a bigot, ignorant, etc...

The greatest hurt occurs when fellow believers slander you, sometimes deliberately, sometimes ignorantly.

This was David’s experience. It explains the first two verses—Words weaponized.

B. Vs 3-4 WORD’S OF PRAYER

3 May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts, **4** those who say, “With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us; who is master over us?”

What does David do? How does he respond? He doesn’t turn to people. He doesn’t flee to the courts. He doesn’t gossip about the gossipers. He prays. “Cut

off their flattering lips.” i.e. God, give me justice. God, protect me. God, go before me. Deal with my enemies.

C. Vs 5-6 WORD OF GOD

5 “Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan, I will now arise,” says the LORD; “I will place him in the safety for which he longs.”

6 The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.

God says two things to David.

First, I will be just. “I will now arise...I will place him in the safety...” In other words, I will judge the offenders.

When? Sometimes God’s justice occurs in this life. That was David’s experience. God judged Saul and his entire family. They all died on Mt. Gilboa.

Sometimes God defers justice until the next life, but justice always ultimately occurs.

“I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:36–37).

Second, in vs 6 God tells David, “focus on my words, not the words of your slanderers.

“The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.”

Here is the question: Who should you listen to? God or the slanders, mockers, liars, and boasters who use words to kill, destroy, control, and dominate?

We have discussed words weaponized, words of prayer, and Words of God.

D. Vs 7-8 WORD'S OF HOPE

7 You, O LORD, will keep them; you will guard us from this generation forever. **8** On every side the wicked prowled, as vileness is exalted among the children of man.

Verses 7 & 8 take us back to reality. We live in a fallen world. Because sin corrupts and distorts us, our speech is distorted and corrupted. "Vileness is exalted among the children of man."

Here is the question. Will we focus on the words of fallen men or will we focus on God's promise "to arise" and help us? That is what David did. It is what God wants us to do. David ends, "*You, O Lord, will keep them; you will guard us from this generation forever.*"

Lets look back on Psalm 12 and draw out a few points of application for daily life in 2022.

First, you will be slandered. All faithful Christians experience the slander that David described and that Jesus also experienced.

This means that you have either been slandered and gossiped about or you will be, or both.

Second application is prayer. When this happens, be like David. Turn to God in prayer. Confess any truth in their accusations. Then turn to God for protection against the lies.

Third, you have also sinned against others with your speech. You have used it as a weapon, and you will do it again in the future. You will participate in slander, gossip, boasting, etc. How do I know that?

"For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body." (James 3:2).

"For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison." (James 3:7–8).

Fourth, the most important place to de-weaponize speech is in your home— with your spouse and children.

"Life and death are in the power of the tongue."

- Change criticism into praise
- Change complaining into thanksgiving.
- Look for evidences of grace, and acknowledge them verbally.
- Reject condescending speech, and look up to your spouse with your speech.

Fifth, if life and death are in the power of the tongue, and if we can't perfectly control it, what are we to do? If others have weaponized their speech against us how should we respond? What is the solution? The solution is the Gospel. Why?

Jesus is the only person who never sinned with his lips. He fulfilled Psalm 12:6. His words were *“pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.”*

When you believe the gospel and repent of sin God imputes his speech to you.

In addition, on the cross Jesus bore the judgment that you and I deserve, a judgment previously promised in Psalm 12:5 and reaffirmed in Matthew 12.

“Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan, I will now arise,” says the LORD; “I will place him in the safety for which he longs.” Psalm 12:5

“On the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:36–37).

This means there are only two types of people—those whom God will judge for their slander, gossip, complaining, arrogance, criticism, unbelief, etc. and those who turn to Jesus and let him take that judgment in their place.

In Conclusion, whose words will you look to, man’s words against you, or God’s word for you?

Man’s words are lies, slander, gossip and boasting—all motivated by a desire to control, dominate and destroy. But according to vs 6 God’s words are *“pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.”* And the proof is the cross of Christ.

He promises to judge those who oppress us with their speech. He also promises to judge his Son with the judgment we deserve.

Ultimately, God will judge all evil speech with perfect justice.

All of this makes one thing becomes perfectly clear. God is both love, and God is perfect justice!

The big idea in this Psalm: **Trust in God's word rather than man's words.** Psalm 12 has four movements—1. Words Weaponized, 2. Words Praying, 3. Word from God, 4. Word of hope...