

PSALM 12

Written and compiled by Gary Kukis

Psalm 12:1–22

Believers Are Preserved by God in an Evil World

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God.” (John 3:16–18). “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!” (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

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Links to the [word-by-word](#), [verse-by-verse](#) studies of the **Psalms** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)), which have been done over a very extended period of time; meaning that the quality will vary considerably.

This study makes reference to a wide-range of sources. There are quotations from doctrinal teachers, of course; but from Catholic commentaries and from other sources as well. Wherever I found relevant truth, I quoted from it or was inspired by it. Even though it is clear that some churches have a better concept of our reason for being here, that does not mean that there is no truth to be found anywhere else. So, from time to time, I will quote from John Calvin, even though I do not subscribe to 5-point Calvinism; I will quote from some Catholic sources, even though I believe that they are very wrong regarding Mary, the pope, apostolic succession and other such doctrines. The intention is for this to be the most thorough and accurate study of Psalm available anywhere.

Also, **it is not necessary that you read the grey Hebrew exegesis tables**. They are set apart from the rest of the study so that you can easily skip over them (based upon the suggestion of a friend). However, if you ever doubt the translation of a word, phrase or a verse, these translation tables are then available.

Preface: David seems to have come to the sudden conclusion one day that there were no faithful men of grace in his periphery; but that everywhere that he looked, there were men who would flatter others or boast (flatter themselves) or lie. David calls for God to intercede. God promises to step in and to protect and defend the powerless. Unlike the words of man, God's words are pure and they may be trusted. Nevertheless, everywhere that David looks, the wicked prowl about, and all the is wrong and evil is celebrated.

The Bible Summary of Psalm 12 (in 140 characters or less): *Help, O LORD, for the godly are no more. Everyone lies. "I will protect the weak," says the LORD. The words of the LORD are pure.*¹

There are many **chapter commentaries** on the book of Psalm. This will be the most extensive examination of Psalm 12, where you will be able to examine in depth every word of the original text. Every attempt has been made to make this both a complete and self-contained study. Therefore, all references, vocabulary, and related concepts should be found within this extensive study. Easy access links to more in-depth studies of some vocabulary words, concepts and doctrines are also provided.

Quotations:

Benjamin Franklin: *Since I cannot govern my own tongue, tho' within my own teeth, how can I hope to govern the tongues of others?*²

Kukis: *The strong silent type...thinks before he speaks, and, as a result, often does not speak.*

Raleigh: *A flatterer is said to be a beast that bites [while] smiling...[nevertheless] it is hard to know them from friends - they are so obsequious and full of protestations; for, as a wolf resembles a dog, so does a flatterer a friend.*³

Barton Bouchier: *[The] walls [of this world and its mode of government] can be cemented and kept together only by flattery and falsehood.*⁴

The philosopher Bion being asked what animal he thought the most hurtful, replied: *That of wild creatures a tyrant, and of tame ones a flatterer.*⁵

George Horne: *The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, etc. They who take pleasure in deceiving others, will at the last find themselves most of all deceived, when the Sun of truth, by the brightness of his rising, shall at once detect and consume hypocrisy.*⁶

Charles Haddon Spurgeon: *Cut off lips and tongues. May there not be here an allusion to those terrible but suggestive punishments which Oriental monarchs were wont to execute on criminals? Lips were cut off and tongues torn out when offenders were convicted of lying or treason. So terrible and infinitely more so are the punishments of sin.*⁷

Michael Ayguan: *Who have said, "With our tongues will we prevail; who is Lord over us?" So it was: twelve poor and unlearned men on the one side, all the eloquence of Greece and Rome arrayed on the other. From the time*

¹ From <http://www.biblesummary.info/psalms> accessed April 24, 2020.

² *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

³ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

⁴ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

⁵ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

⁶ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

⁷ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

of Tertullus to that of Julian the apostate, every species of oratory, learning, wit, was lavished against the church of God; and the result, like the well-known story of that dispute between the Christian peasant and the heathen philosopher, when the latter, having challenged the assembled fathers of a synod to silence him, was put to shame by the simple faith of the former...Who is Lord over us? *"Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?"* Exodus 5:2. *"What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?"* Job 21:15. *"Who is that God that shall deliver you?"* Dan. 3:15.⁸

Voltaire: *In twenty years Christianity will be no more. My single hand shall destroy the edifice it took twelve apostles to rear.*⁹

Voltaire's home in Geneva was used as a repository for Bibles 58 years after his death.¹⁰

Psalm 12:7–8 You, O Jehovah, will guard the grace-oriented and the destitute,
and You will watch over us, protecting us from this evil generation forever more
even though the sons of men exalt that which is vile,
and the malevolent are everywhere.

Blaise Pascal: *Man is nothing but insincerity, falsehood, and hypocrisy, both in regard to himself and in regard to others. He does not wish that he should be told the truth, he shuns saying it to others; and all these moods, so inconsistent with justice and reason, have their roots in his heart.*¹¹

Francis Quarles: *Under this cloak [of phony religion] I walk in public fairly with applause, and in private sin securely without offence, and officiate wisely without discovery.*¹²

Thomas Adams: *A man without a heart is a wonder, but a man with two hearts is a monster.*¹³

Luther: *As long as we are in the world, we are obliged to be among the wicked.*¹⁴

Adam Clarke: *Righteousness is right wiseness, or that which is according to true wisdom. A righteous man is one who is right wise; properly instructed in Divine wisdom, and acts according to its dictates; and among them who act rightwisely, there are some who act rightwiser than others; and nothing can be rightwiser than ever to think and act according to the principles of that wisdom which comes from above.*¹⁵ We would understand this to be experiential righteousness; or, experiential sanctification.

The Voice All around, those who are wicked parade—*proud and arrogant*—and people applaud their emptiness. (Psalm 12:8)

Kukis: Does this not sound like a description of any panel discussion on CNN or MSNBC? Or an hour of celebrity news on Entertainment Tonight? Or any late-night talk show with celebrity guests?

⁸ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

⁹ From [Google books](#); accessed April 13, 2020.

¹⁰ Skeptics, atheists and agnostics will argue, to their last breath, that this is false. Compare the [Cross Examined](#) to a discussion on the [Stack Exchange](#).

¹¹ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

¹² Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

¹³ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

¹⁴ The Rev. Dr. John P. Lange, *Lange's Commentary*; 1857–1864; in the Public Domain; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8 (Homiletical and Practical).

¹⁵ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

Prov. 29:2 **When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan. (ESV)**

I originally worked this psalm in 2007. It is 2020 and R. B. Thieme, III is just beginning this psalm in his wisdom study; therefore, I am going to go back over what I have here and do some more work on it simultaneous to Bobby's teaching.

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Psalm 12 Inscription

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Psalm 12:1a Save, Y^ehowah (various commentators)

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Psalm 12:1b The châçîyd man has come to an end (various commentators)

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God Preserves Those Who Believe in Him

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- v. 1 **Psalm 12:1 David bemoans his time period** (various commentators)
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- v. 5 **Psalm 12:5a-b Because of the poor and the needy** (various commentators)
- v. 5 **Psalm 12:5c Y^ehowah says, “Now I will arise!”** (various commentators)
- v. 5 **Psalm 12:5c David quotes God** (various commentators/discussion)
- v. 5 **Psalm 12:5d God: “I will set him in a safe place”** (various commentators)
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- v. 5 **Psalm 12:5 (ESV)** (a graphic)
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- v. 6 **The Pure Words of Scripture** (Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary)
- v. 6 **Psalm 12:6a-c God’s Word is like silver** (various commentators)
- v. 6 **What is this *Furnace to the Ground?***
- v. 6 **Bullinger Applies Ellipsis to *Furnace to the Earth***
- v. 6 **Earthly Words Appropriated by God the Holy Spirit**
- v. 6 **Psalm 12:6d God’s pure word is like silver purified 7 times** (various commentators)
- v. 6 **Psalm 12:6 God’s words are pure like silver refined 7x** (various commentators)
- v. 6 **Bullinger Organizes Psalm 12:6**
- v. 6 **The Seven-fold Purification of God’s Word** (James Burton Coffman)
- v. 7 **Psalm 12:7a You, Y^ehowah, will keep them (Your words)** (various commentators)
- v. 7 **Psalm 12:7a You, Y^ehowah, will keep them (the poor and needy)** (commentators)
- v. 7 **Psalm 12:7b You, God, will keep us from this evil generation** (commentators)
- v. 7 **God Preserves His Own**
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v.	8	Psalm 12:8a The wicked prowl around everywhere (various commentators)
v.	8	Psalm 12:8b Vileness is exalted by the sons of man (various commentators)
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www.kukis.org	Psalm folder	Exegetical Studies in the Psalms

Doctrines Covered or Alluded To			
		Sins of the Tongue	
Additional doctrines and links are found in Definition of Terms below.			

Chapters of the Bible Alluded To and/or Appropriately Exegeted with this Chapter			
	1Samuel 18	1Samuel 21	

Many who read and study this chapter are 1st or 2nd generation students of R. B. Thieme, Jr., so that much of this vocabulary is second nature. One of Bob’s contributions to theology is a fresh vocabulary along with a number of concepts which are theologically new or reworked, yet still orthodox. Therefore, if you are unfamiliar with his work, the definitions below will help you to fully understand all that is being said. Also, I have developed a few new terms and concepts which require definition as well.

In addition, there are other more traditional yet technical theological terms which will be used and therefore defined as well.

Sometimes the terms in the exegesis of this chapter are simply alluded to, without any in-depth explanation of them. Sometimes, these terms are explained in detail and illustrated. A collection of all these terms is found here: ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). Often, the terms below are linked to complete doctrines.

These technical terms will be **bolded** the first time that they occur. If you do not know the term, go to the beginning of this document and click on *Dictionary of Terms* (under *Document Navigation*). That will bring you

to here. When you click on the term in question, that will hyperlink you back to where that term first occurs.

Dictionary of Terms

Anthropopathism	An anthropopathism is taking an easily understood emotion, thought or action that man has or does and attributing that emotion, thought or action to God, to explain God's thinking and action in language of accommodation. One might view this is somewhat of a shortcut when speaking about God. For more information, see Wenstrom .
Blessing by Association	Friends and relatives and associates of a spiritually mature believer receive some overflow of blessing from that believer. People in the same geographical area of a mature or maturing believer receive blessings through their association. Blessing by Association (HTML) (PDF) (WPD).
Chiasmus	A chiasmus organizes a passage, so that there is a parallel with the beginning of the chiasmus with the end of it; the second portion of the passage finds its match in the second to the last portion of the passage; etc. (Chiasmus example) (Thomas B. Clarke) (Brad McCoy) (Biblical Chiasm Exchange)
Faith-rest	Faith-rest is placing your trust in God, in His Word, in His promises or in Bible doctrine, and you step back and allow God to keep His Word, or fulfill His promises, or vindicate the doctrine which is in your soul. See the Doctrine of Faith-Rest (HTML) (PDF) (WPD). Doctrine of the Faith-rest Drill (Cherreguine Bible Doctrine Ministries); (Divine Viewpoint.com); (Robert McLaughlin).
Grace Apparatus for Perception	God has made it possible for all believers, no matter what their IQ, to take in doctrine and to understand doctrine. Any believer, no matter what his or her IQ, can grow spiritually; and their spiritual growth is never hampered by their IQ (although, some high IQ types may try to over think a doctrine or find some clever way to justify some personal sin or failing, and fail to grow in that area). See the Grace Apparatus for Perception (HTML) (PDF) (WPD).
Grace Orientation	<i>Grace</i> is all that God is free to do for mankind on the basis of the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. <i>Grace</i> is undeserved mercy and unmerited favor from God to us. <i>Grace</i> is the title of God's plan and His policy for mankind. <i>Orientation</i> is defined as familiarization with a particular person, thing or field of knowledge. <i>To orient</i> means to set right by adjusting to facts or principles; to put oneself into correct position or relation or to acquaint oneself with the existing situation. <i>Grace orientation</i> , therefore, means to become familiar with God's grace plan and grace policies by adjusting to the facts and principles found in the Word of God, which puts you in correct relation to God and others. You will never be <i>grace-oriented</i> until you understand that your personal sins don't condemn you. Adam's original sin, which was imputed to you at birth, is what condemns you (spiritual death). This means that God's grace was operational when He imputed Adam's original sin to you, because condemnation must precede salvation. This is just another part of God's ingenious grace plan of salvation. ¹⁶ The Doctrine of Grace Orientation (Ron Adema) (Robert Dean) (Rick Hughes—audio) (Robert McLaughlin) (Utilization of Grace Orientation) (R. B. Thieme, Jr. as one of the problem solving devices)
Hyperbole	A figure of speech in which exaggeration is used for emphasis or effect, as in <i>I could sleep for a year</i> or <i>This book weighs a ton</i> . ¹⁷

¹⁶ From http://gracebiblechurchwichita.org/?page_id=1556 accessed August 3, 2012.

¹⁷ The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition copyright c2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Updated in 2009. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company. Accessed [online](#) January 19, 2014.

Dictionary of Terms	
Imprecatory Psalm	Imprecatory Psalms in the Bible, are those that invoke judgment, calamity, or curses, upon one's enemies or those perceived as the enemies of God. For example, Psalm 69:24 states toward God, " Pour out Your indignation on them, and let Your burning anger overtake them. " ¹⁸
Rebound (Restoration to fellowship with God)	In the New Testament, this is naming your sins to God, so that you are both restored to temporal fellowship with God and are then filled with the Spirit of God. In the Old Testament, naming your sins to God would result in a restoration of fellowship and, in some cases, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit once again (the Holy Spirit was not given to all Old Testament believers). See the Doctrine of Rebound (HTML) (PDF) (WPD).
The Revealed God (or, the Revealed Lord)	We all come to a time of God-consciousness where we understand the concept and possibility of the existence of God. At that point, we face 2 great questions: (1) do we want to know this God and (2) are will willing to believe in God as He has revealed Himself or do we make a god in our own image and worship that? In both the Old and New Testaments, God will make Himself known (He reveals Himself) to those who will believe in Him and to others as well. We know Him firmly and concretely as Jesus Christ; and in the Old Testament, He is known as the God of the Jews, the Creator of the Universe, the God of Moses (or of Abraham), etc.
Reversionism	Getting out of fellowship through sinning, and then remaining out of fellowship for a long time. Often, such a believer reverts to his behavior as an unbeliever (a dog returning to his vomit). This is called <i>reversionism</i> ; or <i>spiritual regression</i> ; or <i>spiritual retrogression</i> . This is going further than simple <i>carnality</i> , which is being out of fellowship; this is a person staying out of fellowship for long periods of time, losing his spiritual focus, and beginning to think like an unbeliever. He is a believer who is off course, walking backwards, or has fallen into a ditch (Reversionism—Ken Reed) (Reversionism—Jim Rickard) (Reversionism—divine viewpoint)
Spiritual Advance	Spiritual advance is another way to describe <i>growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ</i> (2Peter 3:18). We grow by keeping short accounts with God insofar as our sinning goes (that is, we often name our sins to God as per 1John 1:9); and by exposing ourselves regularly (daily) to accurate teaching of the Word of God by a well-qualified pastor-teacher, hearing and believing the spiritual principles being taught. See Basic Themes of the Bible ; aka The Fundamental Themes of Scripture (HTML) (PDF) (WPD); Living the Christian Life (HTML) (PDF) (WPD); and Christian Mechanics (HTML) (PDF) (WPD).
Spiritual Atlas	Often, during a time of national crisis, God promotes one man who, for all intents and purposes, carries his nation on his shoulders. God protects and even prospers a nation based upon the spiritual Atlas of that day. We have historical examples of Israel under Moses, Joshua and David (among many others) and Rome under Paul. In the Church Age, there can be many people who function as spiritual Atlases in any given period of time.
The supergrace believer	This is a term originated by R. B. Thieme, Jr. to indicate that a person is in spiritual maturity. (Robert R. McLaughlin) Or, R. B. Thieme, Jr. covers this in lesson #10 of his 1972 David Series 631; or in his 1972 Supergrace Series769 (12 lessons) (the terminology is original with Thieme)

¹⁸ Paraphrased from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imprecatory_Psalms accessed April 26, 2020.

Dictionary of Terms

The Supergrace Life

The supergrace life is simply life as a mature believer. The believer is using rebound regularly; the believer recognizes the importance of Bible doctrine and takes in Bible doctrine daily. They are grace oriented and living the faith-rest life.

Some of these definitions are taken from

<http://www.rickhughesministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Biblical-Terms.pdf>
<https://gbible.org/doctrines-post/terms-used-robert-mclaughlin-bible-ministries/>
<http://www.wordoftruthministries.org/terms-and-definitions/>
<http://www.theopedia.com/>

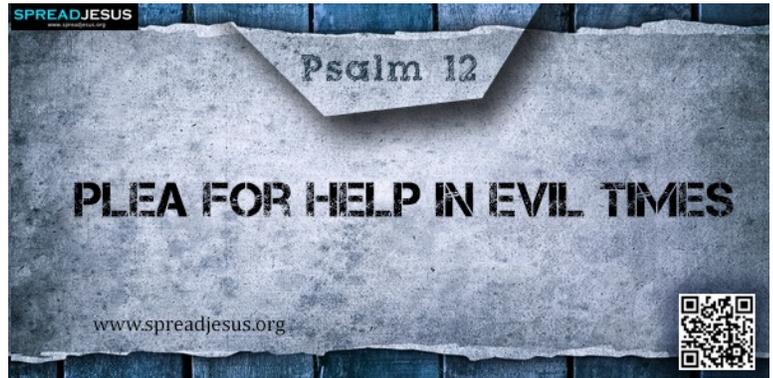
[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

An Introduction to Psalm 12

Introduction: Because of a word in the inscription, I originally wanted to place Psalm 12 with the moving of the Ark; however, one verse into the psalm, and it was clear that this did not belong with David moving the Ark. In this psalm, David speaks of evil men being everywhere, what they are like, and what God will do to them. He also deals with the believer living in a time of evil.

A Plea for Help in Evil Times (a graphic); from [Spread Jesus](#); accessed April 18, 2020.



There are three common time periods where this psalm is placed, but not with any certainty. Saul

began to pursue David when Saul's mental illness began to flare up, and David left the city of Saul and spent a great deal of time on the run. Men came to him, but David also faced betrayal by many (including soldiers whom he had formerly fought side-by-side with). David was joined up with a crack army of 600 recruits, but this did not occur on day one. For this reason, some suggest that he wrote this psalm during that period of time.

During the time that David was on the run, he stopped in at the city of Nob, and ate some of the Bread of Presence, since he was starving at the time. After leaving Nob, Doeg, a commander under Saul, arrived, and he killed all of the priests there save one. Some believe that this low point in Israel's history was when David wrote this psalm.

Others suggest that David wrote this when his son Absalom revolted against him, and tried to take his place. The idea that there would be popular support for his son may have caused David to write this psalm.

Let me offer a 4th view: David, as king, was a brilliant man, and part of his brilliance was, he observed and he took mental notes. People who are always talking often have nothing to say, as they are too busy talking to observe anything. David may have observed a downtrend among the people of Israel, and that may be the key to what is going on. David could have observed this at any point in his life, and his being persecuted is not necessarily a prerequisite for these observations.

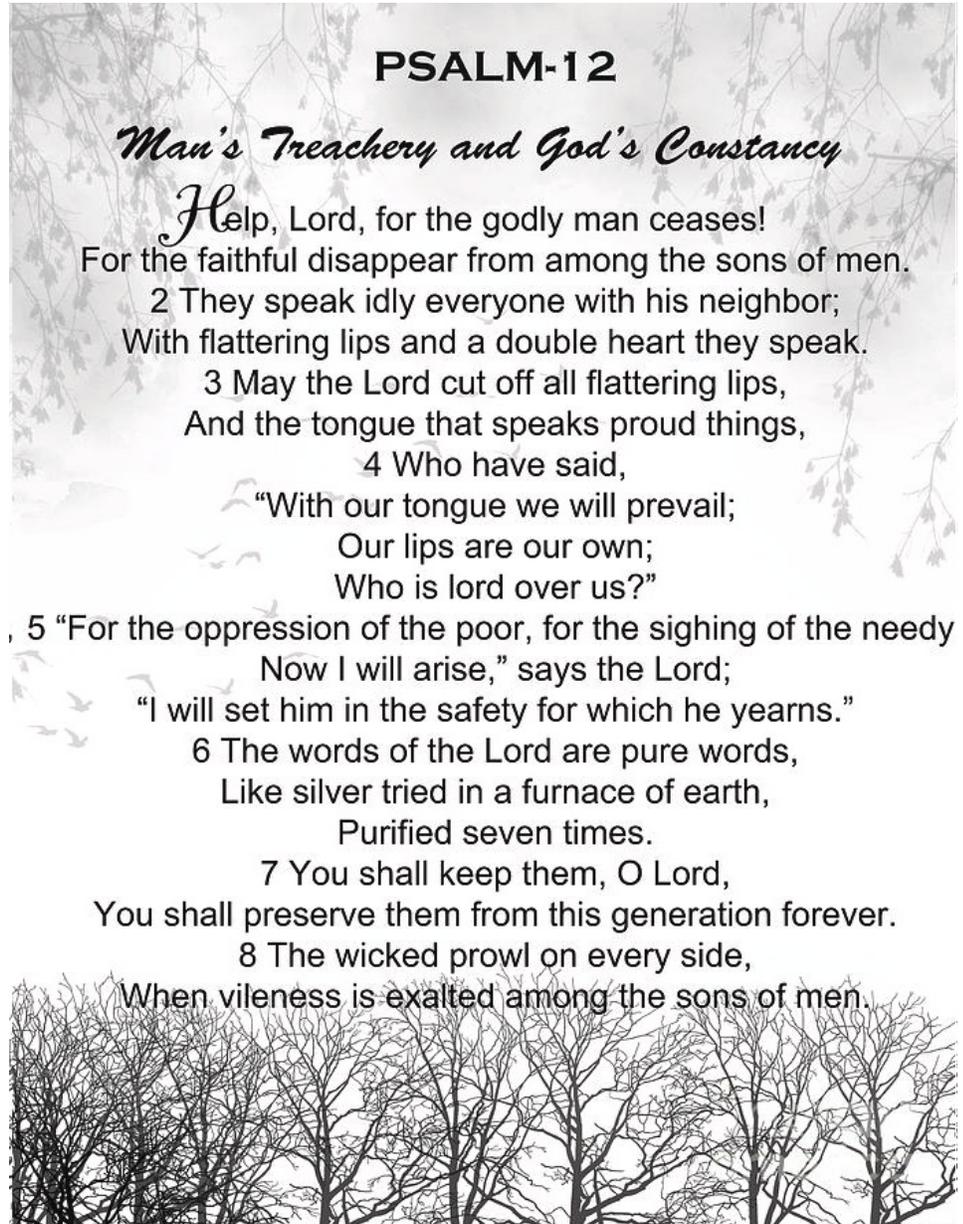
When considering these 4 options, bear in mind that, during the reign of Saul, Israel was in a general downturn, as a society. During David's reign, things seemed to turn around. For this reason, I would think that this psalm was mostly likely been written during Saul's reign, when David was a young adult.

When it comes to interpreting this psalm, I must admit to having a very difficult time with it on the first run-through. Part of that I attribute to not having a time and place during which to place this psalm. That helps to give the psalm a general tenor. In some ways, it paints a very bleak picture of the world; but, that makes this psalm parallel to our society. We live during a time of great moral degeneracy, but also during a time when there are many believers in the United States, and at least a double-handful of doctrinal churches.¹⁹ What I particularly liked about this psalm was its emphasis upon verbal sins and how evil the tongue can be.

My biggest problem with this psalm was the translation of it; once I put together a **nearly literal rendering** of the psalm, as well as a **paraphrased version** of it, it all fit together and made a great deal more sense, despite the fact that I was unable to assign to it a specific place in time in David's life (I have strong leanings in this regard, but there is nothing definitive).

Another key to understanding this psalm is filling in the ellipsis of v. 6, and then organizing this psalm. Bullinger put this all into perspective when he explained what is missing in v. 6, and then he organized the psalm, an organizational ability which I rarely see in other exegetes (I found a **chiastic organization** during my second approach to this psalm, which is quite excellent). You may find it instructive to go directly to a proper rendering of this psalm, which is placed side-by-side **Bullinger's organization** of this psalm. Bullinger will help you see the forest for the trees (which was much of my problem). Or, you may want to study the **chiasm** put together by Worship Arts Conservatory.

Let me take this opportunity to highly recommend Bullinger's *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*. There are a number of things in the Bible which make little sense; and then, you read Bullinger's take, and it suddenly makes complete sense.



¹⁹ I should clarify this point: what I mean by a doctrinal church is, rebound is clearly taught, along with verse by verse studies from the Bible. Bible teaching should be preeminent; and all other activities in the church should be clearly secondary, even to the most casual observer. *Rebound* is a term popularized by R. B. Thieme Jr., which means that, after we sin, we name our sins to God, and these sins are forgiven and we are restored to fellowship (1Cor. 11:31 1John 1:9). Do not be confused at this point; people can be saved and attend a variety of churches or not at all. Salvation is only through faith in Jesus Christ, and any person can do that at any time. What they do after salvation can be a whole different matter. With proper Bible teaching, people lead effective, meaningful Christian lives (which does not mean that they do not fail now and again).

As an aside, both the Tanakh and the New Living Bible (also known as the Open Bible) offer marvelous translations of this psalm. Sometimes I get mired down in the NASB, even though it is a outstanding translation in general. Both the Tanakh and the New Living Bible provide easy-to-understand and very readable translations, and yet remain reasonably accurate. Although I list the New Living Bible with the paraphrases, it never offers renderings which are as far off from the Hebrew as the Message or the Contemporary English Version.

Psalm 12 (a graphic); from **Fine Art American**; accessed April 18, 2020.

I originally wrote this commentary and translation of Psalm 12 in the year 2007; there are few psalms or passages which are more relevant to the time in which we live. I have seen the political left lie and slander and defame; they rarely debate—in some instances, claiming the debate to be over—they tear down and they insult. The few times that I post a comment here or there at a political site, the first thing out of the mouth of someone who disagrees with me is generally a character assault. Almost every posting that disagrees with me will contain one or more paragraphs wherein my name, my background (real or imagined) and/or my associations are insulted and slandered. I watched the first political “debate” of the Democratic candidates the other evening, and easily 75% of what they said were Bush-bashing talking points which they were able to deftly slip into their answer to whatever question was asked of them. If I did not have a calendar to refer to, I would have thought that these candidates were running against President George Bush.

The thrust of this psalm are the words of the reprobates in David’s time, who were slanderous and vicious.

The briefest summary of Psalm 12.

Titles and/or Brief Descriptions of Psalm 12 (by various commentators)

Morgan G. Campbell: *Out of a consciousness of the terrible evil of his times, the worshiper cries to Jehovah for help. The failure of godly men and faithful souls is always the gravest peril which can threaten a nation or an age.*²⁰

The Cambridge Bible: *A prayer for help in an age of apparently universal hypocrisy, dissimulation, and untrustworthiness.*²¹

College Press Bible Study: *General Corruption, Evidenced by Sin of the Tongue, Impels to Prayer and Calls Forth a Divine Answer.*²²

Dr. John Gill: *[Psalm 12 is] an accusation of the wicked, and a prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah.*

Dr. Geoff Gleason: *Surrounded by Liars.*²³

David Guzik: *In this Psalm David bemoans the vicious words of his adversaries, and in contrast praises the pure and precious Word of God.*²⁴

Matthew Henry: *The psalmist begs help of God, because there were no men that he trusted.*²⁵

Matthew Henry: *This psalm furnishes good thoughts for bad times; a man may comfort himself with such meditations and prayers.*²⁶

²⁰ Morgan G Campbell, *Exposition on Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

²¹ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

²² *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Psalm 12:1–8.

²³ From <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/vDr3Z6OOu8c/hqdefault.jpg> accessed April 18, 2020.

²⁴ *David Guzik’s Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

²⁵ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments) (slightly edited).

²⁶ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

Titles and/or Brief Descriptions of Psalm 12 (by various commentators)

Keil and Delitzsch: *Lament and Consolation in the Midst of Prevailing Falsehood.*²⁷

J. Vernon McGee: *The godly in the midst of the godlessness of the Great Tribulation.*²⁸

Shmoop: *The righteous have been supplanted by wicked liars, which is never a good sign. The writer, however, remains confident that God remains ever-present.*²⁹

Spurgeon: *Good Thoughts is Bad Times.*³⁰

D. Thomas: *The moral degeneracy of society.*

D. Thomas: *The poem is a picture of a morally rotten age. The devout author felt himself living in corrupt times. Hence he notes this degeneracy.*³¹

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: *David, destitute of human comfort, craves help of God (Psalm 12:3), He comforts himself with God's promises, and his judgments on the wicked.*³²

Whedon: *The prevalent corruption and falsehood of the times is the theme of this psalm. Not that every individual is false, but that the leading men and governing spirit of society are so. True men are afraid to speak out, and flattery and deceit prevail. The psalmist is alone in the midst of these fickle tides, himself their victim.*³³

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Sometimes, a commentator will begin with a good observation of this chapter of the Bible.

Brief, but insightful observations of Psalm 12 (various commentators)

Barnes: *The psalm undoubtedly does refer to prevailing iniquity, and it is not difficult to determine to what form of iniquity it refers. It was a general failure of fidelity among good men; a general withdrawal from active duties of such men as had before been found faithful; a lack of that firmness and zeal which it was proper to expect from those who professed to be good men.*

Barnes continues: *Particularly, this psalm refers to prevailing modes of speech among those from whom it was right to expect better things: a condition in which there was a lack of seriousness and sincerity in conversation; in which flattery abounded; in which double meanings in conversation were common; in which promises solemnly made could not be relied on; and in which there was, in consequence, great wrong done to the poor and the unsuspecting - those who, on account of their ignorance and their unsuspecting nature, were greatly injured by putting confidence in such promises and assurances. In this state of things the psalmist felt that it was proper to call on God to protect those who were exposed to such wrongs.*³⁴

²⁷ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

²⁸ From <https://archive.org/download/19-Psalms/19-PSALMS.doc> accessed April 24, 2020.

²⁹ From Shmoop.com; accessed April 24, 2020.

³⁰ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

³¹ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8.

³² *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

³³ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

³⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

Brief, but insightful observations of Psalm 12 (various commentators)

The Biblical Illustrator: *[David] is evidently smarting from the falseness and hypocrisy of the time. The defection which he deplors is a national defection. Like Elijah in the desert, he feels himself alone. A taint has spread through society. Falsehood is everywhere, truth nowhere. The heart of man is double; their lips are flattering lips (verse 8). And whilst they utter slander, hypocrisy, and lies, they boast of their power; and not only give their tongues licence, but justify the licence: "Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?" Now this utter hollowness and insincerity are very hard to bear. The few who, in the midst of general corruption, still retain their integrity are persecuted, and sigh for deliverance.*³⁵

The Christian Community Bible: *Lies, propaganda and the false prophets of the easy life conceal the injustice of every day. God's word is true, and it will judge the world. In the Word-of-God-made-man, there is no yes and no: in him all the promises of God have become a yes.*³⁶

C. Clemence: *Let the student take the psalm simply for what it professes to be—a believer's moan over the corruptions of his age.*³⁷

E. Dunsterville: **Times of spiritual dearth and solitude**; *In the days of Savonarola, Italy was abandoned to its passions, its corruptions, and its vices. The rich tyrannised over the poor, and the poor were miserable, helpless, and abandoned. The zealous monk found himself at war with the world and the Church, and was shocked by the profanations that existed around him. "There is no one," he said, "not even one remaining, who desires that which is good; we must learn from children and women of low estate, for in them only yet remains any shadow of innocence. The good are oppressed, and the people of Italy are become like the Egyptians who held God's people in bondage."*³⁸

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *ONE penalty of living near God is keen pain from low lives. The ears that hear God's word cannot but be stunned and hurt by the babble of empty speech. This psalm is profoundly melancholy, but without trace of personal affliction. The psalmist is not sad for himself, but sick of the clatter of godless tongues, in which he discerns the outcome of godless lives.*³⁹

I don't know about the description being *stunned and hurt by the babble of empty speech*; but, extensive exposure to same does tend to get boring.

H. A. Ironside: *With Saul on the throne, David [the author of this psalm] knew what it was to be driven out into the wilderness, persecuted, hated, forsaken, and yet to love in return. Instead of grumbling and complaining, his heart goes out in thanksgiving, "I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart."* (Psalm 9:1)⁴⁰

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *The Psalmist laments the decrease of good men. The pride and deceit of the wicked provokes God's wrath, whose promise to avenge the cause of pious sufferers will be verified even amidst prevailing iniquity.*⁴¹

Keil and Delitzsch: *David points us to the time when the Temple music was being established, i.e., the time of David - incomparably the best age in the history of Israel, and yet, viewed in the light of the spirit of holiness, an age so radically corrupt.*⁴²

³⁵ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8.

³⁶ From sobicain.org; accessed April 9, 2020.

³⁷ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8 (Homilies by C. Clemence).

³⁸ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8.

³⁹ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

⁴⁰ From <http://plymouthbrethren.org/article/6477> accessed April 24, 2020.

⁴¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

⁴² Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

Brief, but insightful observations of Psalm 12 (various commentators)

Matthew Henry: *Ask the children of this world, What makes the times bad? they will tell you, Scarcity of money, decay of trade, and the desolations of war, make the times bad: but the Scripture lays the badness of the times on causes of another nature, 2Tim. 3:1, etc.: perilous times shall come, for sin shall abound; and of this David complains. When piety decays times really are bad. He who made man's mouth will call him to an account for his proud, profane, dissembling, or even useless words. When the poor and needy are oppressed, then the times are very bad. God himself takes notice of the oppression of the poor, and the sighing of the needy. When wickedness abounds, and is countenanced by those in authority, then the times are very bad.*

Henry continues: *See with what good things we are here furnished for such bad times; and we cannot tell what times we may be reserved for. 1. We have a God to go to, from whom we may ask and expect the redress of all our grievances. 2. God will certainly punish and restrain false and proud men. 3. God will work deliverance for his oppressed people. His help is given in the fittest time. Though men are false, God is faithful; though they are not to be trusted, God is.*

Henry concludes: *The preciousness of God's word is compared to silver refined to the highest degree. How many proofs have been given of its power and truth! God will secure his chosen remnant, however bad the times are. As long as the world stands, there will be a generation of proud and wicked men. But all God's people are put into the hands of Christ our Saviour; there they are in safety, for none can pluck them thence; being built on Him, the Rock, they are safe, notwithstanding temptation or persecution come with ever so much force upon them.*⁴³

J. Vernon McGee: *Prophetically, this psalm is like the preceding ones. It refers ultimately in its final fulfillment to the days of the Tribulation which will come upon Israel's godly remnant -- also upon godly Gentiles -- in that day.*⁴⁴

McGee is one of the few to note the prophetic nature of this psalm.

The NET Bible® also sums this chapter up quite nicely: *The psalmist asks the Lord to intervene, for society is overrun by deceitful, arrogant oppressors and godly individuals are a dying breed. When the Lord announces his intention to defend the oppressed, the psalmist affirms his confidence in the divine promise.*⁴⁵

Joseph Parker: **Our imperfect estimates;** *We must not accept the words of this Psalm as true because they happen to be written here or anywhere. It is perfectly possible for us to take an unwise and incorrect view of social conditions. David did not keep a register of all the "godly" and all the "faithful." Another prophet said that he alone was left; the Lord corrected his estimate, and said, No, not alone; I have seven thousand who have never kissed the lips of Baal. It is unwise to take the opinion of dejectedness and forsakenness upon any topic. When we are in extreme positions, either of joy or of sadness, we are not qualified to pronounce broadly and correctly upon the whole scope of Divine Providence.*⁴⁶

We should bear in mind that David is not merely complaining but this is the state of affairs as he sees it in his periphery. The same sort of thing happens to a president—they are separated more and more from the public by their inner circle, and if these men are insincere, flatterers and manipulators, then the leader at the top finds himself at their mercy.

As an aside, because this psalm is in the Word of God, and because there are timeless elements to it, we should give David the benefit of the doubt here, since he was divinely inspired when he wrote this psalm.

⁴³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

⁴⁴ From <https://archive.org/download/19-Psalms/19-PSALMS.doc> accessed April 24, 2020.

⁴⁵ *The Net Bible®*; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 12:1.

⁴⁶ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8.

Brief, but insightful observations of Psalm 12 (various commentators)

On the other hand, we may feel this way in our lives, and yet, it is not really the case. But, no matter what the case, whether this is true or simply one’s perception, looking to God in prayer and to His Word is the correct approach.

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As I study a chapter, questions will occur to me—some of them important and many of them minor. Not all of these questions will be satisfactorily answered.

Fundamental Questions About Psalm 12

1. When exactly did Psalm 12 take place?
2. If David’s life takes place during the golden age of Israel, how can it appear to him that there are no godly or gracious men left in this world?
3. Are God’s words placed into a furnace for purification?
4. Who or what is the Lord *keeping* in v. 7?
5. Given the way that this psalm ends, is there any hope to be had?

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I’ll include some of the comments about when this psalm was written:

The Occasion of Psalm 12 (various commentators)

Commentator	Occasion
Barnes	<i>On what occasion it was composed is now unknown, and there is nothing in the psalm itself to enable us to decide. Some have supposed that it was written in view of the persecution of David by Saul; and others, that it was in view of the rebellion of Absalom. There is nothing in the psalm, however, which shows that it has any spectral reference to those persecutions or troubles; nothing which might not have been uttered if those troubles had never occurred. All the expressions in the psalm are of a general character, and seem rather to refer to a prevailing state of iniquity than to any particular manifestation of wickedness as pertaining to the psalmist himself.</i> ⁴⁷
Benson	<i>It has been conjectured by some that he points particularly at the corruption which reigned in Saul’s court, and more especially at Doeg, and the treacherous Ziphites; who promised David their friendship with no other design but to deliver him up to Saul.</i> ⁴⁸
The Biblical Illustrator	<i>This, according to the title, is one of David’s Psalms; but there is nothing in the circumstances, so far as we know them, of his history, which can lead us to associate the Psalm with any particular period. Tholuck thinks it is aimed at persons by whom David was surrounded in the court of Saul. Others suppose that it was occasioned by the treachery of the Ziphites (1Sam. 23:19), or the treachery of Ahithophel, in Absalom’s rebellion. But it is not one or two prominent individuals whose conduct forms the burden of the Psalmist’s complaint.</i> ⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12 introduction.

⁴⁸ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

⁴⁹ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8.

The Occasion of Psalm 12 (various commentators)	
Commentator	Occasion
Cambridge Bible	<i>The title assigns it to David, who might have written it while he was at the court of Saul, or during his outlaw life. Men like Doeg were in positions of authority. Unscrupulous enemies were poisoning Saul's mind against him (1Sam. 26:19). The ungrateful citizens of Keilah were ready to betray their deliverer (1Sam. 23:11). The Ziphites deliberately meditated treachery (1Sam. 23:19 ff.).</i>
The Cambridge Bible continues	<i>The language is general, and the Psalm might belong to almost any age. Similar complaints are found in Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah. In every period of the Church's history there have been godly men who, separated from friends and persecuted by enemies, have been tempted to say with Elijah, "I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away."⁵⁰</i>
Clarke	<i>The Arabic has "Concerning the end (of the world which shall happen) on the eighth day. A prophecy relative to the Advent of the Messiah." Some think that this Psalm was made when Doeg and the Ziphites betrayed David to Saul, see 1 Samuel 22 and 23; but it is most likely that was written during the Babylonish captivity.⁵¹ Obviously, if written during the Babylonia captivity, then David was not the writer of this psalm.</i>
Guzik	<i>We do not know the exact circumstances of David's life that prompted this Psalm; it may well have been the period when he was in the court of King Saul, yet a target for the mad jealousy of the king. We can easily imagine a vicious whispering campaign against David among those who wanted to gain favor with the misguided king.⁵²</i>
Henry	<i>It is supposed that David penned this psalm in Saul's reign, when there was a general decay of honesty and piety both in court and country, which he here complains of to God, and very feelingly, for he himself suffered by the treachery of his false friends and the insolence of his sworn enemies.⁵³</i>
Keil and Delitzsch	<i>Keil and Delitzsch look at the placement of this psalm in the book of Psalms: Psalm 11:1-7 is appropriately followed by Psalm 12:1-8, which is of a kindred character: a prayer for the deliverance of the poor and miserable in a time of universal moral corruption, and more particularly of prevailing faithlessness and boasting.⁵⁴</i>
Matthew Poole	<i>The same title is prefixed to Psa 6. This Psalm was composed in the time and upon the occasion of Saul's ill government, and his persecution of David.⁵⁵</i>
Dr. Peter Pett	<i>This Psalm was written in dark times when evil seemed to prevail. But the humble and lowly were assured that while it might seem like it, it was not so, and that whatever the situation God was aware of their need and would sustain them. The same promise comes to His people today.⁵⁶</i>
Spurgeon	<i>We may read this song of complaining faith in the light of His coming who shall break in pieces the oppressor.⁵⁷</i>

⁵⁰ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

⁵¹ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12 introduction.

⁵² *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1-8.

⁵³ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12 introduction.

⁵⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

⁵⁵ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1.

⁵⁶ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

⁵⁷ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

The Occasion of Psalm 12 (various commentators)	
Commentator	Occasion
Spurgeon	<i>There is nothing to mark definitely the time of the composition; but its position in the Psalter, and its general resemblance to the psalms which precede, point to the period of David's residence at the court of Saul.⁵⁸</i>
Sutcliffe Commentary	<i>The lying tongue of Doeg, who misguided his sovereign to a rash and bloody act, pierced the soul of David. But he who for the moment prevails against his neighbour, shall soon himself be cut off. The sword of the Philistines in a few years proved sharper than the sword of Saul.</i>
Sutcliffe Commentary	<i>The great sin of slander and falsehood is to be noted here, as it led to all those foul and cruel deeds that followed. It was for the oppression of the defenceless poor, to whom they should have been fathers and protectors, that the day of visitation was reserved.</i>
Sutcliffe Commentary	<i>But this should console the afflicted in all such circumstances, that while the tongues of wicked men utter the malice of their hearts, the words of the Lord are pure, like gold seven times refined. He is not as man, that he should lie: his truth and faithfulness endure for ever. The promises made to the fathers are made to the children, to the generations not yet born. Fret not thyself then, oh my soul, when the vilest of men obtain promotion; for the Lord shall cast them down, and number them with the dust.⁵⁹</i>
John Trapp	<i>"Help, Lord." was high time to call to heaven for help, when Saul demanded, "Go, kill me up the priests of Jehovah" (the occasion as it is thought of making this Psalm)...1Sam. 22:17. David, after many sad thoughts about that slaughter, and the occasion of it, Doeg's malicious information, together with the paucity of his fast friends, and the multitude of his sworn enemies at court, breaks forth abruptly into these words, "Help Lord," help at a dead lift.⁶⁰</i>
Werner Commentary	<i>Psalm 12 is linked to David, but it does not provide the kind of details needed to identify a particular period in his life. Some of the thoughts expressed therein could fit the time he was fleeing from King Saul or when his son Absalom was plotting to seize the throne.⁶¹</i>
Whedon	<i>[This psalm] suits well the history of 1 Samuel 23.⁶²</i>

The view of Matthew Henry is my preference—that David writes this psalm during the reign of Saul, noting the dishonesty and degeneracy around him.

I would more specifically place this psalm during the reign of Saul where Doeg told Saul about the Tabernacle; and Saul had him kill all of the priests (one of young priests escaped to David). What could be more horrendous than the king ordering the slaughter of innocent priests and Levites? 1Sam. 22

However, on another day, my opinion would change and I would not place this psalm during David's life until after he has been made king. The flattering lips is exactly what a king would hear, far more than a shepherd or even a young warrior.

Most days, I would place David in the times of Saul, when David did not have many allies and people appealed to Saul by stroking his ego and agreeing with his false paranoia concerning David.

⁵⁸ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Expositions Volumes 1-3A*; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–2.

⁵⁹ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/jsc/psalms-12.html> accessed April 24, 2020.

⁶⁰ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:1.

⁶¹ From <https://wernerbiblecommentary.org/?q=node/17> accessed April 24, 2020.

⁶² *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

Generally speaking, I would not place this psalm during the revolt of Absalom. Men very faithful to David stuck with him and were led by him. Furthermore, David knew, because of his sin, that he would be under divine discipline; which culminated in the Absalom rebellion.

It is worth noting that most of the Bible should have a universal theme to it and that knowing exactly when something was written and what occasioned the human author to write can provide texture; but it is not necessary for those who want to apply these same words to the 21st century.

As an aside, the College Press Bible Study spent a consider number of **paragraphs** on this very topic, but there just was not enough there to reproduce it here.

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It is important to understand what has gone before.

The Prequel of Psalm 12

I believe that David’s interactions with Saul, when he was a young and faithful general to Saul, was the time that David wrote this psalm. I would first believe that David wrote this psalm during the time of **1Samuel 18**. ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). The only problem with this is, David has a good relationship with Saul’s son and daughter (he is best friends with Jonathan and married to Michal. I believe that we get around this problem by understanding that when David says that there are no more godly or faithful men who are alive, this does not mean that he knows of no one at all who could be so classified.

Another possible time that David wrote this psalm is when Saul had him on the run, and, in the course of events, Doeg, a soldier under Saul, kills all of the priests of Nob. This would make it seem as if there are no faithful or godly men remaining. **1Samuel 21:1–9** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#))

Psalm 12 will begin with David’s complaint that there are no more godly men remaining in Israel.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

We need to know who the people are who populate this chapter.

The Principals of Psalm 12

Characters	Commentary
David	David does not appear to take an active role in this psalm, although he is clearly the observer and no doubt, one who prays to God throughout this experience.
Ungodly men, the wicked	Men who are called in this psalm, <i>flatterers, men with a double heart, men who speak arrogant things.</i>
God	God speaks in this psalm and makes promises. His words are contrasted with the words of the sons of men.

That God speaks in this psalm is quite fascinating, because I do not believe that David ever saw a manifestation of God, nor did he ever hear God’s voice.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

There really is no place associated with this psalm.

By the Numbers

Item	Duration; size
The eighth (found in the inscription)	The actual meaning has been lost to us. Some consider this a reference to an 8-stringed instrument; others speak of this as a reference to the bass voice of the singers.
A double heart (v. 2)	Literally, <i>a heart and a heart</i> . Signifies that a person says one thing, but is thinking another.
The purity of God’s Word is compared to silver being purified 7 times (v. 6).	God’s words do not require any sort of purification. So David is not setting up a parallelism or an analogy, per se. 7 times is the number of perfection, so God’s Word is seen as being perfect.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Here is what to expect from Psalm 12:

A Synopsis of Psalm 12 (by D. Thomas)

- I. As a fact for devout lamentation. He mourns because of three things—
 - 1. The absence of the true. “The godly man ceases.”
 - 2. The presence of the false, vain man,—“they speak vanity.” Obsequious men “flattering lips.” Insincere—“a double heart.” They spoke one thing and meant another. Proud—they spoke “proud things.” Cruel—“the oppression of the poor.” What a spectacle for a devout eye.
 - 3. The exaltation of the vile. “The vilest men are exalted.”
- II. As a reason for Divine interposition.
 - 1. “Help, Lord.” So he prayed.
 - 2. Divinely promised. “Now will I arise, says the Lord.” This comes as an answer to the prayer. “Before they call I will answer.”
 - 3. Heartily expected. “You will keep them, O Lord.
- III. As suggesting by contrast the excellency of God’s Word. “The words of the Lord are pure words.” They are so for—
 - 1. They are unmixed with falsehood; and
 - 2. They have been thoroughly tested. “As silver tried in a furnace of earth,” etc. How thoroughly it has been tried these six thousand years, by persecution, by hostile criticism, by the most profound experience of the good in all ages.

Like all chapters of the Word of God, you need more than just the simple plot outline to understand what God wants us to know.

The Biblical Illustrator; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

A Synopsis of Psalm 12 (J. H. Jowett, M. A.)

The degeneracy of a soul

“Help, Lord!” This is the wailing supplication of a soul oppressed with the degeneracy of society. It is a cry for security amid an evil epidemic. This Psalm marks off the steps of social degradation. We can see the

A Synopsis of Psalm 12 (J. H. Jowett, M. A.)

progressive descents from the worship of God to the exaltation of vileness. Regard these stages of decline in their relationship to the individual. Society only reflects the individual man. Regard the passage as a vivid description of the degeneracy of a soul.

1. The decay of the sense of reverence. The beginning of degeneracy is to lose touch with God. We lose our touch with God when we cease to feel after Him. It is the effort to feel that preserves the sensitive touch.
2. The decay of the sense of honour. Faithfulness faileth, the dependableness of character is impaired. When reverence is benumbed, trustfulness is broken.
3. The decay of the sense of responsibility. "Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us? ' The perversion of honour destroys the sense of responsibility. Men become self-centred, and therefore blinded.
4. The decay of the sense of humanity. "The spoiling of the poor, the sighing of the needy." Where irresponsibility reigns, cruelty abounds. The birth of cruelty synchronises with the death of reverence.
5. The decay of the sense of right. "Vileness is exalted." This is the last stage of the appalling degradation. Evil at length becomes man's good. He has lost his moral discernment. How can we be saved from this perilous decline? The wish to be saved is the beginning of salvation. Exercise thyself in feeling, and thou shalt become expert in touching. Everywhere and at all times be reaching out for God. Pray for Him everywhere. The good Lord is dependable; He is better than His word.

The Biblical Illustrator; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

A Synopsis of Psalm 12 (The Biblical Illustrator)

The death of the godly an incentive to prayer

- I. Because there are so few of them in the world. Such men are the salt of the earth. God teaches us their worth by removing them from this world.
- II. Their presence and service here seem essential to the cause of God.
 1. On account of their example.
 2. Their influence and usefulness.
- III. Because it is so difficult to fill up their places.
- IV. The grace and providence of God suggest the only remedy—prayer. "Help, Lord," etc.

The **supergrace believer**, the **spiritual Atlas**, must also continue to grow in grace and knowledge.

The Biblical Illustrator; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

I only found a couple of outlines, and Barnes was the most different from mine.

An Alternate Outline of Psalm 12 by Albert Barnes

- I. A statement of the prevailing condition of things, as a reason why it was proper for God to interpose, Psalm 12:1–2.
- II. The fact that the Lord would interpose in such cases, and would cut off this class of persons, Psalm 12:3–5.

An Alternate Outline of Psalm 12 by Albert Barnes

III. The strong contrast between the words of the Lord and the language which was then in prevalent use, Psalm 12:6. The words of the Lord were pure; pure as silver tried by the severest tests of fire.

IV. A deep conviction on the part of the psalmist that God would be the protector of those who were thus exposed to injury and wrong; particularly he would keep them from the purposes of such a generation forever, Psalm 12:7.

V. The closing verse, "[The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted](#)" Psalm 12:8, seems to be but the carrying out of the idea of the divine protection in the psalm: "[Let the wicked walk about, therefore, on every side when vile men are exalted to power, for God is the protector of his people, and all such men are under his control.](#)" Or it may be the statement of a fact that wickedness did abound, or that people seemed to be unrestrained when wicked men were in power, though with the idea that God saw them, and would so check and restrain them that the injured and the wronged would be protected.

This is taken from Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12 introduction.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Outlines of Psalm 12 (Various Commentators)

Benson: *In this Psalm David, who was the author of it, as the title informs us, complains of the decrease of God's faithful servants, and of the prevalence of falsehood and treachery in the world (Psalm 12:1-2). Foretels the destruction of the wicked, especially of the deceitful and proud (Psalm 12:3-4). Assures himself and others that, how corrupt soever the times were, God would deliver and preserve his own people, and make good his promises to them (Psalm 12:5-7).*

Bridgeway Bible Commentary: *[I]n Psalm 12,...Ungodly people hold all the positions of power and pay no attention to the opinions of those who walk in God's ways. They maintain their authority and influence only by twisting, ignoring or withholding the truth (12:1-4). But God sees and knows. He promises to protect the godly, and his promises can be trusted (5-6). His people know that their only hope is in him (7-8).*⁶³

The Cambridge Bible: *The Psalm falls into two equal divisions, each consisting of two equal stanzas.*

- i. *Prayer for help amid prevailing faithlessness (Psalm 12:1-2). O that insolent braggarts might be exterminated! (Psalm 12:3-4).*
- ii. *Jehovah's promise of help; its purity and preciousness (Psalm 12:5-6). The Psalmist's confidence in the divine guardianship in the midst of unrestrained wickedness (Psalm 12:7-8).*⁶⁴

Clarke: *The psalmist, destitute of human comfort, craves help from God, Psalm 12:1; gives the character of those who surrounded him, and denounces God's judgments against them, Psalm 12:2-5; confides in the promises of God, and in his protection of him and all good men, Psalm 12:6-8.*⁶⁵

- Arno Gaebelein: 1. *The arrogance of the wicked in the last days (Psalm 12:1-4)*
2. *Then Jehovah will act and deliver His people (Psalm 12:5-8).*

⁶³ Don Fleming, *Bridgeway Bible Commentary*; ©1988, 1994, 2005; from e-Sword, Psalm 11:1-13:6.

⁶⁴ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

⁶⁵ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

Outlines of Psalm 12 (Various Commentators)

Gaebelein continues: *Psalm 12:1-4. It is the time of departure from the Lord; the godly and faithful have ceased. It is a mass of corruption, lying lips, flattering lips, proud lips. They reject the Lord. "Who is lord over us?" Psalm 12:5-8. Then faith sees the coming intervention. The Lord will speak. "Now will I arise, saith Jehovah, I will set him in safety whom they would puff." Jehovah will keep His people in these coming dark days, "when the wicked walk on all sides and the vilest men are exalted."*⁶⁶

Keil and Delitzsch: *The direct words of Jahve, and the psalmist's Amen to them, form the middle portion of this Psalm—a six line strophe, which is surrounded by four line strophes.*⁶⁷ This would give us vv. 1–4, 5–6, 7–8.

F. B. Meyer: *The opening words of the Psalm 12 appeal for help in bad and evil days. See Micah 7:2. A double heart is literally "a heart and a heart," Psalms 12:2. Let us be true in act and speech, else we forfeit the Spirit of truth, Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9. Our sighing will make God arise, Acts 7:56. We shall be helped and kept, Psalms 12:7 and Isaiah 54:17.*⁶⁸

NIV Study Bible:

12:1–2 Initial appeal, with description of the cause of distress.

12:3–4 The prayer.

12:5–6 A reassuring word from the Lord.

12:7–8 Concluding expression of confidence.⁶⁹

Matthew Poole: *David, being destitute of human comfort, craves help of God, Psalm 12:1. He exclaims against flattering and deceitful tongues, Psalm 12:2; and comforte himself with God's judgment on them, Psalm 12:3,4; and assures himself of his tried mercies to the needy, Psalm 12:5-8.*⁷⁰

J. J. Stewart Perowne, B. D.:

I. A complaint (Psalm 17:1-4).

1. The cry for help, because good men are nowhere to be found; and lies, and flattery, and insincerity prevail.

2. The prayer that flatterers and liars may be destroyed (Psalm 17:3-4).

II. The answer to that complaint (Psalm 17:5-7). Including God's promise of help in answer to the cry for help, and the Psalmist's Amen, and the assurance and hope built upon the promise (Psalm 17:7-8).⁷¹

Spurgeon: *[This Davidic psalm] consists of a complaint (Psalm 12:1, Psalm 12:2), a menace (Psalm 12:3, Psalm 12:4), and a promise (Psalm 12:5-8).*⁷²

Spurgeon: *Division - In the first and second verses David spreads his plaint before the Lord concerning the treachery of his age; Psalm 12:3 and Psalm 12:4 denounce judgments upon proud traitors; in Psalm 12:5, Jehovah himself thunders out his wrath against oppressors; hearing this, the Chief Musician sings sweetly of the faithfulness of God and his care of his people, in Psalm 12:6 and Psalm 12:7; but closes on the old key of lament in Psalm 12:8, as he observes the abounding wickedness of his times.*⁷³

⁶⁶ Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

⁶⁷ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

⁶⁸ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/fbm/psalms-12.html> accessed April 24, 2020.

⁶⁹ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 790 (footnote).

⁷⁰ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1.

⁷¹ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8.

⁷² Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Expositions Volumes 1-3A*; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–2.

⁷³ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

Outlines of Psalm 12 (Various Commentators)

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge gives us a nice summary of this psalm: *David, destitute of human comfort, craves help of God (vv. 1–4); He comforts himself with God's promises (vv. 5–6), and his judgments on the wicked (vv. 7–8).*⁷⁴

Whedon: *The psalm generally falls into two parts: the complaint, Psalm 12:1-4, and the answer of Jehovah and David's amen thereto, Psalm 12:5-8.*⁷⁵

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

I reworked this from a so-so looking graphic. However, the material contained within the graphic I thought was outstanding. It provides a very nice organizing approach to this psalm. This particular type of organization is known as a **chiasm**, which is very common in the book of Genesis and in the Psalms.

To the choirmaster: according to The Sheminith. A Psalm of David.

The Organization of Psalm 12 (ESV) (from Worship Arts Conservatory)

Scripture	Spoken to/by	Theme
1 Save, O LORD , for the <u>godly one</u> is gone; for the <u>faithful</u> have vanished from among the children of man . 2 Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.	Spoken to God	People are faithless
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?"	Spoken to the people	Man's speech is flattery and boasting
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."	Spoken by God	God promises to help
6 The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.	Spoken to the people	God's speech is flawless
7 You, O LORD , will keep them; you will guard us from this generation forever. 8 On every side the <u>wicked</u> prowl, as <u>vileness</u> is exalted among the children of man .	Spoken to God	God is faithful

The Worship Arts Conservatory picked up on the artful and precise construction of this psalm.

Notice some parallels and contrasts. The first verse speak of the godly and faithful disappearing; the last verse speaks of the wicked prowling about, when vileness is exalted.

⁷⁴ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, Psalm 12 introduction. I inserted the verses.

⁷⁵ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

Man’s speech in the second section is flattery and boasting. God’s thinking, in the parallel 4th section are pure words.

The central theme is found in the middle of the 3rd section—God will arise; and we may reasonably assume, He will exhibit His love, righteousness and justice.

The *LORD* is found in every section; in the vocative in the first and last section.

From **Worship Arts Conservatory**; accessed April 19, 2020 (with some minor editing). The next time that I do a psalm, I will come back and check their work on that psalm.

As an aside, the word that Worship Arts Conservatory did on this psalm appears to be based upon Casper Labuschagne’s **work** on the psalm. The WAC takes Labuschagne’s rather complex approach and presents the organizing structure of this psalm and represents it in a clear, easy-to-understand graphic.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

An Organization of Psalm 12 (a graphic); from **Worship Arts Conservatory**; accessed April 18, 2020.

Of all the outlines and summaries that I have seen, this one is by far the best. It provides perfect organization for this psalm.

The look of this graphic was not all that professional; but the organization of it I thought was first rate. For that reason, I reproduced it above.

I may even check this page and include their organization with every psalm that I do.

Various people have various skills; but what is most helpful to understanding a psalm is to see its fundamental purpose or organization first. Once that is understood, everything else falls into place.

I do not know anything about the Worship Arts Conservatory; I do not know their point of view, their affiliations, or their organizing principles. What I do recognize is the excellence of this work. Now, even though it is based apparently on Casper Labuschagne’s **work**, I found his analysis to be overly complex and confusing. Had I come across his work independently, I might have studied it for 5 or 10 minutes, and then moved on, not finding anything I could include in this study of Psalm 12. So, what we have here is an interesting combination of believers: Labuschagne from South Africa, who apparently does a spot-on analysis of the structure of Psalm 12, but in such a way that, few people would understand or appreciate it. And then someone from the WAC comes along, studies Labuschagne’s work, and then distills it into a much better, and easier-to-understand format (I do not know how much of this work is original and how much was inspired by Labuschagne).

That you are reading this here helps to illustrate the variety and importance of our various spiritual gifts. I did not come up with this organization on my own (sometimes I am able to, but this time, I missed it). A believer in South Africa did recognize the organizational structure, but explained it in a rather complex fashion. Someone at WAC saw his word and distilled it into a graphic; and then I came along, recognized the brilliance of the graphic and just cleaned it up a bit.

I have listed the outlines and summaries of nearly 20 different men, most of whom are noted Christian theologians who have lived over a period of perhaps 400 or 500 years. Then I came across this chiasm from WAC while I was simply searching for graphics, and realized, this person totally nailed it.

Psalm 12 (ESV)
To the choirmaster: according to The Sheminith.
A Psalm of David.

1 Save, O Lord, for the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man.	Spoken To God	People Are Faithless
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,	Spoken to the People	Flattering Speech
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."	Spoken By God	God Responds
6 The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.	Spoken to the People	Flawless Speech
7 You, O Lord, will keep them; you will guard us from this generation forever.	Spoken To God	God Is Faithful
8 On every side the wicked prow, as violence is exalted among the children of man.		

Central Theme: Verse 5b

At some point in time, I am going to have to revisit the work I have done in the psalms, and add in this important work of two men, one who is a genius when it comes to complex analysis; and another a genius when it comes to distilling this complex analysis to an easy-to-understand format.

Despite being quite pleased with the WAC organization above, I will include the synopses and outlines of others.

929 Synopsis of Psalm 12 (Rabbi David Z. Moster)

Psalm 12 – “Petition and Response”

I. Summary

The psalmist petitions God to help the needy and God promises to do so.

II. Photo [from flickr; accessed April 12, 2020]

The psalmist trusts in God: “The words of the Lord are pure words, silver purged in an earthen crucible, refined sevenfold.” (v. 7) [I assume that the graphic is balls of silver.]

III. Select Verses

2-4: Help, O LORD! For the faithful are no more; the loyal have vanished from among men. Men speak lies to one another; their speech is smooth; they talk with duplicity. May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, every tongue that speaks arrogance.

6: “Because of the groans of the plundered poor and needy, I will now act,” says the LORD. “I will give help,” He affirms to him.

7: The words of the LORD are pure words, silver purged in an earthen crucible, refined sevenfold.

9: On every side the wicked roam when baseness is exalted among men.



IV. Outline

1. Superscription
- 2-3. Invocation, petition, complaint
- 4-5. Wish/imprecation
6. Salvation Oracle
- 7-9. Affirmation of confidence

V. Comment

No comment. Stay tuned.

VI. Works Used

(see “Commentaries” page)

Collins, John J. “Introduction to the Hebrew Bible,” (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

Craigie, Peter C. “Psalms 1-50” Word Biblical Commentary vol. 19 (Waco, Texas: Wordbooks, 1983).

Gerstenberger, Erhard S. “Psalms Part 1 with an Introduction to Cultic Poetry” Forms of Old Testament Literature (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1988).

Their verse numbering here follows the Hebrew. It is interesting that nearly every verse of this chapter was chosen as an important verse. Regarding the picture, I don’t have a clue.

From [929chapters](#); accessed February 9, 2020.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

I see the final two verses of this psalm as being the *strong verses*.

A Synopsis of Psalm 12 from the Summarized Bible

Contents: A prayer for help against oppressors.
Characters: God, David.
Conclusion: The believer is commonly tempted to think that because trouble has lasted long, it will last always, but if he will bring his cares and griefs to the throne of grace, he may go away with praise, being assured that all will be well at last.
Key Word: Oppressors, Psalm 12:5.
Strong Verses: Psalm 12:3, Psalm 12:6.
Striking Facts: Psalm 12:6. Some see in the seven-fold trying of God’s Word, an allusion to the seven dispensations of man or to the seven periods of the church, or to that perfection signified in the number seven to which the Scriptures will have been brought at the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

Keith L. Brooks, *Summarized Bible; Complete Summary of the Bible*; ©1919; from e-Sword, Ex. 12.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

I include these two summaries which each study that I do; but it should be clear how on point WAC is when they simply are not.

The first chapter heading sometimes does double duty, giving an overall view of the chapter and/or telling what the first section is about. I make an attempt to find 5 translations with very different divisions.

Paragraph Divisions of Modern Translations for Psalm 12

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	Expanded Bible	Tree of Life
God, a Helper against the Treacherous	Man’s Treachery and God’s Constancy	Plea for Help in Evil Times	A Prayer Against Liars	Silence the Flattering Lips

There are no real paragraph divisions, as this is poetry. Each line is divided into 2 or more lines.

Inspired by Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Changes—additions and subtractions (for Psalm 12): Very often, when I begin a new chapter, I have either discovered a new translations, a new commentary; or have decided to leave out a particular translation or commentary. Sometimes, I make a minor formatting change. I have always placed such comments before the beginning of the first verse. So one formatting change is, *the addition of this more formal approach to changes, giving it a section of its own*. Many times, if I like a change a lot, I will occasionally go back and make that change in previous chapters.

I have begun to include more than the same 9 translations when I do my first exegetical study of a chapter.

In the past, if I updated a word (like *ceaseth* to *ceases*) I would note this in the footnote, adding the words *slightly edited*. I have decided to stop doing that for simply updating to 21st century English.

As an aside, I know that many younger Christians barely understand the King James Version or King James’ English. To them, it is like a foreign language. Keil and Delitzsch often pepper their commentary with Latin or with Greek, which was fine during an age when many of their readers understood some Latin and some Greek (it was

standard fare, even for many in high school). However, if I included complete quotes from Keil and Delitzsch, it would put off a significant number of readers, as Greek and Latin is gibberish to them.

There is one commentator, Adam Clarke (1715-1832) whom I often quote, and he occasionally gives a Scottish or Welsh translation (I forget which). He provides that translation for v. 8: **In umgang wiked gos: eftir thy heenes thu has multiplied the sons of man.**⁷⁶ Even though our English has some roots in this language, it is frightfully difficult to read and digest.

Now, if I am experiencing trouble with these sorts of citations, I know that those younger than me have trouble with King James' English. I realize that there is no modern version, including the NKJV, which has the same literary punch as the KJV. But, if you do not understand the KJV—if the thee's and the thou's put you off—then the literary punch is moot.

Also, beginning with this psalm, if I give the text of a Scriptural reference, I will no longer make note of that in the citation. So if Dr. John Gill cites Psalm 18:30 while commenting on the text of Psalm 12:6, I may add in the text of Psalm 18:30, but without making note of it in the citation.

Similarly, there are some older commentators, like John Gill, who will wax on eloquently for 170 words, without taking a breath or employing a period.⁷⁷ I may impose a period here or there and not note that in the citation.

Originally, I have listed the lessons where R. B. Thieme, Jr. might have taught a particular chapter or psalm. Now I have put this into a table, have referenced doctrinal teachers, and have placed this into the *Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines*.

Since the last studies I did in the Psalms was 2007 and 2012, what I do here and what I did back then will be like night and day when it comes to details. There are far too many changes to list them all here. I did make a handful of changes in the translation near the end, developing a better understanding of the psalm this time around.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Psalm 12 Inscription

As always, 3 separate translations will be produced for each verse. The slavishly literal translation attempts to preserve word order and number, making it more literal than Young's translation (however, I do not preserve the consistency of the translation that Young does). The moderately literal translation may add or delete a definite article, change the number of a noun to correspond with the English sense of thinking, and the order is often changed in order to better represent our English sentence structure. The paraphrase is an attempt to give a thought-for-thought interpretation of what each verse tells us.

The entire translation (the moderately literal and not-so literal paraphrase) may be found at the **end** of this study.

Slavishly literal:

To the preminent [one]; upon the eighth [or, *sheminith*]; a psalm to David.

Psalm
12 inscription

Moderately literal:

To the preminent one; on the octave [or, *sheminith*]; a psalm of David.

⁷⁶ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

⁷⁷ This is from an actual example of his commentary for this chapter.

A reasonable paraphrase:

To the one who is preeminent; on the octave; a Davidic psalm.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	To the preeminent [one]; upon the eighth [or, <i>sheminith</i>]; a psalm to David.
The Psalms targum	For praise, on the lyre of eight strings. A hymn of David. Translated by Edward M. Cook.
Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	Unto the end: for the octave, a psalm for David.
Septuagint	For the end, A Psalm of David, upon the eighth.

Significant differences: The Greek and Latin both have *to the end*; the Hebrew has, *to the preeminent one*.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Easy English	This is a song that David wrote for the music leader.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	To the director: With the sheminith. A song of David.
Good News Bible (TEV)	No inscription is listed. [I mentioned this a few times, but many translations leave out the psalm inscriptions.]
<i>The Message</i>	A David Psalm
New Simplified Bible	([Psalm of David])

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press paraphrase	To the Chief Musician.
Contemporary English V.	(A psalm by David for the music leader.)
New Berkeley Version	<i>The Lord Will Judge the Wicked</i> For the Chief Musician; according to the Sheminith [or, <i>the eighth</i> ; an eight-stringed instrument; or an octave lower than <i>alamoth</i>]. A Psalm of David.
New Living Testament	For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by an eight-stringed instrument.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	No inscription.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	To the director; the eighth Psalm of David.
Beck's American Translation	<i>When People Lie</i> For the choir leader; for base voices [<i>Conjecture</i>]; a psalm by David.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	(To the choir-master. Over the octave. A psalm. Of David.)

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Revised Ferrar-Fenton Bible	To the Conductor of the Pipers. A Psalm of David.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	The Twelfth Psalm To the Chaunter upon *Shenunith. From the Hebrew: * my father is a lamp "doubtful"
HCSB	Oppression by the Wicked For the choir director: according to Sheminith. A Davidic psalm.

International Standard V	To the Director: On an eight stringed harp. [12:T Or on a lower octave] A Davidic Psalm.
Lexham English Bible	For the <i>music</i> director; on the Sheminith. A psalm of David.
Unlocked Literal Bible	For the chief musician; set to the Sheminith. A psalm of David.
Wikipedia Bible Project	To the conductor of the Shminith, a lyric for David:...

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

The Heritage Bible	To the Chief Musician upon an Eight Stringed Lyre. A Psalm of David.
New American Bible (2011)	For the leader; “upon the eighth.” A psalm of David.
New Jerusalem Bible	[For the choirmaster On the octachord Psalm Of David]
Revised English Bible–1989	<i>For the leader: according to the sheminith: a psalm: for David.</i>

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	For the leader. On sh'minit [low-pitched musical instruments?]. A psalm of David:...
exeGesex companion Bible	To His Eminence; On the Octave; A Psalm by David.
Israeli Authorized Version	No inscription.
Tree of Life Version	Silence the Flattering Lips For the music director, on the eight-string lyre, a psalm of David.

Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible	FOR THE END, A PSALM OF DAVID, UPON THE EIGHTH.
Concordant Literal Version	A Davidic Psalm
Orthodox Jewish Bible	For the one directing According to the Sheminith Mizmor of Dovid
Rotherham's <i>Emphasized B.</i>	To the Chief Musician. On the Octave. A Melody of David.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	God, a Helper against the Treacherous. To the Chief Musician; ^[a]set an octave below. A Psalm of David. [a] Or possibly on the eight-stringed lyre; meaning uncertain.
The Expanded Bible	A Prayer Against Liars For the director of music. Upon the ·sheminith [^Leighth; ^Ca reference to an eight-stringed instrument or possibly the manner of singing]. A psalm of David.
The Voice	For the worship leader. A song of David accompanied by the lyre. Hebrew, <i>sheminith</i> , perhaps an eight-stringed instrument from a root meaning “eight”

Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

College Press Bible Study	Psalm—By David.
The Complete Tanach	For the conductor on the sheminith, a song of David.

on the sheminith: The eight stringed harp.

NET Bible®	<i>For the music director; according to the sheminith style;² a psalm of David.</i> ^{1sn} Psalm 12. The psalmist asks the Lord to intervene, for society is overrun by deceitful, arrogant oppressors and godly individuals are a dying breed. When the Lord announces his intention to defend the oppressed, the psalmist affirms his confidence in the divine promise.
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^{2th} The meaning of the Hebrew term תִּיִמִיט (shÿminith) is uncertain; perhaps it refers to a particular style of music. See 1 Chr 15:21.

Peter Pett’s translation

‘For the Chief Musician; set to the Sheminith. A Psalm of David.’

Again the psalm is for the Choirmaster. ‘Sheminith’ means eighth. It may refer to an eight stringed instrument, or to a musical notation. Again the psalm is a part of the Davidic collection.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

C. Thompson (updated) OT Context Group Version	For the conclusion, for the eighth [day] A Psalm by David. For the Chief Musician; set to the Eight Strings. A Psalm of Davi.
English Standard Version	The Faithful Have Vanished To the choirmaster: according to The Sheminith. [Probably a musical or liturgical term] A Psalm of David.
MKJV	To the Chief Musician, on eight. A Psalm of David.
New American Standard B.	God, a Helper against the Treacherous. For the choir director; upon an eight-stringed lyre [Or according to a lower octave (Heb Sheminith)]. A Psalm of David.
New King James Version	Man’s Treachery and God’s Constancy To the Chief Musician. On an eight-stringed harp [Heb. sheminith]. A Psalm of David.
Niobi Study Bible	Man’s Treachery and God’s Constancy; To the Chief Musician. On an eight-stringed harp. A Psalm of David.
Webster’s Bible Translation <i>Young’s Literal Translation</i>	For the Chief Musician; upon an eight-stringed lyre. A Psalm of David. To the Overseer, on the octave. --A Psalm of David.

What is the gist of this verse? This psalm was written either to God or for the choir director, and it was written by David.

Psalm 12 inscription a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^{er}]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong’s # BDB #510
nâtsach (נָצַח) [pronounced naw-TZAHKH]	<i>to oversee, to supervise; to be preeminent, to be enduring; the Preeminent One</i>	Piel participle with the definite article	Strong’s #5329 BDB #663

The Piel participle of nâtsach is given a wide variety of renderings: *overseer* (Young), *the music leader* (CEV), *choir director* (NASB, NLT), *choirmaster* (Owens), *leader* (NRSV, NEB, NAB) and *chief musician* (Rotherham).

Translation: **To the preeminent one;...**

As we have seen with the numerous translations above, no one is clear as to who this person is. This psalm could be dedicated to God, which would be represented by capitalizing *Preeminent One*. On the other hand, this psalm could be written to be conducted by the chief musician, which is how Rotherham understands it. Most translators assume that this is given over to the choir director or the conductor or the one in charge of those who sang. The strongest argument against this psalm being dedicated or written to God is, *David could have used a well-known designation for God, but he did not.*

Unfortunately, the exact meaning of the lâmed preposition is also hard to determine. We find several psalms which are ascribed to David written *to David*; but the idea is, the psalm *belongs to David*. The lâmed preposition is used more often when something is given *to* someone else or something is *for* someone else, the chief meanings of the lâmed preposition. Despite the use of the lâmed preposition with David throughout the book of Psalms, I have taken this to me that this psalm is written *for* whoever this preeminent person is.

Barnes comments on this portion of the inscription: *This phrase in the title, "To the chief Musician," occurs at the beginning of 53 psalms, and at the close of the hymn in Habak. 3:19. It is uniformly rendered "to the chief Musician," and means that the psalm was intended for him, or was to be given to him, probably to regulate the manner of performing it. In no one instance does the title imply that he was the author. The word rendered "Chief Musician" is derived from [a Hebrew word] properly meaning "to shine," but not used in the Qal. In the Piel form it means to be conspicuous; to be over anything; to be chief; to be superintendent (2Chron. 2:2, 18 34:12) and then it means to lead in music. The meaning of the form used here, and in the other places where it occurs as a title to a psalm, is "Chief Musician," or precentor; and the idea is, that the psalm is to be performed under his direction; or that the music is to be directed and adapted by him.*⁷⁸

Even though we have the same preposition used here as we find used with *David*, when he is the author, the many times that this phrase is found in combination with the author's name suggests more that there is a musical organization and that this song was delivered over to the Choirmaster (or conductor) of that organization to be sung and performed at various functions.

The NIV Study Bible has its opinion on this matter: *[For the director of music is] probably a liturgical notation, indicating either that the psalm was to be added to the collection of works to be used by the director of music in Israel's worship services, or that when the psalm was used in the temple worship, it was to be spoke [or, sung?] by the leader of the Levitical choir—or by the choir itself (see 1Chron. 23:4–5, 30 [Of the overseers over the works of the house of the Lord there were twenty-four thousand, and there were six thousand scribes and judges; and four thousand gatekeepers, and four thousand to praise the Lord with instruments which he made to praise the Lord...to stand in the morning to praise and give thanks to the Lord, and so in the evening] 25 [assignments are given to the sons of Korah, among others]). In this liturgical activity the Levites functioned as representatives of the worshiping congregation. Following their lead the people probably responded with "Amen" and "Praise the LORD" (Hallelujah); see 1Chron. 16:36 Neh. 5:13; compare 1Cor. 14:16 Rev. 5:14 7:12 19:4.*⁷⁹

A reasonable question would be: *we can make a reasonable guess as to who this preeminent one is, but we really don't know, so why did God the Holy Spirit include this inscription (and the many like it) in the psalms.* This is a good question as, many of the psalms have information which help us to place the psalm into a particular time and place, which provides us with an enriched understanding of the psalm; however, here, although we can certainly come to a conclusion or make a reasonable hypothesis, we really do not know if this is the solution or not. Let me suggest that the use of the word has an intentional double-meaning: (1) David writes this psalm and will turn it over to the choirmaster, the music conductor; (2) but, in a larger sense, this psalm is written to God, with God in mind, inspired by God the Holy Spirit, and is therefore, dedicated to *the Preeminent One*.

⁷⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 4 introduction.

⁷⁹ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 782 (footnote). Text slightly edited and some of the passages were included as well.

Psalm 12 inscription b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gah</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
sh ^e mîynîyth (תִּינִיַּת) [pronounced <i>sh^e-mee-NEETH</i>]	<i>eight; eighth key; octave; transliterated <i>sheminith</i></i>	feminine singular adjective numeral; with the definite article	Strong's #8066 & #8067 BDB #1033

Translation: ...on the octave [or, *sheminith*];...

Originally, I wanted to place this psalm with 1Chron. 15, because there is a rare word found here and in 1Chron. 15. However, even by v. 1, it appears to be clear that this psalm would not be appropriate to the celebration of bringing the Ark into Jerusalem.

From looking at the other translations, it should be apparent that no one really knows what this word means, although it is probably a musical term. This rare word is the feminine form of the numeral *eight*. However, we know little else besides this. A CEV footnote suggests that this is a musical instrument.⁸⁰

God the Holy Spirit must have known that, 3000 years into the future, we would read this and be nonplussed. So, *why would He include this word?* First off, not everything in Scripture is written specifically for your benefit or for mine. So, at one time, this may have meant something to the reader; specifically, in this case, for the music director. Secondly, some of these words and some things which take place are later archeologically discovered to come from the place and time that we expect it to. Thirdly, most agree that this is a musical term, which tells us, that the psalms were written to be sung/performed and that there is nothing wrong with musical professionalism.

In my life, I have seen the Word of God handled with anything but professionalism; and I have been in churches where there is no professionalism to be found. It is God's way to run an organizations with professionalism, which would include specific authorities, integrity, accountability, and intelligence. A church service should not be a free-for-all; and a Christian organization should not lack organization or accountability.

Psalm 12 inscription: ...on the octave [or, *sheminith*];...

Psalm 12 inscription: sh^emîynîyth (various commentators)

E. W. Bullinger quite the detailed explanation here: *Though it is agreed that the word means "eighth", it is not agreed as to what "the eighth" refers to. It varies between "the eighth mode", "the eighth (or octave) below" (i.e. the bass), "the eighth day", or year, or "an instrument with eight strings". The latter is out of the question, because, in 1Chron. 15:21, those with harps are set "over the Sheminith" (as others are set "over the 'Alamothe"), and we cannot speak of certain "instruments" being "set" over others. Moreover, the Sheminith are additional to Neginoth in the sub-scription to Ps. 5.*

Bullinger continues: *1Chron. 15:21 helps us to the solution. The 'Alamothe being maidens (v. 1Chron. 15:20), it would seem obvious that the Sheminith must be men (v. 1Chron. 15:21). But what class of men? The Talmud (*4) suggests a class of true Israelites, i.e. those circumcised on the eighth day, and thus distinguished from all other Jews or Gentiles; for other nations who practice circumcision always do so on a later day (*5), never on the eighth day.*

⁸⁰ *The Promise* (The Contemporary English Version); Thomas Nelson Publishers; ©1995; p. 587 (footnote).

Psalm 12 inscription: sh^emîynîyth (various commentators)

Bullinger concludes: *As all others in the procession were, in this sense, Sheminith, and the Sheminith are distinguished from these as well as the 'Alamoith, Dr. Thirtle concludes that it must refer, as well, to a division in that procession. Everything points to divisional order in such processions (cp. Exodus 25:14. Num. 4:15; Num. 7:9. So also in 1Chron. 24:1; 1Chron. 26:1; 1Chron. 26:12). The definite article seems conclusive. In 1Chron. 15:21 the Sheminith were to lead (R.V.), not "to excel" (as in A.V.). This is its general meaning (see 1Chron. 23:4. 2Chron. 34:12. Ezra 3:8; Ezra 3:9), where it is rendered "set forward".*⁸¹

Clarke: *The Arabic has "Concerning the end (of the world which shall happen) on the eighth day."*⁸²

Dr. John Gill: *The word "sheminith" is used in the title of Psalm 6:1, and signifies "eighth"; and intends either the eighth note, to which the psalm was sung, or rather the harp of eight chords, to which it was set, as the Targum and Jarchi interpret it. Some Jewish writers understand it of the times of the Messiah; and the Syriac version entitles the psalm.*

Gill also writes: *The Arabic version says, it is concerning the end of the world, which shall be in the eighth day; and concerning the coming of the Messiah: but Arnobius interprets it of the Lord's day.*⁸³

Spurgeon: *As Sheminith signifies the eight, the Arabic version says it is concerning the end of the world, which shall be the eighth day, and refers it to the coming of the Messiah.*⁸⁴

Whedon: *Sheminith—This word is an ordinal adjective, signifying the eighth, which some take as an instrument of eight strings; Furst, as the eighth division of the choristers; but it is better to understand it as denoting the lowest and gravest notes sung by men—the modern bass, as opposed to alamoith, or soprano.*⁸⁵

Admittedly, Bullinger's explanation may have been a bit much; on the other hand, perhaps he is the only person who is correct here.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Psalm 12 inscription c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
miz ^e môwr (מִזְמוֹר) [pronounced <i>miz-MOHR</i>]	<i>melody, song, poem, psalm</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4210 BDB #274
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i>]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187

Translation: ...a psalm of David.

⁸¹ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; from Bullinger's Appendices; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, App–65.

⁸² Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

⁸³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

⁸⁴ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

⁸⁵ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 6 (chapter comments).

As has been discussed in the past, the lamed preposition can indicate authorship in these psalms, and when found with *David*, it is reasonable to assume that he is the author of this psalm.

Psalm 12 inscription [To the preeminent one; on the octave \[or, *sheminith*\]; a psalm of David.](#)

Psalm 12 inscription [To the one who is preeminent; on the octave; a Davidic psalm.](#)

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

The Psalmist Calls on God to Deliver Him from the Ungodly

J. Vernon McGee: *In the opening verses we find a description of the apostasy in those days.*⁸⁶

Ultra literal translation

Reasonably literal translation

**Save, O Y^ehowah—
for has come to an end a pious [one],
for have ceased faithful [ones] from sons
of man.**

Psalm
12:1

**Preserve [me] [or, *Deliver (us)*], O Y^ehowah,
for the gracious [man] has come to an end;
for those who are faithful have ceased [to
be] from mankind [lit., *sons of man*].**

Reasonable paraphrase

**Preserve us, O Jehovah,
for the gracious believer is no longer,
for those who are faithful have ceased to be among men.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	Save, O Y ^e howah— for has come to an end a pious [one], for have ceased faithful [ones] from sons of man. In the MT, v. 1 is the inscription and this is v. 2.
The Psalms targum	Redeem, O Lord, for the good [righteous] are annihilated; for the faithful have ceased from the sons of men.
Aramaic Targum	Save, Lord Jehovah, because the good man is finished and faith has ceased from the Earth!
Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	Save me, O Lord, for there is now no saint: truths are decayed from among the children of men.
Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	SAVE, O LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for faith hath disappeared from the earth.
Septuagint	Save me, O Lord; for the godly man has failed; for truths are become rare from among the children of men.
Complete Apostles' Bible	Save me, O Lord; for the godly man has failed; for truth is diminished from among the children of men.
Significant differences:	Although the second verb appears to be different, it is simply another translation of the Hebrew verb. It is very likely that <i>truths</i> from the LXX is their rendering of

⁸⁶ From <https://archive.org/download/19-Psalms/19-PSALMS.doc> accessed April 24, 2020.

faithful ones. The final verb in the LXX is possibly an alternate rendering of *to cease* from the Hebrew; it is not a New Testament verb, so I could not say for certain. Furthermore, this Hebrew verb is found nowhere else in Scripture, so our English translations are making guesses at its meaning as well. You will notice that below, I have listed a lot of translations for this verse; that indicates that there will be some difficulty in rendering it into English and in understanding what it is saying. Therefore, I don't think that the differences that we find in the Greek are significant or indicative of different words in the Hebrew.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	Send help, Lord, for mercy has come to an end; there is no more faith among the children of men.
Easy English	A prayer for help Lord, please help me! All the good people have gone away! No kind or faithful people remain.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	Save {me} Lord! The good people are all gone. There are no true believers left among all the people on earth.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	Save me, LORD! We can no longer trust anyone! All the good, loyal people are gone.
<i>God's Word</i> ™	Help, O LORD. No godly person is left. Faithful people have vanished from among Adam's descendants!
Good News Bible (TEV)	Help us, LORD! There is not a good person left; honest people can no longer be found.
<i>The Message</i>	Quick, GOD, I need your helping hand! The last decent person just went down, All the friends I depended on gone.
Names of God Bible	Help, O Yahweh . No godly person is left. Faithful people have vanished from among Adam's descendants!

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press paraphrase	Lord! Help! Godly men are fast disappearing. Where in all the world can dependable men be found?
Contemporary English V.	Please help me, LORD! All who were faithful and all who were loyal have disappeared.
The Living Bible	Lord! Help! Godly men are fast disappearing. Where in all the world can dependable men be found?
New Berkeley Version	Do help, O LORD, for godly men have come to an end; for the faithful have vanished from among the descendants of man.
New Life Version	God—Our Helper Help, Lord! For God-like men are here no more. The faithful can no longer be seen among the sons of men.
New Living Testament	Help, O LORD, for the godly are fast disappearing! The faithful have vanished from the earth!
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	Yahweh, help us! It seems like people who honor you are no more, that those who are loyal to you have all vanished.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	O Jehovah; Please come down here and save me, For there are no holy ones left,
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Common English Bible	And few among men tell the truth. Help, Lord, because the godly are all gone; the faithful have completely disappeared from the human race!
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Lord, come to my rescue; piety is dead; in a base world, true hearts have grown rare.
Translation for Translators	A psalm written by David for the choir director Yahweh, help us! <i>It seems that people who are loyal to you have all vanished.</i>

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Revised Ferrar-Fenton Bible	STANZA 1. Help, LORD, for the merciful cease, And the faithful fail from Adam's sons.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	Help Lord, for there is not one saint more: very few faithful are there among the children of men.
HCSB	Help, LORD, for no faithful one remains; the loyal have disappeared from the human race.
International Standard V	Human and Divine Words Contrasted Help, LORD, for godly people no longer exist; trustworthy people have disappeared from humanity. [Lit. from among the children of men]
Lexham English Bible	Save, O Yahweh, for <i>the</i> pious have ceased to be; for <i>the</i> faithful have vanished from among <i>the</i> children of humankind.
Arnold B. Rhodes ⁸⁷	Supplication in a Time of Degeneracy (For the Chief Musician; Set to the Sheminith. A Psalm of David).
Unlocked Literal Bible Urim-Thummim Version	Help, Yahweh, for the godly have disappeared; the faithful have vanished. Help YHWH; for the Holy man comes to an end; for the faithful disappear from among the children of men.
Wikipedia Bible Project	Yahweh, save us. For the pious is finished, because the believers faltered among the sons of man.



Psalm 12:1 (HCSB) (a graphic); from **Wellspring Christian Ministries**; accessed April 18, 2020.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988) Help us, O Lord, none of the godly are left, the faithful have vanished.

⁸⁷ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/psalms-12.html> accessed April 24, 2020.

The Heritage Bible	Save, Jehovah, because the merciful ceases, because the faithful disappear from among the children of men.
New American Bible (2002)	Help, Lord, for no one loyal remains; the faithful have vanished from the human race.
New American Bible (2011)	Help, LORD, for no one loyal remains; the faithful have vanished from the children of men. Ps 14:3; 116:11; Is 59:15; Micah 7:2.
New Jerusalem Bible	Help, Yahweh! No one loyal is left, the faithful have vanished from among the children of Adam.
New English Bible—1970	Help Me O Lord! Help, LORD, for loyalty is no more; good faith between man and man is over.
New Jerusalem Bible	Help, Yahweh! No one loyal is left, the faithful have vanished from among the children of Adam.
Revised English Bible	Save us, LORD, for no one who is loyal remains; good faith between people has vanished.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	Help, <i>ADONAI!</i> For no one godly is left; the faithful have vanished from humankind.
JPS (Tanakh)	Help, O LORD! For the faithful are no more; the loyal have vanished from among men.
Hebraic Roots Bible	Help, O YAHWEH, for the righteous ceases to be; for the faithful fail from among the sons of men.
Israeli Authorized Version	Help, YY ; for the Elohimly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	Save, יהוה, for the kind one is no more! For the trustworthy have ceased from among the sons of men.
Tree of Life Version	Help, Adonai! For no one godly exists. For the faithful have vanished from the children of men.

Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible	SAVE ME, JESUS; FOR THE GODLY MAN HAS FAILED; FOR TRUTH IS DIMINISHED FROM AMONG THE CHILDREN OF MEN.
Awful Scroll Bible	Be delivering me Jehovah - is he honored to have come to his end? - is he being credible to have faded away from the sons of mankind? -
Concordant Literal Version	Do save, O Yahweh, for the benign one has reached an end, For the faithful ones have disappeared from the sons of humanity;"...
exeGesés companion Bible	Save, O Yah Veh; for the mercied decease; for the trustworthy disappear from among the sons of humanity.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	Help, Hashem; for the chasid is no more; for the emunim (faithful ones) vanish from among Bnei Adam.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Help, Lord! For principled and godly people are here no more; faithfulness <i>and</i> the faithful vanish from among the sons of men.
The Expanded Bible	Save me, Lord, because the good [faithful; godly; covenantal; loyal] people are all gone;

·no true believers are left on earth [^L the faithful have vanished among humanity].

Kretzmann's Commentary

Verses 1-8

Prayer for God's Protection of His Church.

This psalm again shows a prophetic strain; it is applicable throughout to the little flock, the poor, small crew of the Christian Church, in its many vicissitudes. Cf Acts 2:30. To the chief musician upon Sheminith, upon the octave, to be sung or played with bass voices, or, on an eight-stringed instrument, a psalm of David.

Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, it was a time when true piety was decreasing both in amount and in influence; for the faithful fail from among the children of men, true loyalty and faithfulness having become exceedingly rare in the world, vanished, to all intents and purposes.

The Pulpit Commentary

Help, Lord; rather, Save, Lord, as in the margin (comp. Psalm 20:9; Psalm 28:9; Psalm 60:5, etc.). For the godly man ceaseth. "Ceaseth," i.e; "out of the land"—either slain or driven into exile. We must make allowance for poetic hyperbole. For the faithful fail from among the children of men (compare, for the sentiment, Micah 7:2). The writer, for the moment, loses sight of the "remnant"—the "little flock"—which assuredly remained, and of which he speaks in Psalm 12:5 and Psalm 12:7. [Sometimes the entire verse is found in the Pulpit Commentary and sometimes not.]

Syndein/Thieme

{Verbal Reversionism - if no Pivot of believers}

Help, Jehovah/God . . .

for the godly man {SuperGrace believer} ceases to exist.

For the faithful ones disappear from the human race.

The Voice

Help me, O Eternal One, for I can't find anyone who follows You.

The faithful have fallen out of sight.

Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

College Press Bible Study

Oh save Jehovah! for the man of kindness is no more, for the faithful have ceased from among the sons of men:... Cp. Isa. 57:1-2, Mi. Psalm 7:2.

The Complete Tanach

Save, O Lord, for the pious are gone, for the faithful have vanished from the sons of men.

are gone: Heb. רגם, lit. finished, destroyed.

have vanished: Heb. פּוּל, faylirt in Old French, to lack, fail.

for the faithful have vanished from the sons of men: Everyone betrays me and spies out the places where I hide, and tells Saul (54:2): "Is not David hiding with us?"

NET Bible®

Deliver, Lord!

For the godly³ have disappeared;⁴

people of integrity⁵ have vanished.⁶

³tn The singular form is collective or representative. Note the plural form "faithful [ones]" in the following line. A "godly [one]" (חַסִּיד, khasid) is one who does what is right in God's eyes and remains faithful to God (see Pss 4:3; 18:25; 31:23; 37:28; 86:2; 97:10).

⁴tn Or "have come to an end."

⁵tn Heb "the faithful [ones] from the sons of man."

⁶tn The Hebrew verb פּוּל (pasas) occurs only here. An Akkadian cognate means "efface, blot out."

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Adam Clarke	Save me, O Lord; for merciful men fail, and faithful men have passed away from the sons of Adam.
Charles Thompson OT	SAVE me, O Lord! for a holy one hath ceased; for truths are scarce among the sons of men.
Context Group Version	Help, YHWH; for the godly man ceases; For the trustworthy fail from among the sons of man.
Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	O save, Yahweh, For the man of lovingkindness [or, <i>grace</i>] is no more, For the faithful have vanished from among the sons of men.
English Standard Version	Save, O LORD, for the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man.
Green's Literal Translation	Help, O Jehovah, for the godly ceases to be; for the faithful fail from among the sons of men.
New European Version	Help, Yahweh; for the Godly man is fading away, the faithful fail from among the children of men.
Restored Holy Bible 6.0	Help, LORD; for the Saint ceases; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.
Young's Updated LT	Save, Jehovah, for the saintly have failed, For the steadfast have ceased from the sons of men.

What is the gist of this verse? David calls to Jehovah for help, because it appears to him that believers and mature believers have seemed to have disappeared from his periphery.

This is v. 2 in the Hebrew and all of the verses in the original Hebrew are off by one. Bear in mind that the division of the Bible into chapters and verses was done long after Scripture was originally written.

Psalm 12:1a (= 12:2a in the Hebrew)

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yâsha' (עָשָׂה) [pronounced yaw-SHAHG]	<i>to deliver, to save; to set free, to preserve; to aid, to give relief</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperative; with the voluntative hê	Strong's #3467 BDB #446
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yhoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: [Preserve \[me\]](#) [or, *Deliver (us)*], O Y^ehowah,...

It is not clear what or whom David wants God to deliver. There are no suffixes for this verb. David could be asking for himself, which is quite likely. However, David could be asking for himself and those around him; and he could be asking for the nation Israel.

Poetry is often somewhat more vague, and, for this reason, can be applied in more situations. As we will find in the next portion of this verse, it is unclear as to *why*, but those who are believers and those who are faithful believers appear to be missing from David's periphery. This could be a psalm written by a lonely David when watching the sheep out in the fields as a young man. This could be David when he is pursued by his own son Absalom. This could be David when he finds himself face to face with Achish, king of Gath. Given these various situations, we may apply this psalm to ourselves in much the same way. As an aside, I don't believe that this psalm was written during any of those situations.

I recall that, soon after being saved, I was exposed to doctrine. I began to study that, along with a lot of cultic crap (which I eventually rejected). The few Christians that I knew either seemed to be cut from a cookie cutter (those I met from Campus Crusade—no offense meant to Campus Crusade); and those that I knew from church appeared to have absolutely no real interest in the Word of God, although they were up for being religious. There was one afternoon where my wife and I invited several other young couples from the church we attended (a reasonable, standard, Baptist church) and we all listened to a tape of R. B. Thieme, Jr. There was really no discussion afterwards, and as we exited, one of the guys looked straight at me as they were exiting and quietly said, “We are *never* going to do this again.” *None* of those people ever spoke to me later, saying, “That was amazing; he is quite a teacher.” After awhile, I began to wonder, *am I that far gone? Am I the only person I know who seems to have this interest in the Word of God being taught carefully, word by word, verse by verse.* So, at any point in time, when you feel that you are alone, you may go to this psalm to call upon God for preservation and deliverance.

Can you imagine being a believer in a Muslim country? Everything that you saw, everything that you read, would tell you that you are wrong and misguided; and many would consider you to be a dangerous person, worthy of death. Not only would your friends and family reject you, but many of them would actually want to see you die. Some of them would like this to be an unpleasant death. You might not even know another believer, or, if you do, meeting with them could be life-threatening act, if discovered. When a person feels that they are the only one left—whether or not this is a true perception—then they should go to this psalm for comfort and guidance.

Psalm 12:1a [Preserve \[me\]](#) [or, *Deliver (us)*], O Y^ehowah,...

Psalm 12:1a Save, Y^ehowah (various commentators)

Barnes: [Help, Lord](#) - Hebrew, “*Save, Yahweh.*” *The idea is that there was no human help, and, therefore, the divine help is implored. The psalmist saw that those on whom reliance was usually placed for the promotion of the cause of truth and virtue now failed, and hence, he invites the divine interposition.*⁸⁸

Benson: [Help, Lord](#) — Hebrew, העִשׂוּהָ, hoshigna, *save, Jehovah; namely, me and other good men, from the subtlety and rage of wicked men.*⁸⁹

The Cambridge Bible: [Help\]](#) *Render save, as in Psalm 3:7, Psalm 6:4, Psalm 7:1.*⁹⁰

Expositor’s Bible Commentary: *The cry for help...abruptly beginning the psalm tells of the sharp pain from which it comes.*⁹¹

W. Forsyth: *As the child instinctively cries to its father, so we cry to God. Society may wax worse and worse. The righteous may fail out of the land. It is hard to serve alone. Falsehood and lust prevail. There are fears on every side. In God alone is our help found.*

Forsyth continues: *There is some relief in telling our griefs. Further, we are cheered by the assurance of God’s love. He must ever be on the side of truth and right. More particularly we are encouraged by the record of God’s mighty works, and his promises to stand by his people.*⁹²

Matthew Henry: *[Even in] such bad times...we have a God to go to, from whom we may ask and expect the redress of all our grievances.*⁹³

⁸⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1.

⁸⁹ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1.

⁹⁰ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12:1.

⁹¹ *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

⁹² *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8 (Homilies by W. Forsyth).

⁹³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

Psalm 12:1a Save, Y^ehowah (various commentators)

Morgan G. Campbell: *Here is a cry for help but no suggestion that God is indifferent. Indeed, there is an immediate affirmation [vv. 3 & 5] of confidence in the interest and interference of God.*⁹⁴

William Nicholson: *The petition is brief and jaculatory, for he breaks upon God with one word—Help, or Save. Of which he gives two reasons—*

- (1) *The penury and scarcity of good men.*
- (2) *The great abundance of the wicked, and the licentious times.*⁹⁵

Spurgeon: *“Help, Lord!” A short, but sweet, suggestive, seasonable, and serviceable prayer; a kind of angel’s sword, to be turned every way, and to be used on all occasions.*

Spurgeon continues: *Ainsworth says the word rendered “help,” is largely used for all manner of saving, helping, delivering, preserving, etc.*

Spurgeon continues: *“Help, Lord,” is a very useful ejaculation which we may dart up to heaven on occasions of emergency, whether in labour, learning, suffering, fighting, living, or dying.*⁹⁶

Dr. Bob Utley: *In the OT this term has the implication of physical deliverance but in the NT it takes on the emphasis of spiritual salvation.*

Utley then adds: *I have often thought how sad it would be for someone to be physically delivered (i.e., health, war, financial) but miss the joy and benefit of spiritual deliverance! In the NT healing did not always result in a spiritual transformation. What humans need most is God, not a change of circumstances!*⁹⁷

Whedon: *Help, Lord—The call is abrupt, impassioned, and universal. The verb has no object, because the evil is not local and personal, but general.*⁹⁸

In difficult circumstances, there are two promises for the believer to remember:

Eph. 3:20–21 **Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.**

Rom. 8:31 **What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?**

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: Psalm 3:7, Psalm 6:4, Psalm 54:1; Matt. 8:25, Matt. 14:30.⁹⁹

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Psalm 12:1b (= 12:2b in the Hebrew)

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471

⁹⁴ Morgan G Campbell, *Exposition on Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

⁹⁵ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8.

⁹⁶ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon’s Expositions Volumes 1-3A*; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–2.

⁹⁷ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Psalm 12:1–5.

⁹⁸ *Whedon’s Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1.

⁹⁹ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Psalm 12:1.

Psalm 12:1b (= 12:2b in the Hebrew)

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gâmar (גָּמַר) [pronounced gaw-MAHR]	<i>to complete, to finish, to end, to come to an end; to leave off, to fail</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1584 BDB #170
châçîyd (חַסִּיד) [pronounced khaw-SEED]	<i>gracious, kind, pious; gracious one, pious one</i>	masculine singular adjective	Strong's #2623 BDB #339

Translation: ...for the gracious [man] has come to an end;...

The adjective used here means *gracious* and this word is often used to describe the mature believer (one who is grace-oriented). David examines his periphery, and there appear to be no mature, grace-oriented believers around. As mentioned above, this could have taken place on a number of occasions in David's life. His family seemed to reject him, and he found himself out under the stars watching over his father's sheep for most of his young life. Here, he would be completely alone. He could be walking toward Goliath, ready to take this giant on, knowing that no one in the entire army of Saul came forward to do this over a period of 40 days. Later, Saul hated David and pursued him, and David had to leave, again, completely alone (he was joined by others, but not immediately). He even showed up in Gath, a heathen city (although I would not be surprised if Achish was a believer). And, David's own son pursued him much later in his life, with the intent of killing him. On any of these occasions, David could have looked around and saw that there were no strong believers in his periphery.

Psalm 12:1b ...for the gracious [man] has come to an end;...

Psalm 12:1b The châçîyd man has come to an end (various commentators)

Barnes: *For the godly man ceases* - The word used here properly denotes the "merciful" man - חַסִּיד *cha' si' yd*. It is a term applied to the righteous, because it is a prominent trait in the character of a pious man that he is merciful, kind, benignant. Hence, the general character is often denoted by the special characteristic; in the same way as we speak of a pious man as a good man, a just man, a righteous man. The idea suggested by the use of the term here is, that it is always a characteristic of a pious man that he is merciful or benignant. Compare Psalm 4:3; Psalm 32:6, where the same word is rendered "godly;" Psalm 30:4; Psalm 31:23; Psalm 37:28; Psalm 50:5; Psalm 52:9; Psalm 79:2; Psalm 85:8, where it is rendered saints; and Deut. 33:8; Psalm 16:10; Psalm 86:2; Psalm 89:19, where it is rendered "holy."

Barnes continues: "Ceases." The word used here - גָּמַר *gâmar* - means properly to bring to an end; to complete; to perfect. Hence, it means to come to an end, to cease, to fail.¹⁰⁰

Gilbert Burnet waxed poetically about the *godly man*: "Godly" imports a benign, gentle, and good-natured man, but this has such a relation to religion, and is such a disposition to it, that among the Jews the word was in common use extended to a man that was exact to all the duties of religion, and strict in the performance of them. A godly man is not one that places his religion in many assumed practices, that do not tend to make him better. Nor he that understands his religion well Nor he that is very regular in all outward rules and matters of form.

¹⁰⁰ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1.

Psalm 12:1b The châçiyd man has come to an end (various commentators)

Gilbert Burnet continues: *The truly godly man has an inward sense of a supreme power that is over him, and endeavours to resemble this being, and to govern all his actions in conformity to the will and laws of God. He believes that God, by His providence, watches over all things, and consequently resigns himself up to His will, and submits to everything that comes to him from that hand. A godly man is a faithful man. He that has a true sense of religion knows that God is true, and so he always speaks the truth. He is severe in matters of truth.*¹⁰¹

Despite Burnet's flair for the English language, the *godly man* is the *gracious man*, or the *grace oriented man*. He is the person who takes advantage of the life of grace which God has given us. He is a man who takes in Bible doctrine through God's grace system (known as **grace apparatus for perception**); and grows spiritually.

The Cambridge Bible: *Mercy and truth, lovingkindness and trustworthiness, seem to have become extinct. Similar complaints are common in the prophets. See Hosea 4:1; Micah 7:2; Isa. 57:1; Isa. 59:14 ff.; Jer. 5:1 ff; Jer. 7:28; Jer. 9:2 ff.*¹⁰²

Gesenius: *This might occur either by their being cut off by death; or by their ceasing to exert their influence in favor of religion; that is, by a general prevalence of wickedness among those who professed to be the friends of God. The latter seems to be the meaning here, since, in the following verses, the psalmist proceeds to specify the manner in which they "fail;" not by death, but by speaking vanity, falsehood, and flattery. That is, their conduct was such that their influence failed, or was lost to the community.*

Benson: *for the godly man ceases* — נֹחַד, *chasid, the kind, or, merciful man, as the word properly means.*¹⁰³

Gesenius continues: *No reliance could be placed on them, and, therefore, the psalmist so earnestly calls on God for his interposition. The idea is, that when men professing religion become conformed to the world - when they live like other men - when they cease to exert an influence in favor of piety - when they fall into habits of sin, it is a time to call on God with special earnestness for his aid. Often such conduct on the part of the professed friends of religion makes such an appeal to God more proper than even the death of good men does, for, in the latter case, their influence is simply withdrawn; in the former, not only is this influence which they might exert lost to the church, but there is a positive bad influence to be counteracted. The fall of a professor of religion into sin is a greater loss to the church than his death would be.*¹⁰⁴

Men of grace could simply cease to exist. This does not mean that they all die out, but that their souls become infiltrated with human viewpoint and legalism.

Matthew Poole: *The godly; or, kind, or merciful, as this word is oft used, as Psalm 30:5 31:24 86:2: q.d. I and my friends are sorely and causelessly persecuted, banished from our homes and friends, and, which is worst of all, from God's sanctuary.*¹⁰⁵

Spurgeon: *"For the godly man ceases [to be]," the death, departure, or decline of godly men should be a trumpet-call for more prayer, They say that fish smell first at the head, and when godly men decay, the whole commonwealth will soon go rotten. We must not, however, be rash in our judgment on this point, for Elijah erred in counting himself the only servant of God alive, when there were thousands whom the Lord held in reserve.*¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8.

¹⁰² *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12:1.

¹⁰³ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1.

¹⁰⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1.

¹⁰⁵ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1.

¹⁰⁶ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Expositions Volumes 1-3A*; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–2.

Psalm 12:1b The châçiyd man has come to an end (various commentators)

Trapp: *[For] the merciful man [ceases]; who, having obtained mercy from You [God], would show me mercy, and defend my innocence; such as these are banished the court, which is now possessed by parasites and sycophants.*¹⁰⁷

Whedon: *The godly man ceases—Better, the merciful man ceases; exactly parallel to Micah 7:2 : “The good man is perished out of the earth.” The earth is given up to violence and rapine. On the use of noֹד, (hasid,) godly, merciful, see on Psalm 4:3; Psalm 86:2.*¹⁰⁸

Let me add the caveat that some men of grace change as well, for whatever reason, so that they are no longer men of grace.

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: Gen. 6:12 Isa. 1:9, 21-22 57:1 63:5 Jer. 5:1 Micah 7:1-2 Matt. 24:12.¹⁰⁹

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Psalm 12:1c (= 12:2c in the Hebrew)

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
pâçaç (פָּצַח) [pronounced paw-SASS]	<i>to cease, to leave off; to disappear, to vanish; to fail; to spread oneself abroad</i>	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #6461 BDB #821
The Hebrew verb pâçaç (פָּצַח) [pronounced paw-SASS] occurs only here. An Akkadian cognate means "efface, blot out." ¹¹⁰			
'âman (אָמַן) [pronounced aw-MAHN]	<i>those who stand firm, the faithful [ones], the unshaken ones; those who are secure</i>	masculine plural, Qal passive participle	Strong's #539 BDB #52
min (מִן) [pronounced mihn]	<i>from, off, out from, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
bânîym (בְּנֵיִם) [pronounced baw-NEEM]	<i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men; young men, youths</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
'âdâm (אָדָם) [pronounced aw-DAWM]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind, Adam</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #120 BDB #9

The word *the Adam* can mean *man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings*.

¹⁰⁷ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:1 (slightly edited).

¹⁰⁸ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1.

¹⁰⁹ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Psalm 12:1.

¹¹⁰ *The Net Bible*®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 12:1.

Psalm 12:1c (= 12:2c in the Hebrew)

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Whedon: <i>Children of men—Sons of Adam, a designation of an earthborn, degenerate race, as opposed to “sons of God.”</i> ¹¹¹			

Translation: ...for those who are faithful have ceased [to be] from mankind [lit., sons of man].

The main verb found here in this phrase is only found here, so I have listed all of the possible meanings from several sources. This is in identical parallel to the previous portion of this verse, so we may reasonably assume that this word is a synonym for the verb in v. 1b.

The verb which is a participle acts like the subject of the main verb, and this is the common verb which means *to trust, to believe, to have faith in, to place faith in, to put one's weight upon*. In the passive sense, this is a class of men who have done so—they have placed their faith in Y^ehowah Elohim, Who is Jesus Christ. I would further suggest that these are people who have great faith in the Word of God and that they pursue knowledge of God's Word whenever possible (or, better yet, regularly, daily).

In the previous portion of this verse, it appears that David may have been speaking of grace-oriented believers; however, in this part of the verse, it appears as though he is simply speaking of other believers.

Now, there are two ways that this final phrase could be understood. This could be rendered *believers from the sons of men have disappeared*; or, *believers have disappeared from the sons of man*. The difference is slight, but there is a difference.

In any case, David examines his periphery and it appears that there are no believers (or no grace believers) around him. Recall that Elijah felt the exact same way; he thought that he was the only one left in all Israel (God told him that he was wrong, by the way).

Not only are the general characterizations which may be given to certain generations in a geographical area (God states that He hated Gen X of the Exodus generation); but there may be times of **spiritual advance** for a generation and times of **reversionism** for the very same generation.

Psalm 12:1c ...for those who are faithful have ceased [to be] from mankind [lit., sons of man].

Psalm 12:1c The faithful cease to be (various commentators)

Barnes: *The word [faithful] is equivalent to the believing, and is properly expressive of trust or faith in God.*¹¹²

Benson: *The faithful fail, &c. — Men have lost, not only serious piety, that even truth and honesty in their conversation and dealings with men.*¹¹³

E. W. Bullinger: *That is, the faithful fail.*¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Whedon's *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1.

¹¹² Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1.

¹¹³ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1.

¹¹⁴ *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p. 588.

Psalm 12:1c The faithful cease to be (various commentators)

Gill comments: *The words design the paucity of them, and the sad degeneracy of the times to which they refer: and they may belong either to the times of David, when Saul's courtiers flattered him, and spoke evil of David; when the men of Keilah intended to have delivered him up; when the Ziphites discovered him to Saul, and invited him to come and take him; or when Absalom rose up in rebellion against him, and so many of the people fell off from him: or else to the times of Christ; the people of the Jews in his age were a wicked and faithless generation; and even among his own disciples there was great want of fidelity: one betrayed him, another denied him, and all forsook him and fled; after his death, some doubted his being the Redeemer, and one of them could not believe he was risen from the dead, when he was.*

Gill continues: *And these words may be applied to the antichristian times, the times of the grand apostasy, and falling away from the faith, upon the revealing of the man of sin; since which the holy city is trodden under foot; the witnesses prophesy in sackcloth; and the church is in the wilderness, and is hid there. Yea, to the second coming of Christ, when there will be great carnality and security, and little faith found in the earth. A like complaint with this see in Isa. 57:1 (*The righteous man perishes, and no one lays it to heart; devout men are taken away, while no one understands. For the righteous man is taken away from calamity*).¹¹⁵*

J. Vernon McGee: *It is easy to develop an Elijah complex today and say, "I am the only one left. I am the only one standing for God today." Many people develop that complex. It is not accurate, but it can happen when you see godlessness on every hand.*¹¹⁶

NIV Study Bible: *The faithful are those who maintain moral integrity.*¹¹⁷

Whedon: *The faithful—Literally, the amen people. Those who believe and speak the truth and keep their word. Men have ceased to regulate their conduct one with another by the law of kindness and truth. Compare the complaint of Elijah, 1Kings 19:10; 1Kings 19:14.*¹¹⁸

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: *Prov. 20:6; Isa. 59:4, 13-15.*¹¹⁹

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

It might be worthwhile to see some of the verses where we find *the faithful ones*:

God Preserves Those Who Believe in Him

Verse	Quotation
Psalm 3:4	Know that the LORD has set apart the faithful for Himself; the LORD will hear when I call to Him.
Psalm 18:25	With the faithful You prove Yourself faithful; with the blameless man You prove Yourself blameless.
Psalm 31:23	O love Jehovah, all you His saints; for Jehovah preserves the faithful, and abundantly recompenses the proud doer.
Psalm 37:28	For the LORD loves justice and will not abandon His faithful ones. They are kept safe forever, but the children of the wicked will be destroyed.

¹¹⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1 (I added the text of Isa. 57:1).

¹¹⁶ From <https://archive.org/download/19-Psalms/19-PSALMS.doc> accessed April 24, 2020.

¹¹⁷ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 790 (footnote) (slightly edited).

¹¹⁸ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1.

¹¹⁹ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Psalm 12:1.

God Preserves Those Who Believe in Him

Verse	Quotation
Psalm 86:2	Protect my life, for I am faithful. You are my God; save Your servant who trusts in You.
Psalm 97:2	You who love the LORD, hate evil! He protects the lives of His godly ones; He rescues them from the hand of the wicked.

These verses were taken from *The Net Bible*®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 12:1.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

There are going to be two things which help to tie this psalm together into a nice, neat package: the first is this phrase, *the sons of Adam* (or, *the sons of men*). This short phrase will be in the final verse of this psalm as well. When we see a phrase occur in a first and last verse, immediately, we should be thinking, **chiasm**.

Psalm 12:1 [Preserve \[me\]](#) [or, *Deliver (us)*], O Y^ehowah,
for the gracious [man] has come to an end;
for those who are faithful have ceased [to be] from mankind [lit., *sons of man*].

These are unbelievers, these are those who are fallen and have not believed in Jesus Christ; these are the ones who persecute or defile or exploit others for their own gain.

Matthew Henry: *When godly faithful people cease and fail it is time to cry, Help, Lord!* ¹²⁰

Lange: *Those are bad times when the number of the friends of God and of the faithful decreases, and the number of the double-tongued, deceitful and false increases in the land.* ¹²¹

It is a fascinating observation to read this psalm and also to think back on the time of David, realizing that this was one of the greatest periods of time in Israel's history (along with the reign of Solomon).

Star Trek 2020 (a graphic); from [Power Line Blog](#); accessed April 12, 2020.

Application: I write this in April of 2020, understanding that, right now is one of the greatest times to be alive in the United States (if not the greatest); and also recognizing that people of this time are viewing this time in 2020 this as one of the worst times in US history. Essentially, people have been forced to take a few weeks vacation in their own homes (*what a sacrifice!*) Whenever there is a period of time where God's blessing is so clearly seen, Satan is also there, either trying to take credit for it or to muck it up (or both, simultaneously). Despite our many blessings, we cannot lose sight of the fact that we live in the devil's world.

Application: David is bemoaning his time insofar as, he cannot



¹²⁰ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

¹²¹ The Rev. Dr. John P. Lange, *Lange's Commentary*; 1857–1864; in the Public Domain; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8 (Doctrinal and Ethical).

find men of true spiritual character in his periphery; he feels like anyone around him has another agenda (a double heart) and will tell David whatever might achieve that hidden agenda (or tell King Saul). We have to be careful not to simply bemoan our own circumstances because they are difficult. Or to exalt our difficulties over our blessings. We cannot allow a particular negative aspect of our lives to overshadow everything else.

Application: I post that meme tongue-in-cheek. I do not believe that this is a horrible time to be alive; I am not a person who cannot wait for 2020 to be over with. We have a simple change of circumstance, and the believer in Jesus Christ cannot allow himself to be thrown about, as if on a ship on the unstable high seas during a storm. God has given us the **faith-rest** life; He has given us the **supergrace life**. **God has not give us a spirit of fear but of power, love and self-control** (2Tim. 1:7).

One thing which I have seen much more of in my own neighborhood are families hanging out together; walking in the beautiful weather together. We need to accept the circumstances that we are in and mix in healthy amounts of Bible doctrine. While you are alive, it is okay to enjoy all that God has given us; it is okay to enjoy your life. Although we have difficult circumstances in our lives, we also take the time to enjoy our lives. There are times and places where there are great blessings showered upon believers (such as believers living in the United States in 2020). As an aside, as God has blessed you, be a blessing to others.

All that being said, David may have solid reasons to bemoan this time in his life.

Psalm 12:1 **Preserve [me] [or, Deliver (us)], O Y^ehowah,**
for the gracious [man] has come to an end;
for those who are faithful have ceased [to be] from mankind [lit., sons of man].

Psalm 12:1 David bemoans his time period (various commentators)

Dr. John Brown presents this possible progression: *In observing the advances of commerce, we shall find that in its first stages it supplies mutual necessities, prevents mutual wants, extends mutual knowledge, eradicates mutual prejudice, and spreads mutual humanity. In its middle and more advanced period, it provides conveniences, increases numbers, gives birth to arts and science, creates equal laws, diffuses general plenty and general happiness. If we view it in its third and highest stage, we shall see it change its nature and effects. It brings in superfluity and vast wealth, begets avarice, gross luxury, or effeminate refinement among the higher ranks, together with general loss of principle.*¹²²

C. Clemence: *Many a prophet of the Lord has had to look upon such a state of things, when all day long he stretched out his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people.*¹²³

James Burton Coffman: *perhaps [this is]...merely an hyperbole for the sake of emphasis.*¹²⁴

Delitzsch very much makes the same point: *The time of David, incomparably the best age in the history of Israel, and yet, viewed in the light of the spirit of holiness, an age so radically corrupt.*¹²⁵

I would guess that the time of David is the second-best time in Israel to be alive, the first best time being the reign of Solomon. However, in thinking about this, who would not want to be alive during the public ministry of our Lord, despite everything else?

¹²² *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

¹²³ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8 (Homilies by C. Clemence).

¹²⁴ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/psalms-12.html> accessed April 24, 2020.

¹²⁵ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

Psalm 12:1 David bemoans his time period (various commentators)

From my own point of view, living in the United States of America in this era is possibly the greatest time to ever be alive on this earth. We have such incredible freedom in this country; and so many options in life. Now, don't misunderstand me—I am not claiming greater spiritual understanding than David. However, I recognize that the spiritual opportunities in this era right now are the greatest that they have ever been.

James Burton Coffman: *The age of David was in some ways the Golden Age of Israel, but here is a revelation that the moral condition of society as a whole was one of the utmost degeneracy.*¹²⁶

I believe that this was the situation while Saul was still king and he was starting to go a bit mad. Note my final remark at the end of this set of commentators.

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *The age of David was in many respects the "golden age" of Israel, then it was great in literature, commerce, statesmanship, music, architecture, and arms. And yet David bemoans it, and sighs amid all its splendour.*

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary continues: *The true glory of a country is moral, and where the moral element is wanting, all other glories are dim. David felt that whilst palaces, people, chariots, gems, and gold, were on the increase, pious, honest, true-hearted men were on the decrease; nay, they seemed in danger of disappearing altogether, and he felt the gravity of the situation.*

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary continues: *Paul overlooked the museums, pictures, statues, palaces of Athens, and "his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry;" and when we survey the magnificence of our country, we must weep to think of the atheism, the sin, the folly of the people.*

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary finally concludes: *Philosophers, poets, commanders, artists, orators, statesmen, millionaires, do not make "a golden age," but the presence of many virtuous and godly men, and where these are wanting, colours, marbles, jewels, domes, and plumes, are but dust and ashes. The age that we call "golden," Heaven may call "dark;" the age that is written down in human histories as supremely august may be an age which angels record in Heaven's "Book of Lamentations."*¹²⁷

To be fair, this may have taken place when Saul was king, and he led his country wrong.

C. Smith: *Remember when Elijah said, "Lord, they have all bowed their knee to Baal and I, only I am left. Lord, the righteous man ceases. There is none left."*¹²⁸

Charles Haddon Spurgeon: *One might have thought that David still lived among us, his cry is so timely, so exactly true to the position of affairs today.*¹²⁹

Sutcliffe's Commentary: Psalms 12:1. **Help, Lord; for the godly**, Hebrews **חֲסִיד** chasid, **the merciful man ceases**. The true reading is preferable, because it joins piety with usefulness. In this manner David is thought to have prayed in the wilderness of Ziph, against the vices of the court, after the eighty priests of Nob, and their city, were destroyed. 1 Samuel 22:23.¹³⁰

Trapp (paraphrased): *Herein, David complained of Saul, that he was too apt to listen to any negative report of David (1Sam. 24:9; 1Sam. 26:19), so that David would never be treated fairly by Saul.*¹³¹

¹²⁶ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/psalms-12.html> accessed April 24, 2020.

¹²⁷ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

¹²⁸ Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

¹²⁹ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Expositions Volumes 1-3A*; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

¹³⁰ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jsc/psalms-12.html> accessed April 24, 2020.

¹³¹ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:1 (paraphrased).

Psalm 12:1 David bemoans his time period (various commentators)

Dr. Bob Utley: *Either their numbers are greatly reduced (LXX) or they have completely disappeared (compare Psalm 12:1 & 3.*¹³²

Interestingly enough, many great historical periods follow spiritual awakenings. The Renaissance followed the Reformation; and in the United States, these many decades follows WWII have really been amazing. I believe that it is due to the Billy Graham crusades and the teaching of R. B. Thieme, Jr.

I said that I was revisiting this psalm and delving into it more deeply in April/May 2020. Presently, we are facing the Corona virus, where what is being asked of most people is, they stay home and, if they go out, they practice social distancing. Even the government is doing its best to send out money to individuals and small businesses alike. The sacrifices which we are called upon to make are nothing like those of the greatest generation, a significant number of whom stormed the beaches of Normandy; or the generations of young Americans who fought in Korea and in Vietnam (the latter soldiers coming home and being treated with disdain by many).

No doubt people will wonder, *you had food, the internet, television and access to movies and books; the big deal was what exactly? Your great sacrifice was sitting at home and chillin'?*

I believe that this verse reveals the time and occasion of this psalm. Saul is king; everyone around him tells him what he wants to hear; and they are feeding off one another, flattering Saul and telling lies about David, so that Saul believes that his worst suspicions about David are being confirmed.

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Application: Because of the society which I live in, when exploitation is mentioned, some automatically think of a rich businessman who exploits his workers, but this is but one form of exploitation (and not all employers exploit their employees). Furthermore, being a rich businessman and hiring people to work for you is not a sin nor is it exploitation in and of itself. We have far more consistent examples from our society: drug dealers who exploit young boys to sell or hold their drugs; and who exploit those who are addicted. We have porn merchants, some of whom are involved, in one way or another, in human slavery of children and young women; and who exploit the lusts of man. We have in our society politicians who pretend to stand for the poor, who pretend to stand up for *the other America*, but exploit these people for their votes, and bribe them with federal and state funds in order to rob them of their own initiative. When we come to the afflicted and the needy, I will remind you of these examples of exploitation.

The second key to this psalm are *words, promises, things which are said*. From degenerate man, these are lies spoken in order to exploit and manipulate those who hear them. Speaking lies means nothing to them; there is no evil connotation to such activity in their own minds. In contrast to this will be *the promises of God*, which are trustworthy and dependable.

Application: The lack of truthfulness among men has been something which I have observed over the past several years. I first noticed such a change in my students; and, during the final few years that I taught, I observed that a large number of students, including one Christian student that I can recall specifically, had little regard for the truth or for any sort of personal integrity. After retiring, I began to notice this with those who had a political agenda; particularly those from the left (although I saw a few instances on the right as well). I recall one particular presidential candidate who would parrot any lie about his opponent, without first waiting for the thing to be confirmed or proven wrong. If it was slanderous, and someone said it, then this candidate would say it. I know of a number of individuals that, when an email comes to them expressing their own political views, they forward it along to everyone they know, even if they know the email is filled with inaccuracies. Updating this application to 2020, a person will take any article which supports his personal opinion and he will post it on facebook or tweet it out—many having no concern whether they are sharing accurate information or not.

¹³²Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright©2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Psalm 12:1–5 (edited).

Application: As another tangent, I should add that sin does not exist in a vacuum. Rarely do you find just one sin to be prominent. One of the things which I have noticed, particularly over the past several years (I am writing in the year 2007), is that the lies about President Bush are more than political posturing; there is also a genuine hatred for Bush among a significant number of people. Hatred always clouds a person's objectivity, which I observed with Nixon, Reagan and now Bush. As I update this psalm to 2020, we can include hatred for Presidents Obama and Trump. Lest there be any confusion here, I am speaking of the mental attitude sins *hatred*; not a disagreement with a president's policies. If you are objective, it is impossible to find a president that you believe to be right (or wrong) all of the time.

Application: People will express their hatred in a variety of ways, and rarely is it important for them to be 100% accurate when expressing their vehemence. Truthfulness is simply not an issue to them. This is how man functions; men lie, and many of them see nothing wrong with their lies.

Application: Updating this application to 2020, I have never seen more vitriol directed towards a president than President Trump—and much of this comes from the media! The latest lie to come out of the media is, President Trump has suggested that people drink bleach (or any other sanitizer that will kill the Corona virus), and that it is their duty as journalists to warn people *not* to drink bleach (and, no doubt, half the nation believes that this was Trump's suggestion). That kind of insanity comes from the mental attitude sin of hatred.

As we come to these various keys to organizing this psalm, I will alert and remind you of them. Again, they are *the sons of Adam* and *words, promises and things which are spoken*.

Psalm 12:1 (a graphic); from **Knowing Jesus**; accessed April 18, 2020.

Psalm 12:1 [Preserve us, O Jehovah,](#)
[for the gracious believer is no longer,](#)
[for those who are faithful have ceased to be among men.](#)

It would be interesting to determine when did David feel so alone and feel as if there were no righteous men left in his country? When David was on the run from Saul, he had a crew of 600 men that he could trust. When Absalom rebelled against David, David had a large number of supporters who went with him. This first verse would logically eliminate those periods of time. However, when David first fled Saul, he was alone. The 600 men came to him later (1Sam. 22:1–2 23:13). So, prior to these men coming to David, he certain would have felt completely alone.



**Iniquity [or, falsehood] speaks a man to his neighbor;
a lip of flatteries in a heart and a heart they speak.**

Psalm
12:2

**Everyone speaks lies [or, emptiness] to his neighbor [or, associate];
they speak with a double heart [and] flattering lips.**

**Everyone speaks lies and emptiness to his neighbor;
they flatter them while thinking something else entirely.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	Iniquity [or, <i>falsehood</i>] speaks a man to his neighbor; a lip of flatteries in a heart and a heart they speak.
The Psalms targum	They speak lies, each to his fellow, lips are flattering; in their heart they deceive, and with a lying heart they speak.
Aramaic Targum	The children of men speak emptiness, and a man with his neighbor with duplicitous lips; they speak with a double heart.
Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	<u>They</u> have spoken vain things, every one to his neighbour: with deceitful lips, and with a double heart have they spoken.
Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	Men speak vanity, every one with his neighbour; with flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak.
Septuagint	Everyone has spoken vanity to his neighbour: their lips are deceitful, they have spoken with a double heart.

Significant differences: *Everyone*, in the LXX, is a legitimate translation for *a man*. The Latin has the plural subject or an additional subject. *Vanity* is a reasonable translation for the Hebrew word which I have rendered *iniquity*. It is questionable whether the Septuagint word *deceitful* is an accurate rendering of the Hebrew; however, it is a reasonable understanding of the verse in general. As in v. 1, there is no indication that the Hebrew that the Greek translators dealt with is any different from the Hebrew that we work with today.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	Everyone says false words to his neighbour: their tongues are smooth in their talk, and their hearts are full of deceit.
Easy English	Everybody tells lies to one another. When they say nice things, they do it to deceive their friends.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	People tell lies to their neighbors. Each and every person flatters his neighbors with lies.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006 <i>God's Word</i> TM	People lie to their neighbors. They say whatever they think people want to hear. All people speak foolishly. They speak with flattering lips. They say one thing but mean another.
Good News Bible (TEV) <i>The Message</i>	All of them lie to one another; they deceive each other with flattery. Everyone talks in lie language; Lies slide off their oily lips. They doubletalk with forked tongues.
NIRV	Everyone tells lies to their neighbors. With their lips they praise others, but they don't really mean it.
New Simplified Bible	People speak lies to one another. They speak with flattering lips and with double-heart. (Double Heart: They say one thing but mean another.)

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press paraphrase CEV	Everyone deceives and flatters and lies. There is no sincerity left. Everyone tells lies, and no one is sincere.
The Living Bible New Berkeley Version	Everyone deceives and flatters and lies. There is no sincerity left. Men speak falsehood with each other; with flattering lips and a double heart [A hypocritical heart.] they speak.
New Life Version New Living Testament	They lie to each other. Their lips speak with sweet-sounding words that are not true. Neighbors lie to each other, speaking with flattering lips and insincere hearts.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	Everyone tells lies to other people; they deceive others by flattering them, but they tell lies.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	Each man, to his neighbor, now speaks foolish things... Deceit and wrong, they speak from their hearts.
Beck's American Translation	Everyone tells lies. They talk with flattering lips and a double mind.
Common English Bible	Everyone tells lies to everyone else; they talk with slick speech and divided hearts.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	None but exchanges empty forms of speech with his neighbour; everywhere false hearts and treacherous lips.
Translation for Translators	Everyone tells lies to other people; they deceive others by <flattering them/saying good things about them that they know are not true>.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Revised Ferrar-Fenton Bible	Each one utters lies to his friend, And with false lip, heart speaks to the heart.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	Every man tells lies to his neighbor, they do but flatter with their lips and with and disassemble in their heart.
HCSB International Standard V	They lie to one another; they speak with flattering lips and deceptive hearts. Everyone speaks lies to his neighbor; they speak with flattering lips and hidden motives. [Lit. with slippery lips and a double heart]
Lexham English Bible	They speak falseness to each other. <i>With</i> flattering lips, <i>with</i> a double heart they speak.
Unlocked Literal Bible	Everyone says empty words to his neighbor; everyone speaks with flattering lips and a double heart.
Wikipedia Bible Project	They will speak nothing, a man to his neighbor, a slick language-- in heart they speak not their heart.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

The Heritage Bible	They speak ruin, every man with his neighbor; they speak with flattering lips and with a double ² heart. ² 12;2 double heart is leb leb, which is heart heart, which means they are speaking with two different and contradictory hearts.
New American Bible (2011)	They tell lies to one another, speak with deceiving lips and a double heart. Ps 28:3; 55:22; Is 59:3–4; Jer 9:7.
New English Bible–1970	One man lies to another: they talk with smooth lip and double heart.
New Jerusalem Bible	Friend tells lies to friend,

and, smooth-tongued, speaks from an insincere heart.
 Revised English Bible—1989 One lies to another: both talk with smooth words, but with duplicity in their hearts.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible They all tell lies to each other,
 flattering with their lips, but speaking from divided hearts.
 JPS (Tanakh) Men speak lies to one another;
 their speech is smooth;
 they talk with duplicity.
 Tree of Life Version Everyone tells a lie to his neighbor, talking with flattering lips and a divided heart.

Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Awful Scroll Bible They that were to speak their gloats, a man to his fellow, with flattering lips, even
 from the sensibility of their heart were they to speak.
 Concordant Literal Version They speak hypocrisy, each one with his associate; With a lip of slick words, with
 a double-minded heart they speak.
 exeGesés companion Bible Every man words vanity with his friend;
 with lips that smooth it over
 they word heart to heart.
 Orthodox Jewish Bible They speak vanity every one with his re'a (neighbor); with flattering lips and with a
 double heart do they speak.
 Rotherham's *Emphasized B.* Deception, speak they, every one with his neighbour,—with lips uttering smooth
 things—with a heart and a heart, do they speak.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Amplified Bible To his neighbor each one speaks words without use or worth or truth; with flattering
 lips and double heart [deceitfully] they speak.
 The Expanded Bible Everyone ·lies [·speaks falsehood] to his neighbors;
 they ·say one thing and mean another [speak with flattering lips and with a
 double heart/L heart and heart]..
 Kretzmann's Commentary They, namely, men in general, the rank and file of people on earth, speak vanity
 everyone with his neighbor, falsehood, lies, being the order of the day; with
 flattering lips, without a shred of sincerity, and with a double heart, both hypocritical
 and inconsistent, do they speak. Cf Hosea 4:1-6.
 Peter Pett's translation 'Help, YHWH, for the godly man ceases,
 For the faithful have disappeared from among the children of men.
 They speak falsehood every one with his neighbour.
 With flattering lip, and with a double heart, do they speak.' V. 1 is included for
 context.
 It is a sad day for good men when it appears as though all godly men have
 disappeared (compare Hosea 4:1-2 Micah 7:2-6 Isa. 57:1 Isa. 59:12-15 Jer. 5:1-4
 Jer. 7:28 Jer. 9:2-6). It often seems to be the case, but it is never truly so. This
 godly man who writes the psalm is evidence of that, and he was not alone, even if
 he perhaps thought he was. He was like Elijah who thought only he was left
 (1Kings 19:10, 14), only to learn that God had reserved for Himself seven thousand
 men who had not bowed the knee to Baal (1Kings 19:18).
 But the situation was certainly bad. Deceit and falsehood were prevalent. No one
 could be trusted. Honesty between men seemed to have vanished. They lied, they
 flattered falsely, they spoke with double tongues, saying one thing and thinking and
 meaning another. The world seemed totally corrupt. They were bad times. So the

psalmist cries out to YHWH for help, for deliverance. Surely He cannot allow things to continue as they are?

The Pulpit Commentary	They speak vanity every one with his neighbour; rather, they speak falsehood (Kay, Cheyne). Contrast the injunction of the apostle (Eph. 4:25). With flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak; literally, with lips of smoothness, and with a heart and a heart do they speak. The Authorized Version gives the true meaning.
Syndein/Thieme	They speak falsehood one to another with flattering lips and with a double heart {right lobe} they speak.
The Voice	Everyone tells lies through sweet-talking lips and speaks from a hollow and deceptive heart.

Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

College Press Bible Study	Unreality speak they every one with^[104] his neighbour, with a flattering lip and a double mind do they speak. ^[104] Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. ed., Sep., Vul.): “unto”—Gn.
The Complete Tanach	One speaks to another with falseness, smooth talk; they speak with a double heart. with a double heart: Lit. with a heart and a heart; with two hearts. They feign friendliness, but there is hatred hidden in their heart.
NET Bible®	People lie to one another;⁷ they flatter and deceive.⁸ ⁷ Heb “falsehood they speak, a man with his neighbor.” The imperfect verb forms in v. 2 describe what is typical in the psalmist’s experience. ⁸ Heb “[with] a lip of smoothness, with a heart and a heart they speak.” Speaking a “smooth” word refers to deceptive flattery (cf. Ps 5:9; 55:21; Prov 2:16; 5:3; 7:5, 21; 26:28; 28:23; Isa 30:10). “Heart” here refers to their mind, from which their motives and intentions originate. The repetition of the noun indicates diversity (see GKC 396 §123.f, IBHS 116 §7.2.3c, and Deut 25:13, where the phrase “weight and a weight” refers to two different measuring weights). These people have two different types of “hearts.” Their flattering words seem to express kind motives and intentions, but this outward display does not really reflect their true motives. Their real “heart” is filled with evil thoughts and destructive intentions. The “heart” that is seemingly displayed through their words is far different from the real “heart” they keep disguised. (For the idea see Ps 28:3.) In 1 Chr 12:33 the phrase “without a heart and a heart” means “undivided loyalty.”

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

A Conservative Version	They speak falsehood everyone with his neighbor. With flattering lip, and with a double heart, they speak.
English Standard Version	Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.
New King James Version	They speak idly everyone with his neighbor; With flattering lips and a double heart [an inconsistent mind] they speak.
WEB	Everyone lies to his neighbor. They speak with flattering lips, and with a double heart.
Young's Literal Translation	Vanity they speak each with his neighbour, Lip of flattery! With heart and heart they speak.

What is the gist of this verse? Everyone speaks emptiness and falsehoods to those around them; they use flattery, while they are thinking something else entirely.

In the previous verse, David observes that mature believers appear to be in short supply, and, in this verse, he gives evidence for this observation.

Psalm 12:2a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâv ^e (שָׁו) [pronounced shawv]	wickedness, iniquity; destruction, calamity; falsehood, a lie, false report; vanity, emptiness, unsubstantial, worthlessness	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #7723 BDB #996
It is that which furnishes no support, that which cannot uphold or sustain, and will give away when any trust is placed in it.			
dâbar (דָּבַר) [pronounced daw ^b -VAHR]	to speak, to talk [and back with action], to give an opinion, to expound, to make a formal speech, to speak out, to promise, to propose, to speak kindly of, to declare, to proclaim, to announce	3 rd person masculine plural, Piel imperfect	Strong's #1696 BDB #180
ʾîysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced eesh]	a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone	masculine singular noun (sometimes found where we would use a plural)	Strong's #376 BDB #35
ʾêth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated; occasionally to, toward	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
This is identical to the preposition which is translated <i>with</i> .			
One early printed edition, the Vulgate and the LXX all have <i>unto</i> instead.			
rêa ^c (רֵעַ) [pronounced RAY-ahg]	associate, neighbor, colleague, fellow, acquaintance	masculine singular noun with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7453 BDB #945
James Rickard: "Neighbor" is the Hebrew noun REA, רֵעַ, which means, "kinsman, fellow countryman, friend or anyone you know." ¹³³			

Translation: Everyone speaks lies [or, emptiness] to his neighbor [or, associate];...

Those things which are spoken between men are worthless, empty and false. It sounds like it is happening all around David.

Application (more or less): One of the things which I have noticed, particularly with forwarded emails, that so much of what is sent is false. Now, of course, there are the inconsequential forwards, e.g., stupid things that lawyers say; but I have seen a huge number of political ones, filled with lies about various candidates. For the longest time, I received these forwards from liberals, and there were lots of them; but, as of recent, there are conservatives who are doing the same thing. Some of the falsehoods have hung on to a point where it appears to me that people actually believe them. For instance, George Bush lied about intelligence which he had received about Iraq, and used these lies to get us into a war in Iraq. Even Senator Clinton has publically said that he fooled her in this regard. That Bush lied about the intelligence which he received (or that he spun it in some way) is order to get us into a war in Iraq is completely and demonstrably false; but this lie has been repeated so many times,

¹³³ From <http://gracedoctrine.org/proverbs-chapter-6/> accessed September 21, 2015.

that it is taken as truth by a substantial number of people. I recall listening to a woman marching in an illegal immigrant march, and 2 or 3 questions into her interview, and she was calling George Bush a liar for this exact reason. In other words, these lies have reached even those outside of mainstream voting America.

Application: Updating this to 2020—most of us no longer receive forwarded emails—but now lies and propaganda have found their place on Facebook, Twitter and on many media outlets.

Application: As Rush Limbaugh has often said, *news and media outlets do not do what they purport to do*. We think that our media sources go to a place, an event, an emergency, and tell us what is happening there, because, quite obviously, we cannot be everywhere at once. That is not what they do. If there is an event which they can color politically, they will tell all about that. If it is an event which may not be advantageous to their political views, and cannot be spun in that way, the event may be ignored or barely receive a mention (when one compares the number of times the media reports on women making accusations against Donald Trump; and a woman making accusations against Joe Biden, there is no comparison—one set of accusations is all over the news and the other set of accusation cannot even be found).

Application: Back in 2007, I made this observation: a significant number of the Democratic party have no problem with speaking falsehood after falsehood, as Senator Clinton's campaign has shown. A significant example of this is, Senator Clinton made it clear that, when she voted for the war in Iraq, she double-checked with *other sources* besides the intelligence presented by President Bush and his cabinet (and being the wife of a former president, she had access to other sources). Then, once the war became unpopular, Senator Clinton says that George Bush bamboozled her into voting for the war.

Application: When rereading and rewriting this chapter, we have a whole new set of politicians, but it is still the same old, same old. Many politicians are accusing the current president, Donald Trump, of not reacting fast enough to the COVID19 virus—you can see their comments all over cable news. However, in January, when the President began to limit travel from other countries (starting with China, where the virus began), these exact same politicians claimed and media reports (at the time) claimed that this was an overreaction and xenophobic.

Whatever period of time that you read this, there are undoubtedly countless contemporary examples of politicians and media figures lying. Why do they lie? This advances their agenda and their influence; and, therefore, gives them greater power. What newsman today would not want to be the primary figure to bring down President Trump? Such an event would not just be celebrated at the DNC; it would be celebrated in news rooms as well.

Application: These are just examples from politics. When I was raised, the idea of lying was abhorrent to my parents and they drummed that into my soul. As a result, I would find it very difficult to lie to my mother even as an adult; and the number of lies which I have told to authority figures could probably counted with the fingers of one hand. However, as a teacher, after teaching for a few years, my students began to lie and cheat more and more. Now I can recall some individual examples from when I began teaching, because these students stood out (actually, I can only recall one off the top of my head). However, after about 10 or 15 years, I noticed that a very large number of kids would lie and cheat and appear to give it very little thought. David writes this psalm in an atmosphere like this.

Recall that one of the themes of this psalm—or some of the glue which holds this psalm together—are the words of man versus the words of God. Here, men speak lies to one another. They flatter one another, while their minds are somewhere else entirely. God's promises, by contrast, are faithful, tried by fire in this earth, and can be leaned upon (v. 6).

Psalm 12:2a [Everyone speaks lies](#) [or, *emptiness*] [to his neighbor](#) [or, *associate*];...

Psalm 12:2a Everyone speaks lies (or emptiness) (various commentators)

Barnes: *They speak vanity* - This is a statement of the “manner” in which the “godly” and the “faithful” fail, as stated in Psalm 12:1. One of the ways was that there was a disregard of truth; that no confidence could be placed on the statements of those who professed to be pious; that they dealt falsely with their neighbors. The word “vanity” here is equivalent to “falsehood.” What they spoke was a vain and empty thing, instead of being the truth. It had no reality, and could not be depended on.

Barnes continues: *Every one with his neighbour* - In his statements and promises. No reliance could be placed on his word.¹³⁴

Clarke: *They speak vanity every one with his neighbor* - They are false and hollow; they say one thing while they mean another; there is no trusting to what they say.¹³⁵

Delitzsch: *That which the writer especially laments is the prevailing untruthfulness.*

Dr. John Gill: *They speak vanity everyone with his neighbour,.... That which is false and a lie,...[that which is] not according to the word of God, and was vain and empty,...which no godly and faithful man would do.*¹³⁶

Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary then asks: *Is not this a feature of our times?*¹³⁷

Trapp: *They speak vanity every one with his neighbour] They speak falsely and fraudulently, and therein have an art, as Jer. 9:4-5, such as the devil has taught them.*¹³⁸

Umbreit: *Nothing hurts believers more than the lack of truthfulness and uprightness in the world.*¹³⁹

Dr. Bob Utley: *This is literally “emptiness” or “vanity” (BDB 996). This “emptiness of speech” is a recurrent theme (cf. Psalm 41:6; Psalm 144:8; Psalm 144:11; Prov. 30:9; Isa. 59:4; Ezek. 13:8-9; Hosea 10:4).*

Utley continues: *In some contexts it is used of false testimony (cf. Exodus 20:16; Exodus 23:1; Deut. 5:20) in court. In other places it refers to false prophecies (cf. Lam. 2:14; Ezek. 22:28; Zech. 10:2).*¹⁴⁰

Whedon: *They speak vanity—That is, emptiness; their words are devoid of meaning, because they do not truly represent any thing, the speaker having no intention of fulfilling what is promised, or of stating things as they really exist.*¹⁴¹

Their dishonest speech is indicative of their dishonest lives.

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: Psalm 10:7, Psalm 36:3-4, Psalm 38:12, Psalm 41:6, Psalm 52:1-4, Psalm 59:12, Psalm 144:8, Psalm 144:11; Jer. 9:2-6, Jer. 9:8.¹⁴²

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

¹³⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:2.

¹³⁵ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:2.

¹³⁶ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:2.

¹³⁷ *The Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

¹³⁸ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalms 12:2.

¹³⁹ The Rev. Dr. John P. Lange, *Lange’s Commentary*; 1857–1864; in the Public Domain; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8 (Homiletical and Practical).

¹⁴⁰ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Psalm 12:1–5.

¹⁴¹ *Whedon’s Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:2.

¹⁴² *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Psalm 12:2.

Psalm 12:2b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
sâphâh (שָׁפָה) [pronounced saw-FAWH]	<i>lip, tongue; words, speech; dialect, language; edge, border [or, lip] [of something]</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #8193 BDB #973
This word is found 3x in this short psalm.			
chel ^e qâh (חֶלֶקְאָה) [pronounced chela-KAW]	<i>smooth and slippery place, smooth part, smoothness, flattery; allotment, a portion, a part [of land]; field</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #2513 BDB #324 & #325
BDB treats this as a homonym, where the translations <i>allotment, a portion, a part [of land]; field</i> are Strong's #2513 BDB #324.			
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced lay ^b v]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3820 BDB #524
Owen lists this as a construct; the confusion is the wâw conjunction which follows. Lêb would reasonably be a construct without the intervening conjunction. This should properly be a masculine singular noun.			
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced lay ^b v]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3820 BDB #524
dâbar (דָּבַר) [pronounced daw ^b -VAHR]	<i>to speak, to talk [and back with action], to give an opinion, to expound, to make a formal speech, to speak out, to promise, to propose, to speak kindly of, to declare, to proclaim, to announce</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Piel imperfect; pausal form	Strong's #1696 BDB #180
The only difference between this verb here and in v. 2a is a vowel point.			

Translation: ...they speak with a double heart [and] flattering lips.

I am not completely satisfied with putting the translation together as I have, although I think it is the best rendering of v. 2b. However, I am not completely comfortable with the relationship of the verb to *a heart and a heart (a double heart)* and *[with] flattering lips*. I will assume that we have two things which are related to one another and to the verb.

The double heart means, a person says one thing, but they are really thinking something else.

What these insincere, double-minded men will say is contrasted with what God says in v. 6.

Psalm 12:2b ...they speak with a double heart [and] flattering lips.

Psalm 12:2b They speak with a double heart (various commentators)

Barnes: *And with a double heart* - Margin, as in Hebrew, "a heart and a heart;" that is, as it were, with two hearts, one that gives utterance to the words, and the other that retains a different sentiment. Thus, in Deut. 25:13, the phrase in Hebrew, "a stone and a stone" means, as it is translated, "divers weights" - one stone or weight to buy with, and another to sell with. So the flatterer. He has one heart to give utterance to the words which he uses toward his neighbor, and another that conceals his real purpose or design. No confidence, therefore, could be placed in such persons. Compare the note at Job 32:22.¹⁴³

Benson: *They speak as if they had two hearts, the one inclining them to hate their neighbour, and form designs against him, and the other to prompt the tongue to pretend a friendship for him.*¹⁴⁴

Clarke: *and with a double heart do they speak* - בלו בלב beleb valeb, "With a heart and a heart." They seem to have two hearts; one to speak fair words, and the other to invent mischief.¹⁴⁵

Dr. John Gill: *and with a double heart do they speak: or "with an heart and an heart";* such are double minded men, who say one thing, and mean another; their words are not to be depended upon; there is no faithfulness in them.¹⁴⁶

J. Vernon McGee: *This is a day when Christians need to speak the truth. That is, we should not say one thing to a man's face and another thing when his back is turned. That is double-talk. It is being two-faced.*¹⁴⁷

Matthew Poole: *With a double heart;* pretending one heart, and that they speak from a kind and upright heart, when they really have another, even a cruel and deceitful heart.¹⁴⁸

Trapp: *The prophet here means that they had one heart in their body, and another in their mouth, being desperate dissemblers.*¹⁴⁹

Dr. Bob Utley: *Their mouths reveal their double heart (cf. Psalm 12:2; Matt. 12:34; Matt. 15:18; Mark 7:20-23; Luke 6:45; James 3:2-12).*¹⁵⁰

Whedon: *A double heart*—Literally, a heart and a heart; that is, a heart to make a given impression by his slippery words, and another heart to do the opposite to that impression. Opposed to a "perfect heart," 1Chron. 12:33; 1Chron. 12:38.¹⁵¹

This is quite the opposite of David's singleness of purpose in 1Chron. 12:33. See James 1:8, where a double-minded man is said to be unstable in all of his ways.

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Psalm 12:2b ...they speak with a double heart [and] flattering lips.

¹⁴³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:2.

¹⁴⁴ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:2.

¹⁴⁵ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:2.

¹⁴⁶ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:2.

¹⁴⁷ From <https://archive.org/download/19-Psalms/19-PSALMS.doc> accessed April 24, 2020.

¹⁴⁸ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:2.

¹⁴⁹ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:2.

¹⁵⁰ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Psalm 12:1–5.

¹⁵¹ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:2.

I believe that this parallels what Jesus said, “Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.” (Mat 5:37 ESV) Or, more accurately, a special case of what Jesus is saying.

What does it mean to let your yes be yes and your no be no? (Got Questions?)

Question: "What does it mean to let your yes be yes and your no be no?"

Answer: Jesus said, “Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matthew 5:37, KJV). The NIV clarifies the meaning of Jesus’ words somewhat: “All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.” The context of this verse has to do with oath-keeping. We’ll take a look at the broader context of Jesus’ sermon:

Matthew 5 is part of the Sermon on the Mount. In this section, Jesus addresses some of the underlying principles of certain Old Testament laws. There are some cases in which a person could obey the letter of the law but still be guilty of breaking the principle. The Pharisees and teachers were experts at keeping the letter of the law, but Jesus warns His hearers that, unless their righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, they will never enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20). This statement would have shocked His hearers, because the Pharisees and scribes were looked up to as paragons of obedience. Jesus points out that technical obedience is not enough if the spirit of the law is broken.

In Matthew 5:21–22, Jesus teaches that it is not enough to be “technically” innocent of murder because one can have murderous thoughts and attitudes without carrying out the physical act. In Matthew 5:27–28, Jesus says it is not enough to be “technically” innocent of adultery because a lustful look destroys one’s purity of thought. In Matthew 5:31–32, Jesus teaches that divorcing a wife for an inadequate reason, even when the “proper paperwork” is filed, may not be a legitimate divorce in God’s eyes.

In Matthew 5:33–37, following the same pattern, Jesus addresses the subject of telling the truth. Jesus tells the crowd not to break their oaths. An oath was a promise to do or not do something, invoking God as witness and the One to bring judgment if the promise was broken. It was common for people to make oaths to emphasize their seriousness and truthfulness. Sometimes they would swear on something less than God, such as “heaven.” The point of the lesser oath was to allow some flexibility in breaking the oath—since God’s name had not been invoked, they reasoned, breaking the oath wasn’t that bad. In this case, the oath was being made by a person who was not afraid to break it, making the oath duplicitous. Instead of varying the “sincerity level” of oaths, Jesus says to simply say “Yes” or “No” and mean it. The invocation of God’s name is a mere technicality. Mouthing a meaningless oath does create loopholes for yourself. Your word should be your promise. Jesus says that, oath or no oath, simply say what you mean and stick by it.

Here is the whole context: “You have also heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the Lord.’ But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, ‘By heaven!’ because heaven is God’s throne. And do not say, ‘By the earth!’ because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, ‘By Jerusalem!’ for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. Do not even say, ‘By my head!’ for you can’t turn one hair white or black. Just say a simple, ‘Yes, I will,’ or ‘No, I won’t.’ Anything beyond this is from the evil one” (Matthew 5:33–37, NLT).

In Matthew 5:34, Jesus says, “Do not swear an oath at all.” Some have interpreted this to mean that a Christian should never take an oath for any reason, such as testifying in court. A witness is “sworn in” raising his or her right hand (and sometimes placing the other hand on a Bible) and promising to “tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” However, the point of Jesus’ teaching is not that taking an oath in this manner is wrong. Taking a meaningless oath in order to create a loophole and retain the option of breaking it is wrong. If an oath is required in the course of civic duty, the Christian should have no problem making it. The proper application of Jesus’ principle of “let your yes be yes” is that the Christian must be truthful in all circumstances.

From <https://www.gotquestions.org/let-your-yes-be-yes-and-no-be-no.html> accessed April 18, 2020.

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Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

The lips are modified by the feminine plural word *chel^oqâh* (חֶלֶקָה) [pronounced *chela-KAW*], which means, *smooth and slippery place, smooth part, smoothness, flattery*. Strong's #2513 BDB #324 & #325. Smooth and slippery refers to something that you cannot get a grip of it; you cannot grasp it—it is too slippery and too smooth.

Psalm 12:2b ...they speak with a double heart [and] flattering lips.

Psalm 12:2b They speak with flattering lips (various commentators)

Barnes speaks about the feminine plural noun found here: *chel^oqâh* means *properly to divide, to distribute; then, to make things equal or smooth; then, to make smooth or to shape, as an artisan does, as with a plane; and then, "to make things smooth with the tongue," that is, "to flatter."* See Psalm 5:3, 9 26:28 28:23 29:5. The meaning is, that no confidence could be placed in the statements made. There was no certainty that they were founded on truth; none that they were not intended to deceive. Flattery is the ascribing of qualities to another which he is known not to possess – usually with some sinister or base design.¹⁵²

Barnes: *With flattering lips* - Hebrew, "Lips of smoothness." The verb from which the word used here is derived - *חֶלֶק* *cha^olaq* - means *properly to divide, to distribute; then, to make things equal or smooth; then, to make smooth or to shape, as an artisan does, as with a plane; and then, "to make things smooth with the tongue," that is, "to flatter."* See Psalm 5:9; Prov. 5:3; Prov. 26:28; Prov. 28:23; Prov. 29:5. The meaning is, that no confidence could be placed in the statements made. There was no certainty that they were founded on truth; none that they were not intended to deceive. Flattery is the ascribing of qualities to another which he is known not to possess - usually with some sinister or base design.¹⁵³

The Geneva Bible: [David] means the flatters of the court which hurt him more with their tongues than with their weapons.¹⁵⁴

Dr. John Gill: *with flattering lips*; as Cain did to Abel, Joab to Amasa, the Herodians to Christ, Judas to his Master, false teachers to those that are simple, hypocrites to God himself, when they draw near to Him only with their lips, and all formal professors to the churches of Christ, when they profess themselves to be what they are not.¹⁵⁵

Trapp: The Syriac version hath it, with dividing lips, such as separate very friends.¹⁵⁶

Whedon: *Flattering lips*—Slippery words.¹⁵⁷

I do not know if this is the intention of the Hebrew language, but the person who flatters, hoping to get what he wants out of a conversation (often through manipulation); is similarly excelled at using slippery words, not allowing himself to be pinned down, despite showering flattery on the person he wants to manipulate.

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: Psalm 5:9, Psalm 28:3, Psalm 62:4; Prov. 20:19, Prov. 29:5; Ezek. 12:24; Rom. 16:18; 1Thess. 2:5.¹⁵⁸

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Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

¹⁵² Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:2.

¹⁵³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:2.

¹⁵⁴ Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Psalm 12:2.

¹⁵⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:2.

¹⁵⁶ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:2.

¹⁵⁷ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:2.

¹⁵⁸ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Psalm 12:2.

The verb related to this noun shows up a number of times in the Bible:

Flattery in Scripture	
Verse	Quotation
Psalm 5:9	For there is nothing reliable in what they say; destruction is within them; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongues.
Psalm 12:2–4	Everyone speaks lies [or, <i>emptiness</i>] to his neighbor [or, <i>associate</i>]; they speak with a double heart [and] flattering lips. May Y ^e howah remove all flattering lips, [and] tongues which boast great things, [and cut off those] who have said, “We will prevail because of our speech [lit., <i>tongue</i>]; our lips [are] our own; who is our lord [lit., <i>who is a lord to us</i>]?”
Psalm 55:21	His buttery words are smooth, but war is in his heart. His words are softer than oil, but they are drawn swords.
Prov. 2:16	[Wisdom] will rescue you from a forbidden woman, from a stranger with her flattering talk. Prov. 7:5 says essentially the same thing.
Prov. 5:3–4	Though the lips of the forbidden woman drip honey and her words are smoother than oil, in the end she's as bitter as wormwood and as sharp as a double-edged sword.
Prov. 7:21	She seduces him with her persistent pleading; she lures with her flattering talk.
Prov. 26:28	A lying tongue hates those it crushes, and a flattering mouth causes ruin.
Prov. 28:23	One who rebukes a person will later find more favor than one who flatters with his tongue.
Prov. 29:5	A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.
Isa. 30:10	[Israel in rebellion] says to the seers, "Do not see," and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy the truth to us. Tell us flattering things. Prophecy illusions.
Rom. 16:17–18	Now I implore you, brothers, watch out for those who cause dissensions and pitfalls contrary to the doctrine you have learned. Avoid them; for such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattering words they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

This selection of verses was suggested by Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:2; and by *The Net Bible*®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 12:2; and by *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, Psalm 12:2.

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The idea is, they are saying one thing, but they are thinking another. This is speaking *with (or, from?) a double heart*. The *flattering lips* is the substance of what they are saying. They are saying nice things to others, but these things mean absolutely nothing. What they say is not a reflection of their thoughts, but is quite the opposite of what they are thinking.

Alexander: *By a double heart we are probably to understand, not mere dissimulation or hypocrisy, but inconsistency and instability of temper, which leads men to entertain opposite feelings towards the same object. Comp. the description of the double minded 'man' in James 1:8.*¹⁵⁹

Psalm 12:2 Everyone speaks lies [or, emptiness] to his neighbor [or, associate]; they speak with a double heart [and] flattering lips.

Psalm 12:2 Everyone speaks lies [or, emptiness] to his neighbor [or, associate]; they speak with a double heart [and] flattering lips.

Psalm 12:2 Everyone lies and flatters, having a double heart (commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *Hypocrisy and duplicity are universal. Men's words are vanity, or falsehood, hollow and unreal. Their flatteries come from 'a double heart,' lit. a heart and a heart, which thinks one thing and utters another, and has no constancy or consistency, but thinks one thing today and another thing tomorrow. Cp. Prov. 26:24 ff. For the opposite see 1Chron. 12:33; 1Chron. 12:38.*¹⁶⁰

Or, a person who sounds as if he is thinking one thing, but in reality, is thinking something entirely different.

James Burton Coffman: *The universality of wickedness among the rebellious sons of Adam has been throughout human history a frequently recurring phenomenon. The particular type of immorality that existed in the situation described here seems to have been that of speech. An entire society had completely lost control of their tongues. Falsehood, flattery, deceit, slander, gossip, hypocrisy, derogation, belittling, discrediting, libel, calumny, traducement, backbiting, cheating, misleading, tricking, hoaxing, and victimizing are just a few of the sins of the tongue; and the three particular ones mentioned in these two verses are to be understood merely as examples of the countless outrages perpetrated by tongues out of control.*¹⁶¹

David Guzik: *David was a warrior and a fierce soldier; but we see here that he also had to deal with the battles of gossip and backbiting; of idle and deceptive talkers. David knew what it was like to feel all alone in this kind of battle, where it seemed that no one would speak up and defend him. Instead he took his case to the Lord. We sense that David probably would have preferred to battle with swords and shields than among the gossips and backbiters surrounding him.*¹⁶²

Paraphrasing Guzik: *David observed that those around him spoke idle meaningless chatter; and were two-face liars to boot.*¹⁶³

Matthew Henry: *When dissimulation and flattery have corrupted and debauched all conversation, then the times are very bad (Psalm 12:2), when men are generally so profligate that they make no conscience of a lie, are so spiteful as to design against their neighbours the worst of mischiefs, and yet so base as to cover the design with the most specious and plausible pretences and professions of friendship.*

Henry continues: *This is the devil's image complete, a complication of malice and falsehood. The times are bad indeed...when an honest man knows not whom to believe nor whom to trust, nor dares put confidence in a friend.*¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ The Rev. Dr. John P. Lange, *Lange's Commentary*; 1857–1864; in the Public Domain; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8 (Exegetical and Critical).

¹⁶⁰ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882–1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12:2.

¹⁶¹ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/psalms-12.html> accessed April 24, 2020.

¹⁶² *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

¹⁶³ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

¹⁶⁴ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

Psalm 12:2 Everyone lies and flatters, having a double heart (commentators)

C. Short: *The psalmist is appalled by the rottenness of society around him; unscrupulous ambition appears to rule supreme; truth is scorned as folly, and the god of lies is enthroned in the national heart. But God had not left himself without a witness.*¹⁶⁵ That witness at this point is David, the writer of this psalm.

C. Smith: *He has been around Hollywood.*¹⁶⁶

Spurgeon: *Compliments and fawning congratulations...are most admired by those who are bankrupt in character...Flattery is the sign of the tavern where duplicity is the host.*¹⁶⁷

Dr. Bob Utley: *The false message of the double-hearted person is contrasted with the true message of YHWH's revelation (cf. Psalm 12:6).*

Utley then adds: *Every day believers must ascertain which messages they hear are true or false; from fallen humanity or from God (cf. Deut. 13:1-5; Deut. 18:14-22; Matthew 7; 1Jn. 4:1-3).*¹⁶⁸

One of the reasons for taking in doctrine daily is, you are exposed all of your waking hours to human viewpoint thinking and cosmic thinking. It is easy to be confused by all the messages which are to be heard in the world. One of them—to be found even on shows for young people—is the pro-homosexuality message found in (seemingly) the majority of television series. That is one example of many.

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Psalm 12:2 Everyone speaks lies and emptiness to his neighbor;
they flatter them while thinking something else entirely.

NIV Study Bible: *[Psalm 12:1–2 represent the] initial appeal, with description of the cause of distress.*¹⁶⁹

Psalm 12:1–2 Preserve us, O Jehovah,
for the gracious believer is no longer,
for those who are faithful have ceased to be among men.
Everyone speaks lies and emptiness to his neighbor;
they flatter them while thinking something else entirely.

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God Will Intervene and Cut Off the Wicked

**May cut off Y^ehowah all lips of flatteries;
a tongue speaking great [things];...**

Psalm
12:3

**May Y^ehowah remove all flattering lips,
[and] tongues which boast great things,...**

¹⁶⁵ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8 (Homilies by C. Short).

¹⁶⁶ Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

¹⁶⁷ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Expositions Volumes 1-3A*; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–2.

¹⁶⁸ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright© 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Psalm 12:1–5 (edited).

¹⁶⁹ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 790 (footnote).

**May Jehovah cut down those with flattering lips
and those whose tongues boast great things,...**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	May cut off Y ^e howah all lips of flatteries; a tongue speaking great [things];...
The Psalms targum	The Lord will destroy from the world all flattering lips, the tongue that speaks arrogance.
Aramaic Targum	Lord Jehovah will destroy all duplicitous lips and tongues that speak proud things.
Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	May the Lord destroy all deceitful lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things.
Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	The LORD shall destroy all flattering lips and tongues that speak proud things.
Septuagint	Let the Lord destroy all the deceitful lips, and the tongue that speaks great words.

Significant differences: Interestingly enough, the Latin and Greek both have *deceitful* lips the Aramaic targum has *duplicitous lips*, and the Hebrew and Syriac have *flattering*. I seem to recall several instances in Psalms 24 and 46 where the Latin and Greek agreed, and were different from the Syriac and the Hebrew. Throughout much of Samuel, where there are glaring differences between the Greek and Hebrew, the most common occurrence was for the Latin and Syriac to agree with the Hebrew. Here, in the psalms, ancient versions appear to have different allies, so to speak. As usual, the differences are not so substantive as to affect any major or minor doctrine; they slightly affect the interpretation of the verse, and here, very slightly. Bear in mind that often, flattering lips are also deceitful (and that is definitely the case in this context).

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English Easy English	The smooth lips and the tongue of pride will be cut off by the Lord. Lord, please cut off their tongues! When they deceive people or they boast, stop them!
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	The Lord should cut off those lips that tell lies. The Lord should cut out those tongues that tell their big stories.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006 Good News Bible (TEV)	The LORD should cut off their lying lips and cut out their bragging tongues. Silence those flattering tongues, O Lord! Close those boastful mouths that say, “With our words we get what we want. We will say what we wish, and no one can stop us.” V. 4 is included for context.
<i>The Message</i> NIRV	Slice their lips off their faces! Pull The braggart tongues from their mouths! May the Lord close all lips that don't mean what they say. May he stop every tongue that brags.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

CEV The Living Bible	Won't you chop off all flattering tongues that brag so loudly? But the Lord will not deal gently with people who act like that; he will destroy those proud liars who say, “We will lie to our heart's content. Our lips are our own; who can stop us?” V. 4 is included for context.
New Berkeley Version	May the LORD cut off all flattering lips,

	and the tongue that talks so proudly;...
New Life Version	May the Lord cut off all lips of false respect, and the tongue that speaks of great things.
New Living Testament	May the LORD bring their flattery to an end and silence their proud tongues.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	Yahweh, we wish that you would cut off their tongues so that they cannot continue to boast.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	O Jehovah; Please destroy the lips of the liars, And the tongues of those that boast of great things...
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Those treacherous lips, that tongue with high-sounding phrases; Lord, rid the earth of them!
Translation for Translators	Yahweh, we wish that you would cut off their tongues so that they cannot continue to boast.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Revised Ferrar-Fenton Bible	STANZA 2. JEHOVAH! cut off the false lips; With the tongues that are uttering Lies;...
God's Truth (Tyndale)	O' that the Lord would root out all deceitful lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things.
HCSB International Standard V	May the LORD cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaks boastfully. The LORD will cut off all slippery lips, and the tongue that boasts great things,...
Lexham English Bible NIV, ©2011	May Yahweh cut off all flattering lips, the tongue speaking great boasts—... May the Lord silence all flattering lips and every boastful tongue—...
Unlocked Literal Bible Urim-Thummim Version Wikipedia Bible Project	Yahweh, cut off all flattering lips, every tongue declaring great things. YHWH will cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things. Yahweh will cut down all slick language, a tongue which talks big.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988) New Jerusalem Bible	May the Lord cut off insincere lips, every glib tongue that utters deceit. May Yahweh cut away every smooth lip, every boastful tongue, those who say, 'In our tongue lies our strength, our lips are our allies; who can master us?' V. 4 is included for context.
Revised English Bible—1989	May the LORD make an end of such smooth words and the tongue that talks so boastfully!

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	May ADONAI cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaks so proudly,...
JPS (Tanakh)	May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, every tongue that speaks arrogance.
The Scriptures 1998 Tree of Life Version	יהוה does cut off all flattering lips, A tongue that speaks swelling words, ... May Adonai cut off all flattering lips—a tongue bragging big things.

Weird English, 𐤀𐤃𐤁𐤀 English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible	LET JESUS DESTROY ALL THE DECEITFUL LIPS, AND THE TONGUE THAT SPEAKS GREAT WORDS:...
Awful Scroll Bible	Jehovah was to cut off the flattering lips, and the tongue that is to be speaking haughtily.
Concordant Literal Version exeGesese companion Bible	May Yahweh cut off all lips of slick words, The tongue speaking great things. Yah Veh cuts off all lips that smooth it over and the tongue that words greatneses:...
Orthodox Jewish Bible	Hashem shall cut off all flattering lips, and the leshon that speaketh gedolot;...
Rotherham's <i>Emphasized B.</i>	May Yahweh cut off All the lips that utter smooth things,—the tongue that speaketh swelling words;...

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible	The LORD will ·stop [^l cut off] those flattering lips and those bragging tongues.
Kretzmann's Commentary	The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things, great and swelling words of boastfulness, utterly uprooting the whole kingdom of lies;...
The Pulpit Commentary	The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips. The complaint having been made, a threat follows (comp. Psalm 10:15; Psalm 11:6; Psalm 17:13, etc.). The men who flatter with their lips, beguiling and cozening their victims to get them completely into their power, shall be "cut off" from the congregation (see Gen. 17:14; Exodus 12:15, Exodus 12:19; Le Exodus 7:20, 27; Exodus 17:10, etc.). And the tongue that speaketh proud things ; literally, great things; but proud and lofty boastings are intended (comp. Dan. 7:8, Dan. 7:20). The same man sometimes cozens with smooth words, sometimes blusters and talks big.
Syndein/Thieme	May the Jehovah/God cut off all their flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks 'great' things {in Blind Arrogance}.
The Voice	May the Eternal silence all sweet-talking lips, stop all boasting tongues,...

Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

NET Bible®	May the Lord cut off ⁹ all flattering lips, and the tongue that boasts! ¹⁰ <small>⁹tn The verb form is a jussive, indicating that the statement is imprecatory ("May the Lord cut off"), not indicative ("The Lord will cut off"; see also Ps 109:15 and Mal 2:12). The psalmist appeals to God to destroy the wicked, rather than simply stating his confidence that he will. In this way he seeks to activate divine judgment by appealing to God's just character. For an example of the power of such a curse, see Judg 9:7-57. ¹⁰tn Heb "a tongue speaking great [things]."</small>
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Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Green's Literal Translation	Jehovah shall cut off all with flattering lips and the tongue that speaks great things;...
New King James Version	May the LORD cutt off [<i>destroy</i>] all flattering lips, And the tongue that speaks proud [<i>great</i>] things.
A Voice in the Wilderness WEB	Jehovah shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things,...
Young's Updated LT	May Yahweh cut off all flattering lips, And the tongue that boasts,...
	Jehovah cuts off all lips of flattery, a tongue speaking great things.

What is the gist of this verse? David either asks for God to cut off flattering lips, or asserts that God will do this at some time in the future. It appears that this applies to the person who speaks boastful things, and continues into the following verse.

Psalm 12:3a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kârath (תָּרַח) [pronounced kaw- RAHTH]	<i>to kill, to destroy [men]; to separate, to remove, to withdraw; to cut off, to cut down; to allow to perish</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect; apocopated form	Strong's #3772 BDB #503
This often is a word used to separate some from a community. See Barnes quote below with supporting text.			
The NET Bible: <i>The verb form is a jussive, indicating that the statement is imprecatory ("May the Lord cut off"), not indicative ("The Lord will cut off"; see also Ps 109:15 and Mal 2:12). The psalmist appeals to God to destroy the wicked, rather than simply stating his confidence that he will. In this way he seeks to activate divine judgment by appealing to God's just character. For an example of the power of such a curse, see Judg 9:7-57.</i> ¹⁷⁰			
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yhoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]	with a plural noun, it is rendered <i>all of; any of</i>	masculine singular construct with a masculine plural noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
sâphâh (שִׁפְהַי) [pronounced saw- FAWH]	<i>lip, tongue; words, speech; dialect, language; edge, border [or, lip] [of something]</i>	feminine plural construct	Strong's #8193 BDB #973
chel ^e qâh (חֶלְקָה) [pronounced chela-KAW]	<i>smooth and slippery place, smooth part, smoothness, flattery; allotment, a portion, a part [of land]; field</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #2513 BDB #324 & #325

BDB treats this as a homonym, where the translations *allotment, a portion, a part [of land]; field* are Strong's #2513 BDB #324.

Translation: [May Y^ehowah remove all flattering lips,...](#)

There are two ways to interpret v. 3a: (1) David is asking God to remove all flattering lips (implying that these are deceitful and/or manipulative flatteries); or (2) David is asserting that God will remove all flattering lips at some point in the future. The idea of the second interpretation is, at some point in time (the Millennium and the Eternal State), God will remove verbal sins from this earth. Those in the new civilization will apparently begin without old sin natures. However, man will apparently retain free will to the point where some will still reject God and go their own way. The prevailing opinion is, David is asking God to do this thing. The NET Bible® points out that the verb is in the jussive form, indicating that the verb is **imprecatory**.¹⁷¹

The *removing* of all flattering lips does not indicate that God will necessarily do a lip-ectomy. This word used here is for removal from a group. David could be petitioning for these types of men to be removed from his periphery or for these actions to be removed from those in his periphery. Who among us does not know a person who could so richly benefit from believing in Jesus Christ? In the alternative, David is calling for their lies to be silenced.

¹⁷⁰ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?psa12.htm> accessed April 9, 2020.

¹⁷¹ *The Net Bible*®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 12:3.

Psalm 12:3a [May Y^ehowah remove all flattering lips,...](#)

Psalm 12:3a [May the Lord cut off their flattering lips \(various commentators\)](#)

Barnes: [The Lord shall cut off](#) - This might be rendered, "[May the Lord cut off](#)," implying a wish on the part of the psalmist that it might occur. But probably the common rendering is the correct one. It is the statement of a solemn truth, designed for warning.

Barnes continues: [All flattering lips](#) - The meaning is, that he will cut off all "persons" who use flattery; that is, he will cut them off from the favors which he will show to his own people, or will punish them. The word used here is the common one to denote disowning or excommunicating, and derives its meaning from the act of separating offenders from a community. See Gen. 17:14; Lev. 17:10; Lev. 18:29; Lev. 20:3, Lev. 20:6.¹⁷²

Barnes says, concerning this verb to [cut off](#), to [remove](#): The word used here is the common one to denote disowning or excommunicating, and derives its meaning from the act of separating offenders from a community. See Gen. 17:14 ("[If any male is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that man will be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.](#)") Lev. 17:10 18:29 ([Any person who does any of these abominations must be cut off from his people](#)) 20:3, 6.¹⁷³

Benson: [The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips](#) — All such as speak kind things to any one, at the same time that they mean quite the contrary in their hearts.¹⁷⁴

Dr. John Gill: [The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips,....](#) This is either a prophecy or a prayer...that God either would or should cut off such who used flattery with their lips, by inflicting some judgment in this life, or everlasting punishment hereafter; by taking them away by death "out of the world",...or by casting them into hell, where all liars and deceitful persons will have their portion.¹⁷⁵

David Guzik: [May the Lord cut off all flattering lips](#): David felt somewhat helpless against these destructive chatterers; he found his refuge in the Lord, to whom he appealed to cut off . . . the tongue that speaks proud things.¹⁷⁶

NIV Study Bible: [\[Actual\] physical mutilation is not in view \[here\]](#).¹⁷⁷

Spurgeon: One generally imagines that flatterers are such mean parasites, so cringing and fawning, that they cannot be proud...[however] None are so detestably domineering as the little creatures who creep into office by clinging to the great...indeed...these obnoxious beings are numerous and powerful.

Spurgeon continues: No wonder that the justice of God in cutting off such injurious persons is matter for a Psalm, for both earth and heaven are weary of such provoking offenders, whose presence is a very plague to the people afflicted thereby. Men cannot tame the tongues of such boastful flatterers; but the Lord's remedy if sharp is sure, and is a certain answer to their swelling words of vanity.¹⁷⁸

Trapp: God will cut off such lips (taking notice of the offending member), as he dealt by Doeg, Ahithophel, Shebna, Shemaiah the Nehelamite, Jer. 29:32.¹⁷⁹

[Job 32:21–22](#) I will not show partiality to any man or use flattery toward any person. For I do not know how to flatter, else my Maker would soon take me away.

¹⁷² Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:3.

¹⁷³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:3. I added the text of the verses.

¹⁷⁴ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:3.

¹⁷⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:3.

¹⁷⁶ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

¹⁷⁷ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 790 (footnote).

¹⁷⁸ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12:3–4 (edited).

¹⁷⁹ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:3.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Psalm 12:3a The Lord Shall Cut Off All Flattering Lips (a graphic); from the **Kingdom Collection**; accessed April 18, 2020.

A statement which is this strong could be understood as **hyperbole** (where what is being called for is over the top) or a metonym, where the part (the lips) stand in for the whole (the person who is speaking flattery). David is calling upon God to remove these persons who use flattery as a weapon of manipulation.



Psalm 12:3b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lāshōwn (לִשׁוֹן) [pronounced law-SHOHN]	<i>tongue; lapping; tongue-shaped</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3956 BDB #546
Owen lists this is a feminine singular noun, but BDB has it as a masculine singular noun. This is something which I quite frankly do not understand: this is a masculine singular noun in that form (there is apparently a feminine form); but this is placed with a feminine singular, Piel participle.			
dābar (דָּבַר) [pronounced daw ^b -VAHR]	<i>to speak, to talk [and back with action], to give an opinion, to expound, to make a formal speech, to speak out, to promise, to propose, to speak kindly of, to declare, to proclaim, to announce</i>	feminine singular, Piel participle	Strong's #1696 BDB #180
gādōwl (גְּדוֹל) [pronounced gaw-DOHL]	<i>great in quantity, great in magnitude and extent, mighty, vast, unyielding, immutable; great things, significant and astonishing [or mind-blowing] things</i>	feminine plural adjective often used as a substantive	Strong's #1419 (& #1431) BDB #152

Translation: ...[and] tongues which boast great things,...

The verb in v. 3a should be applied here as well. God will cut off or remove the tongues which boast great things. This does not mean that, at some point in time, God will cut out some people's tongues and leave others; if that were the case, almost everyone you know would face a tongue-ectomy. *Tongue* is a metonym, and it stands for the person who speaks boastfully. In the Millennium, civilization will begin, apparently, with the Jewish believers who survive the Tribulation, and it appears as though they will be cleansed of their old sin natures.

There may be a more immediate interpretation here; that God would physically remove many of those during David's time who lied, boasted, and flattered others in order to manipulate them. Or, in the alternative, God would neutralize them.

David has been a leader for most of his life, and what a leader often attracts are those who flatter him. Some people exert their influence through flattery. They tell you what they want you to hear in order to influence you in some way or another. For David, as a leader, they might want to influence policy. A man may flatter a woman in order to have his way with her. A wife may flatter her husband in order to have her way with him.

Application: There is a very thin line between genuinely complimenting a person and flattering them to get what you want. The key difference is motivation. You may notice that your wife looks particularly wonderful, and it is certainly good to tell her that. Workplace rules have changed considerably and complimenting many women on their looks can be a very tricky proposition (and, today, in most cases, not done). Some women will interpret a compliment in the workplace as flirting; or seen as valuing the woman's looks over her ideas and accomplishments. One may want to dial that back nowadays or not do it at all. Or, keep the compliments limited to work-related things, such as, *that is a great idea*; or, *I can see that you worked hard on that project and it shows in the quality of the project*. Even though I may sound like I am preaching political correctness here, how many women in the workplace have been complimented over the years where there was an ulterior motive? Might that account for most compliments on a woman's appearance in the workplace?

Application: When you use flattery in order to get something from the other person, that is a verbal sin.

Unlocked Dynamic Bible carries this thought into the next verse: [They say, "By telling lies we will get what we want; we control what we say, so no one can tell us what we should do!"](#)

Psalm 12:3b [[May Y^ehowah remove](#)] [tongues which boast great things...](#)

Psalm 12:3b The Lord will cut off the tongue which boasts (various commentators)

Barnes: [And the tongue that speaks proud things](#) - *That boasts...It was this disposition to falsehood, flattery, and boasting, which constituted the fact stated in Psalm 12:1, that "godly" and "faithful" men - men on whom reliance might be placed, whose word might be trusted, and whose promised aid in the cause of truth might be depended on - had seemed to "fail" among men. That is, no such men could be found.*¹⁸⁰

Along these lines, there is nothing more important to a good leader than people who feed him good and accurate information. Those who use their position simply to manipulate the king (or whatever authority) are useless to the king and to the people that they, in a secondary position, serve. The problem is, many such people have no interest in serving the people, but furthering their own power, prestige and income.

Benson: [and the tongue that speaks proud things](#) — *Hebrew, תולדג gedoleth, great things, or, great words, boasting what they have done, or declaring, or threatening what they will do, and what great things they will effect.*¹⁸¹

Clarke: [Proud things](#) - *תולדג gedoloth, great things; great swelling words, both in their promises and in their commendations.*¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:3.

¹⁸¹ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:3.

¹⁸² Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:3.

Psalm 12:3b The Lord will cut off the tongue which boasts (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *and the tongue that speaks proud things, or "great things", as the little horn in Dan. 7:20; and the beast, or Romish antichrist, who is designed by both in Rev. 13:5. This will be accomplished when Christ shall destroy him with the breath of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming; and indeed every tongue that rises up against God, Christ, and his people, will be condemned; when ungodly sinners will be convinced of all their hard speeches (Isa. 54:17, Jude 1:15). Some believe this to be the tongue of Doeg the Edomite.*¹⁸³

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *Boasting (Dan. 7:25) is, like flattery, a species of lying.*¹⁸⁴

Matthew Poole: *Or great things, or great words, either bragging or threatening what they will do, and what great things they will effect, to wit, by their tongues,...which they will use so cunningly and powerfully, that they shall not need to use their hands, or strike a stroke.*¹⁸⁵

Poole makes an excellent point here of the men so arrogant that they believe that their tongues are so brilliant as achieve that which another man would require his fists to do.

Trapp: *And the tongue that speaks proud things] Magnifica, bubbles of words, blustering speeches, breathing out nothing but arrogance and contempt of God and his people. These grandiloqui must one day answer for their hard speeches with flames about their ears,...plagued here in their tongues, those little members that had boasted so great things, James 3:5.*¹⁸⁶

Psalm 52:3 You love evil more than good, and lying more than speaking what is right.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Psalm 12:3 May Y^ehowah remove all flattering lips, [and] tongues which boast great things,...

Psalm 12:3 May Y^ehowah remove all flattering lips, [and] tongues which boast great things,...

Psalm 12:3: Flattery and Pride (various commentators)

E. W. Bullinger: *Your meant me harm; but God meant it for good; that is, meant to turn it to good.*¹⁸⁷

The Cambridge Bible: *The prayer for help passes into a prayer for the excision of these false-hearted braggarts.*¹⁸⁸

Keil and Delitzsch: *[M]ay He root out [flattering lips and a boastful tongue] (cf. Psalm 109:15, and the opposite Psalm 11:6). Flattering lips and a vaunting tongue are one, insofar as the braggart becomes a flatterer when it serves his own selfish interest.*¹⁸⁹

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *When did the tongue speak prouder things than now?*¹⁹⁰

¹⁸³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:3 (edited).

¹⁸⁴ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Psalm 12:3–4.

¹⁸⁵ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

¹⁸⁶ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:3.

¹⁸⁷ *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p. 533.

¹⁸⁸ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12:3–4.

¹⁸⁹ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 12:3–4.

¹⁹⁰ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

Psalm 12:3: Flattery and Pride (various commentators)

Spurgeon: *God's hatred of those twin sins of the lips - Flattery and Pride (which is self flattery). Why he hates them. How he shows his hatred. In whom he hates them most. How to be cleansed from them.*¹⁹¹

Spurgeon: *flattering lips, and tongues speaking proud things, are classed together:...for they are guilty of the same vice, the first flatters another, and the second flatters himself, in both cases a lie.*¹⁹²

Whedon: *Flattering lips... tongue that speaketh proud things—Two opposite characters, the dissembler and the self-confident boaster, alike abominable to God.*¹⁹³

James 3:5 **So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire!** (ESV)

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It might be good to observe some of the sins of the tongue found throughout the Bible.

A List of Verbal Sins Found in the Bible

Sin	Scripture
Arrogance, expressing, speaking	<p>Psalm 17:10: They have become hardened; their mouths speak arrogantly.</p> <p>Ezek. 28:2: "Son of man, say to the ruler of Tyre: This is what the Lord GOD says: Your heart is proud, and you have said: I am a god; I sit in the seat of gods in the heart of the sea. Yet you are a man and not a god, though you have regarded your heart as that of a god."</p> <p>2Peter 2:18: For uttering bombastic, empty words, they seduce, by fleshly desires and debauchery, people who have barely escaped from those who live in error.</p>
Boasting	<p>Ex. 15:9: The enemy said: "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil. My desire will be gratified at their expense. I will draw my sword; my hand will destroy them."</p> <p>1Sam. 2:3: Do not boast so proudly, or let arrogant words come out of your mouth, for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and actions are weighed by Him.</p> <p>1Sam. 17:44: "Come here," the Philistine called to David, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts!"</p> <p>Ezek. 29:3: Speak to him and say: This is what the Lord GOD says: Look, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great monster lying in the middle of his Nile, who says: My Nile is my own; I made it for myself.</p>
Cursing, Blasphemy	<p>1Sam. 17:43: He said to David, "Am I a dog that you come against me with sticks?" Then he cursed David by his gods [God?].</p> <p>Rerv. 13:5–6: A mouth was given to him to speak boasts and blasphemies. He was also given authority to act for 42 months. He began to speak blasphemies against God: to blaspheme His name and His dwelling--those who dwell in heaven.</p>

¹⁹¹ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

¹⁹² Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12:3–4.

¹⁹³ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:3.

A List of Verbal Sins Found in the Bible

Sin	Scripture
Flattering in order to Manipulate Another	Judges 1:16: These people are discontented grumblers, walking according to their desires; their mouths utter arrogant words, flattering people for their own advantage. Psalm 12:2–3: They lie to one another; they speak with flattering lips and deceptive hearts. May the LORD cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaks boastfully.
Mocking God	2Kings 19:23: You have mocked the Lord through your messengers. You have said: With my many chariots I have gone up to the heights of the mountains, to the far recesses of Lebanon. I cut down its tallest cedars, its choice cypress trees. I came to its farthest outpost, its densest forest.
Speaking Against God	Daniel 7:25: He will speak words against the Most High and oppress the holy ones of the Most High. He will intend to change religious festivals and laws, and the holy ones will be handed over to him for a time, times, and half a time. Mal. 3:13: "Your words against Me are harsh," says the LORD. Yet you ask: "What have we spoken against You?"
A Variety of Sins	Psalm 73:8–9: They mock, and they speak maliciously; they arrogantly threaten oppression. They set their mouths against heaven, and their tongues strut across the earth.

Prov. 18:21 **Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.**

Most of these verses came from *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, Psalm 12:3.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Psalm 12:3 **May Jehovah cut down those with flattering lips and those whose tongues boast great things,...**

...that they say to our tongues we confirm our lips with us; who an adonai to us?

Psalm
12:4

...[and cut off those] who have said, "We will prevail because of our speech [lit., tongue]; our lips [are] our own; who is our lord [lit., who is a lord to us]?"

...and those who have said, "We will prevail by our speech; we can say whatever we want to say; no one is our master."

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

...that they say to our tongues we confirm our lips with us; who an adonai to us?

The Psalms targum

Those who deny the essence, who say, "By our tongue we shall prevail, our lips are with us, who is our master?"

Aramaic Targum

Who have said, "Our tongue will prevail; our lips are our Lord".

Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	Who have said: We will magnify our tongue: our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?
Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	For they have said, With our tongue will we prevail: our lips are our own; who is lord over us?
Septuagint	...who have said, We will magnify our tongue; our lips are our own: who is Lord of us?

Significant differences: Although it appears that the beginning of this verse is different, it really isn't. The second verb in the Greek means *to magnify, to make conspicuous, to esteem; to get glory and praise*. The corresponding verb in the Hebrew means *to make strong [firm]; to confirm [a covenant verbally]; to prevail*. This is the primary difference. The Latin agrees with the Greek and Syriac is in agreement with the Hebrew.

The Aramaic targum sees the final phrase somewhat differently from the Hebrew and the ancient translations.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	They have said, With our tongues will we overcome; our lips are ours: who is lord over us?
Easy English	They say: 'Nobody can tell us what to do! We will say what we like to get what we want!'
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	Those people say, "We will say the right lies and become very important. We know what to say, so that no one will be our master."
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	Those people think they can win any argument. They say, "We are so good with words, no one will be our master."
God's Word™	...that has said, "We will overcome with our tongues. With lips such as ours, who can be our master?"
Good News Bible (TEV)	"With our words we get what we want. We will say what we wish, and no one can stop us."
The Message	I'm tired of hearing, "We can talk anyone into anything! Our lips manage the world."
Names of God Bible	May Yahweh cut off every flattering lip and every bragging tongue that has said, "We will overcome with our tongues. With lips such as ours, who can be our master?" V. 3 is included for context.
NIRV	They say, "What we speak with our tongues will win the battle. What we say with our lips will keep us safe. No one will have victory over us."
New Simplified Bible	They say: »We will overcome with our tongues. With lips such as ours, who can be our master?«

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press paraphrase	But the Lord will not deal gently with people who act like that; He will destroy those proud liars who say, "We will lie to our hearts' content. Our lips are our own; who can stop us?" V. 3 is included for context.
Contemporary English V. New Berkeley Version	They say to themselves, "We are great speakers. No one else has a chance." ...those who have said, "To our tongues will we give strength, our lips are our own [Hebrew, "with us"; how characteristic of the wicked!]; who is our master?"
New Life Version	They say, "We can win with our tongues. Our lips are our own. Who is lord over us?"

New Living Testament	They say, "We will lie to our hearts' content. Our lips are our own—who can stop us?"
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	They say, "By telling lies we will get what we want; we control what we say, so no one can tell us what we should do!"

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	Those that say, 'We'll make our tongues great, And ask with our lips, Who's Jehovah?'
Beck's American Translation	...saying, "We'll show with our tongues how mighty we are. We say what we please. Who can be our master?"
Common English Bible	Let the Lord cut off all slick-talking lips and every tongue that brags and brags, that says, "We're unbeatable with our tongues! Who could get the best of us with lips like ours?" V. 3 is included for context.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	With our tongues, they say, we can do great things; our lips are good friends to us; we own no master.
Translation for Translators	They say, "By telling lies we will get what we want; we control what we say [MTY], so no one can tell us what we should not do!"

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Revised Ferrar-Fenton Bible	Who say, "By our tongue we are strong, By the power of our lips we succeed, Who then can be
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master of us?"

HCSB

They say, "Through
our tongues we
have power; our lips
are our own--who
can be our master?"

International Standard V

.those who say,
"By our tongues we
will prevail;
our lips belong to
us.

Lexham English Bible

Who is master [Or
lord] over us?"

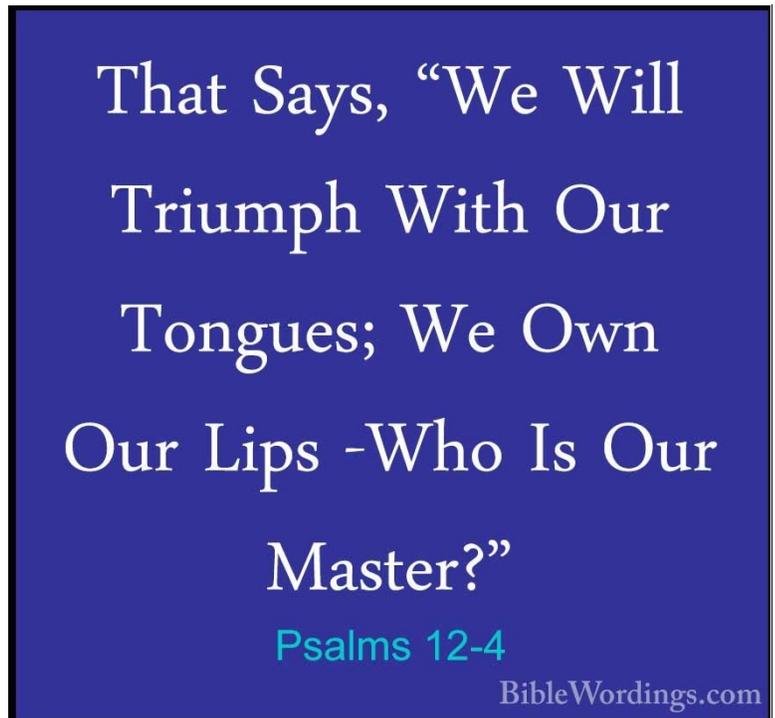
...those who say,
"With our tongue we
will prevail. Our lips
are on our side.
Who is master over
us?"

Psalm 12:4 (NIV) (a graphic); from **Bible Wordlings**; accessed April 19, 2020.

Wikipedia Bible Project

Those that said, "To our tongue we will increase, our lips are with us: who is lord over us?"

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):



Christian Community (1988)	Many say, "Our strength lies in our tongue, we know how to speak, who will lord it over us?"
New American Bible	Those who say, "By our tongues we prevail; when our lips speak, who can lord it over us?"
New English Bible–1970	They said, 'Our tongue can win the day. Words are our ally; who can master us?'
Revised English Bible	They say, 'By our tongues we shall prevail, With words as our ally, who can master us?'

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	May Adonai cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaks so proudly, those who say, "By our tongues, we will prevail; our lips are with us. Who can master us?" V. 3 is included for context.
Hebraic Roots Bible	...who say, We shall be strong by our tongue; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?
JPS (Tanakh)	They say, "By our tongues we shall prevail; with lips such as ours, who can be our master?"
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	Who have said, "With our tongue we do mightily; Our lips are our own; Who is master over us?"
Tree of Life Version	They say: "With our tongue we'll prevail. We own our lips—who can master us?"

Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible	WHO HAVE SAID, WE WILL MAGNIFY OUR TONGUE; OUR LIPS ARE OUR OWN: WHO IS LORD OF US?
Awful Scroll Bible	They are to have said, "That by out our tongue was to prevail, and that of our lips are we to master."
Concordant Literal Version	Who say, With our tongue we shall have mastery; Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?
exeGesés companion Bible	...who say, With our tongue we prevail mightily; our lips are our own; who is adoni over us?
Orthodox Jewish Bible	Who have said, With leshoneinu (our tongue) will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is Adon over us?

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Those who say, With our tongue we prevail, our lips are our own [to command at our will]; who is lord and master over us?
The Expanded Bible	They say, "Our tongues will help us win [prevail]. We can say what we wish [Our lips belong to us]; no one [who...?] is our master."
Kretzmann's Commentary	...who have said, With our tongues will we prevail, showing strength with them, believing themselves to be absolute masters of their words; our lips are our own, to formulate all the flattering speeches which they might choose to make; who is lord over us? Who would dare to interfere with their haughtiness; who would prevent their doing as they pleased? This being the situation, the psalmist now sets forth the views of the Lord.
The Pulpit Commentary	Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; or, through our tongues are we powerful; i.e. whatever we desire we can accomplish through our tongues—by persuasion, or by menaces, or by skill in argument. Success in pleading before courts of law is, perhaps, included. Our lips are our own; literally, are with us; i.e.

are on our side, are our helpers ("Nobis auxilio et praesto sunt," Michaelis). **Who is lord over us?** Who, i.e; can interfere with us and impede our action? They do not believe in any righteous Judge and Controller of the world, who can step in to frustrate their plans, upset their designs, and bring them to ruin (see Psalm 10:4, Psalm 10:11; Psalm 14:1).

The Voice

Of those who say, "With our words we will win;
our lips are our own. Who is the master of our souls?"

Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

The Complete Tanach

Who said, "With our tongue we will overpower; our lips are with us. Who is lord over us?"

With our tongue we will overpower: With our tongue we will gain strength.

NET Bible®

They say,¹¹ "We speak persuasively;¹²
we know how to flatter and boast.¹³
Who is our master?"¹⁴

^{11tn} Heb "which say." The plural verb after the relative pronoun indicates a plural antecedent for the pronoun, probably "lips" in v. 3.

^{12tn} Heb "to our tongue we make strong." The Hiphil of רָבַג (gavar) occurs only here and in Dan 9:27, where it refers to making strong, or confirming, a covenant. Here in Ps 12 the evildoers "make their tongue strong" in the sense that they use their tongue to produce flattering and arrogant words to accomplish their purposes. The preposition לִּ, (l) prefixed to "our tongue" may be ditto graphic.

^{13tn} Heb "our lips [are] with us." This odd expression probably means, "our lips are in our power," in the sense that they say what they want, whether it be flattery or boasting. For other cases where אִתּ (‘et, "with") has the sense "in the power of," see Ps 38:10 and other texts listed by BDB 86 s.v. 3.a.

^{14sn} The rhetorical question expresses the arrogant attitude of these people. As far as they are concerned, they are answerable to no one for how they speak.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

English Standard Version

...those who say, "With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us; who is master over us?"

Modern KJV

...that has said, With our tongue we shall do much; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?

Young's Updated LT

Who [who have] said, "By our tongue we do mightily; Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?"

What is the gist of this verse? This appears to be a continuation of the previous verse where Jehovah God is cutting off (ending) the lips of the arrogant; here, He cuts off those who claim to prevail with their speech; who say, "We can say what we want to say, no one is our master!"

Psalm 12:4a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced ash-ER]	that, which, when, who, whom	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
ʾămar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]	to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55

Psalm 12:4a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
<p>The meanings of the lâmed preposition broken down into groups: ❶ <i>to, towards, unto</i>; it is used both to turn one's heart <i>toward</i> someone as well as to sin <i>against</i> someone; ❷ <i>to, even to</i>; in this sense, it can be used with a number to indicate the upper limit which a multitude might approach (<i>nearly</i>). ❸ Lâmed can be equivalent to the Greek preposition eis (εις), meaning <i>into</i>, as in transforming <i>into</i> something else, changing <i>into</i> something else (Gen. 2:7). This use of lâmed after the verb hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i>] (Strong's #1961 BDB #224) is one thing <i>becoming</i> another (Gen. 2:7). ❹ Its fourth use is the mark of a dative, after verbs of giving, granting, delivering, pardoning, consulting, sending, etc. This type of dative is broken down into several categories, but one includes the translation <i>by</i>, which would be apropos here. ❺ <i>With regards to, as to</i>. Similar to the Greek preposition eis (εις) plus the dative. [Numbering from Gesenius]. ❻ <i>On account of, because, propter</i>, used of cause and reason (<i>propter</i> means <i>because</i>; Gesenius used it). ❼ <i>Concerning, about</i>, used of a person or thing made the object of discourse, after verbs of saying. ❽ <i>On behalf of</i> anyone, <i>for</i> anyone. ❾ <i>As</i> applied to a rule or standard, <i>according to, according as, as though, as if</i>. ❿ When associated with time, it refers to <i>the point of time at which</i> or <i>in which</i> anything is done; or it can refer to <i>the space of time during which</i> something is done (or occurs); <i>at the time of</i>.</p>			
lâshôwn (לשון) [pronounced <i>law-SHOHN</i>]	<i>tongue; speech; language; lapping; tongue-shaped</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person plural suffix	Strong's #3956 BDB #546
gâbar (גָּבַר) [pronounced <i>gaw^b-VAHR</i>]	<i>to make strong [firm]; to confirm [a covenant verbally]; to prevail</i>	1 st person plural, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #1396 BDB #149

Translation: ...[and cut off those] who have said, "We will prevail because of our speech [lit., tongue];...

David got where he was in life through hard work and integrity. Furthermore, he believed in and adhered to God's Word. These *yes-men* who were in his periphery have done nothing of value, but they have David's ear. Therefore, they advance their own agenda and their own interests by flattering David...and he knows it!

The verb is a plural, and therefore probably refers back to the lips of flattery in the previous verse.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, this is a continuation of the previous verse, where Jehovah will cut off certain groups of people, and in v. 3, He spoke of cutting off those who spoke with flattering speech. Here, He cuts off those who claim that, with their speech, they will prevail. Whatever they say, in their eyes, is right. They are beyond correction.

Application: The tongue is quite powerful, and what a person says and how he or she says it can be quite powerful as well. In our current political atmosphere, the liberals and democrats are quite pleased with their speech, and in some ways, they ought to be. With their speech, they have rallied a great many people, despite their repeated corrections, restatements, and out-and-out verbal contradictions. There is a group of people who will ignore these things. Because of the power that they have gained with their tongues, they think that they can do anything with their tongues; so we have a huge number of Democrats thinking that they can speak to and reason with any foreign dictator, regardless of how crazy they might be. In fact, about a month previous to this, Nancy Pelosi, a Democratic Speaker of the House, went to Syria to speak with them, even though the President asked her not to. They are so powerful in the United States with their speech, that they have this conflated idea

¹⁹⁴ From *The Net Bible*®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 12:4 (footnote).

that they have this power everywhere. What is rather humorous is, they don't believe that they have the same power in speaking to our president or to those on the other side of the aisle from them; but they think they can change the policies of a foreign dictator with their speech. Perhaps in the 30's, these same people would have gone to Hitler and said, "Let's talk about this Jew thing you have going on; and your aggression; we think that it is bad." No Democrat from that era would have ever been so delusional; but we have a party of people who seem to be so out of touch with reality, that they have destroyed what was once a great political party (guaranteed, Harry Truman and John Kennedy would all be considered hawk conservative republicans today; and FDR would have been seen today as a moderate).

Application: The key here is the proper use of the tongue and the control of one's own speech. What one says can be very powerful; on the other hand, speaking is not all-powerful. You can destroy other people with your speech: Jer. 18:18: **Then they said, "Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us strike him with the tongue, and let us not pay attention to any of his words."** James 3:5-6: **So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.** On the other hand, you cannot bring peace with what you say. Jer. 6:14: **They have healed the wound of my people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace.**

Application: To have a greater sense of the power of speech, consider how many presidents are remembered not for something that they have done but for something which they have said.

Consider how many presidents are remembered not for something that they have done but for something which they have said.

Psalm 12:4a ...[and cut off those] who have said, "We will prevail because of our speech [lit., tongue];...

Psalm 12:4a Who have said... (various commentators)

Barnes: *Who have said* - Who habitually say. This does not mean that they had formally and openly said this - for none would be likely to do so - but that they had practically and really said this by their conduct. They acted as if it were the real principle on which they framed their lives, that they might use their tongues as they pleased.¹⁹⁵

The Cambridge Bible: *Who*] Namely, the owners of the flattering lips and boastful tongues.¹⁹⁶

Dr. Bob Utley: *"Who have said"* The NASB Study Bible (p. 751) reminds us that the psalmist often quotes or alludes to the false words of the wicked (cf. Psalm 3:2; Psalm 10:11; also note 2Peter 3:1-4; Jude 1:18-19).¹⁹⁷

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Menzel: *Tyranny is indeed hard; but false doctrine is much harder; for tyranny kills the body, but false doctrine the soul.*¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4.

¹⁹⁶ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12:4.

¹⁹⁷ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Psalm 12:1-5.

¹⁹⁸ The Rev. Dr. John P. Lange, *Lange's Commentary*; 1857-1864; in the Public Domain; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1-8 (Homiletical and Practical).

Psalm 12:4a ...[and cut off those] who have said, “We will prevail because of our speech [lit., tongue];...

Psalm 12:4a “With our tongues, we will prevail...” (various commentators)

Barnes: *With our tongue* - literally, “as to,” or “in respect to our tongue;” that is, by our tongue. It was by the tongue that they expected to accomplish their purposes. It was not by direct power, or by violence, but by the power of speech.

Barnes: *Will we prevail* - literally, “We will do mightily;” that is, they would accomplish their purposes. They relied on the power of speech - on their ability in influencing others; in deceiving others; in persuading others to fall in with their plans.¹⁹⁹

Benson: *With our tongues will we prevail* — By raising and spreading evil reports concerning him. We will have the better of all that oppose us; and our tongues are the instruments whereby we will get the victory.²⁰⁰

E. W. Bullinger: *Thanks to our tongue, we will prevail.*²⁰¹

The Geneva Bible: *They think themselves able to persuade whatever they take in hand.*²⁰²

Dr. John Gill: *Who have said, with our tongue will we prevail,....* Either through the eloquence of them, or the outward force and power with which they are backed. The sense is...so shall it be; our words are laws, and shall be obeyed, there is no standing against them; our edicts and decrees shall everywhere be regarded: or “we will make one to prevail”, or “have the dominion”; meaning antichrist, the man of sin; for all this is true of the tongues of the antichristian party²⁰³, and of their laws, edicts, and decrees and which have obtained everywhere, and by which the wicked one has been established in his tyrannical power and authority.²⁰⁴

Matthew Poole: *With our tongue will we prevail*, by raising and spreading slanders and evil reports concerning him, whereby both Saul will be highly and implacably enraged against David, and the hearts of the people alienated from him; which was indeed a very likely way to prevail against, him, and that by their tongues only.²⁰⁵

Trapp: *Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail]* ...this was a common word with them. And surely the tongue is a desperate weapon, made in the form of a flaming sword, and elsewhere by David compared to a tuck or rapier, Psalm 64:3, to a razor also, doing deceit, Psalm 52:2 The Chaldee paraphrast has this...*Because we can swear and lie, therefore we shall prevail.*²⁰⁶

Whedon: *With our tongue will we prevail*—The tongue is often a more deadly weapon than the sword, and these boasters seem to have been aware of its envenomed power. These men would be weak in open war, but were terrible in flattery, evil counsel, and lies. Here-in lay their strength, of which they boasted, not knowing that a just God rules, and that the world is not abandoned to become the victim of tricks and contrivances.²⁰⁷

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: Jer. 18:18; James 3:5-6.²⁰⁸

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¹⁹⁹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4.

²⁰⁰ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4.

²⁰¹ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4.

²⁰² Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Psalm 12:4.

²⁰³ Gill appears to be prophetically speaking of one of the American political parties today.

²⁰⁴ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4.

²⁰⁵ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4.

²⁰⁶ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:4.

²⁰⁷ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:4.

²⁰⁸ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Psalm 12:4.

Psalm 12:4b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
sâphâh (שָׂפָה) [pronounced saw-FAWH]	<i>lip, tongue; words, speech; dialect, language; edge, border [or, lip] [of something]</i>	feminine plural noun with the 1 st person plural suffix	Strong's #8193 BDB #973
'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	<i>with, at, near, by, among, directly from</i>	preposition (which is identical to the sign of the direct object); with the 1 st person plural suffix	Strong's #854 BDB #85

This preposition can also refer to being in one's possession or in one's keeping. This can also mean *to proceed from someone*. The key to this word is *close association with, close proximity to* beyond simple geographical proximity.

Translation: ...our lips [are] our own;...

I think the idea here is, they can say whatever they want. They can flatter, they can speak lies, they can say anything, and, the implication is, no one can stop them. They can say what they want to say, influence those they want to influence, and no one can stop them.

Psalm 12:4b ...our lips [are] our own;...

Psalm 12:4b Our lips are our own (various commentators)

Barnes writes: *Our lips are our own: That is, we may use them as we please; no one has a right to control us in the use of what properly belongs to ourselves. It cannot be meant that they intended to assert this openly as a right, for there are perhaps none who will not admit in words that they are responsible for what they "say," as well as for what they "do."* But their conduct was such that this was the fair interpretation to be placed on what they said. They would speak this if they openly professed and avowed what was their real opinion.²⁰⁹

Benson: *Our lips are our own* — At our own disposal to speak what we please.²¹⁰

Clarke: *Our lips are our own* - Many think, because they have the faculty of speaking, that therefore they may speak what they please.²¹¹

James Burton Coffman: *This is merely the proud boast of the evil doers that they intend to do just as they please without any restraint whatever.*²¹²

Dr. John Gill: *our lips are our own, or "with us": we will say what we please, and make what laws and decrees we think fit, and impose them upon men; and so change times and laws without control, Dan. 7:25.*²¹³

Matthew Poole: *Our lips are our own, i.e. at our own dispose to speak what we please.*²¹⁴

²⁰⁹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4.

²¹⁰ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4.

²¹¹ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4.

²¹² From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/psalms-12.html> accessed April 24, 2020.

²¹³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4.

²¹⁴ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4.

Psalm 12:4b Our lips are our own (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *Light, thoughtless words, void of serious meaning, sometimes flash a light into the inmost chamber of the heart; they could not have been spoken if kindness, good sense, justice, humility, dwelt and ruled there. Profuse professions are often interpreted by the rule of contrary. When Judas said, "Hail, Master!" he branded himself as a traitor, hypocrite, murderer.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *[T]hink of the enormous amount of idle, unprofitable, unkind, unjust, insincere talk poured forth every day; not to speak of what is wilfully false, impure, or malignant. What does all this mean but utter forgetfulness of responsibility to God for our use of this great gift?*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *The dulness of conscience on this point is astonishing. You may meet often with Christians who positively pride themselves on "speaking their mind," no matter at what cost to others. People who would think it unpardonably wicked to strike a hard blow with the fist, think nothing of giving a stab with the tongue, which perhaps years will not heal (James 3:6).*

The Pulpit Commentary then points out what a great mistake this thinking is: *Responsibility is not annihilated or lessened by our refusing to acknowledge it. We are responsible for our words as much as for the rest of our life. Our lips are not our own, because we ourselves are not our own (1Cor. 6:19, 1Cor. 6:20; Psalm 100:3).*²¹⁵

Trapp: *Our lips are our own] Heb. are with us, that is, we have the command of our tongues, and have words at will; we can speak persuasively, and, therefore, we doubt not to persuade Saul to anything against David. Socrates, in his apology, My lords, said he to the judges, I know not how you have been affected with mine adversaries' eloquence while you heard them speak; for my own part, I assure you that I, whom it touches most, was almost drawn to believe that all they said, though against myself, was true, when they scarcely uttered one word of truth. Gaius Curio, the Roman, was...wittily wicked...and the Duke of Buckingham, in his speech to the Londoners, for Richard III, gained this (though slender) commendation, that no man could deliver so much bad matter in so good words and quaint phrases.*²¹⁶

Whedon: *Literally, our lips are with us; are our servants, subject to our will.*²¹⁷

Application: Have you ever wondered why so many women love men who are described as *the strong, silent type*? This is not a man given to speaking his every thought; he will not see something that he disapproves of and then belittles that person. This is a man who thinks before he speaks, and, as a result, often does not speak.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Application: [Obviously an application made in the year 2007] What I have noticed with the advent of the internet and, particularly, with society as a whole embracing the internet, that some "information" is passed around as true, when it is not. I know people overseas, and so many of them, based upon what they have heard and read, think that our current president, George W. Bush, is a crook, has a staff of criminals, lies, is crafty, and, at the same time, is unbelievably stupid. None of these things are true. However, these lies have been repeated and repeated so often that people believe them,²¹⁸ and this is something that we can do on the internet, which is rather unnerving. This is something which liberals have brought into their arsenal, and something I hope that conservatives do not adopt, but I fear that they will. I recently heard for Tom Delay calling for conservatives to go after Rosie O'Donnell in the same manner that people have gone after Imus (if you are reading this a year after I write this, these names may mean nothing to you). Tom Delay is a former congressman from Texas, and he has

²¹⁵ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Psalm 12:1-8 (Homiletics).

²¹⁶ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:4.

²¹⁷ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874-1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:4.

²¹⁸ "Repeat a lie a thousand times and it becomes the truth ..." - usually credited to Dr Joseph Goebbels, Propaganda Minister of the Third Reich. This was taken from http://www.ausairpower.net/DT_F-111_Costs.pdf

been severely beaten down by his enemies (quite frankly, I have never put much study into his background, so I have no opinion on whether it is justified or not), and now he is calling for political enemies on the left to be taken down as he was. As believers, this should not be our approach; we don't go tit for tat. We do not attempt to exact our own revenge, no matter how much we believe we deserve it.

Application: This past week or so has been a marvelous example of this—of people speaking without any thought of the consequences, without any self-restraint. I write in April of 2007, and, in the middle of a war in Iraq, Senate majority leader Harry Reid proclaims that, the war is lost. No person in high office has ever said anything like this before. In the darkest days of World War I or World War II, or even during the Vietnam War, no high ranking politician has proclaimed that the war has been lost by the United States before. Now, if a Senator really believed this, then there should be a call to immediately de-fund the war, as it is lost, and every lost American life would be a wasted American life. However, at least at this point, Reid will say whatever pops into his head, but he will not back this with any actions. What he says is simply to gain a political advantage; he does not take into regard what this might do to soldier morale; he does not consider their families; he does not consider how our enemies might rejoice to hear these words spoken by such a prominent politician.

Application: In the previous month, Don Imus, a *shock-jock*, referred to the female members of a college basketball team as *nappy-headed ho's*. Now, no doubt, Imus was making an attempt to fit into the hip-hop culture and to sound cool and hip, but it did not come off like that. He sounded like an idiot. Again, Imus simply said whatever popped into his head, without much thought to the repercussions. And given our society of complete confusion, Imus was condemned with greater ferocity than Reid, although what Reid said was far more damaging.

Application: In the past several months, Rosie O'Donnell, who speaks to a huge audience of women daily, has made the most absurd statements imaginable (for instance, she has made the claim that the U.S. government planted explosives at the twin towers because otherwise, "This would be the first time that fire melted steel.") She has likened Christian conservatives to Islamic extremists; and during a luncheon, with under-18 women present, used the f-word and used other expressions that I would not use in a private conversation. In the case of Reid and O'Donnell, these are prepared speeches, and they are fully aware of who their audience is, and that their words will be heard throughout the world. Imus, on the other hand, I believe was just riffing, just talking off the top of his head, and had no idea at the time, that his words would have such an impact (having spoken for 6 hours a day, I can understand that sometimes, you are going to say things that you had wish you hadn't). In any case, my point is, these are people who say whatever they want to say; they mouth is their own; no one is master over them.

Application: I am revisiting this psalm in 2020, and, you may be surprised at this, but the politicians are still going on the TV airways and lying. Sometimes they use flattery; but they are simply using their tongue in order to gain power.

Application: One of the things which the current president (Donald Trump) has made clear is, some presidents say all the right things, but they get little or nothing accomplished. He comes from a results-oriented background. Whether you agree or not with him in his politics (Trump began his presidency with little or no political agenda), Trump is a results-oriented guy. He sees a problem and he acts to fix it. Many politicians do not do that. They often like certain problems because they are good for their side; and they want to use those problems year after year to run on. President Trump sees a problem, believes that he has a good idea for a solution, and then he attempts to implement that solution.²¹⁹ Those with lying lips and flattering tongues do not act in that way. If a problem will get them elected, then they prefer to have that problem remain, year after year. Politicians on both sides of the aisle have used illegal immigration as a stepping stone to get elected, without any intention of ever addressing the problem. They will talk about it, but highly unlikely that they will do anything about it.

The Cambridge Bible on Psalm 12:4a-c: *'Our tongue,' they say, 'we will make mighty: our lips are with us,' under our own control, at command as faithful allies; who is lord over us? No one can call us to account for our use of them (Psalm 10:4). Unscrupulous courtiers appear to be meant, who*

²¹⁹ You may or may not like his solutions; that is a whole other topic.

deliberately propose to obtain their own ends by reckless disregard of truth, e.g. by flattery, slander, false witness, and the like.²²⁰

Psalm 12:4c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
mîy (מִי) [pronounced mee]	who; occasionally rendered <i>how</i> , <i>in what way</i>	pronominal interrogative	Strong's #4310 BDB #566
ʾādōwn (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced aw-DOHN]	lord, master, owner, superior, sovereign	masculine singular noun	Strong's #113 BDB #10
lâmed (ל) [pronounced le]	to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to	directional preposition with the 1 st person plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

Translation: ...who is our lord [lit., a lord to us]?"

This is a rhetorical question. No answer is expected here. These are men who have no authority orientation; they recognize no authority, they do not recognize any other man as their authority, nor do they recognize God as their authority.

These people think of themselves as being so clever that no one has any authority over them. They can talk their way out of anything.

Application: These are people who use their tongues to gain their authority or influence. Behind a president are many men; and, in some cases, these are men of flattering lips with a double heart. They have great influence over the president, but without thinking themselves to be under his authority.

Psalm 12:4c ...who is our lord [lit., a lord to us]?"

Psalm 12:4c Who is master over us and our tongues? (various commentators)

Barnes: *Who is Lord over us? That is, who has a right to control us in the case? There are many who practically avow this as a principle of conduct, and who seem to feel that they are not responsible for their words, however much they may admit their responsibility for their actions. There is usually a greater degree of recklessness among men in regard to their speech than in regard to their conduct; and many a man who would shrink from doing another wrong by an act of dishonesty in business, may be utterly reckless as to doing him wrong by an unkind remark.*²²¹ Before God, we are accountable for our thoughts, words and deeds.

Benson: *Who is lord over us? — Who can, or has any right to control us; or to call us to an account?*²²²

James Burton Coffman: *This is the attitude, whether openly stated or not, of every lawless society.*²²³

²²⁰ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12:4.

²²¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4.

²²² Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4.

²²³ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/psalms-12.html> accessed April 24, 2020.

Psalm 12:4c Who is master over us and our tongues? (various commentators)

Gill adds: *who is Lord over us?* which is the very language and conduct of antichrist, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God (2Thess. 2:3–4—*Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God*).

Gill continues: *[This] is indeed the language of the hearts and lives of all wicked and ungodly men, sons of Belial, men without any yoke or restraint; who walk, and are resolved to walk, after the imagination of their own evil hearts; not knowing the Lord, and being unwilling to obey him, or to be restrained by him (Ex. 5:2—But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.")*.²²⁴

David Guzik: *David despised these destructive tongues not only for what they said, but also for their pride that made them so difficult to stop. It was as if they freely said, "You can never make us stop talking as we please."*

Guzik continues, answering the rhetorical question above: *For the one who professes to be a follower of Jesus Christ, there is only one answer to this question, Who is lord over us? Jesus Christ is our Lord, and He owns us body, soul, and spirit. We are bought with a price, and are therefore obligated to glorify God in our bodies, including our lips and tongue (1Cor. 6:20)*.²²⁵

Matthew Poole: *Who is lord over us; who can control or restrain us? This was not the language of their mouths, for they were Israelites, that owned a God above them, and they were subjects of Saul; but the language of their actions. Scripture oft tells us not only what men do actually say, but what they would say if they dared to, or what their actions mean, as Psalm 94:7 Mal. 1:12 13 2:17. They take as great a liberty in their speech as if they believed there was no God or man superior to them; because neither the fear of God, nor the reverence of men, can keep them from speaking whatsoever they please, or what they suppose makes for their interest*.²²⁶

Spurgeon: *Free-thinkers are generally very free-talkers, and they are never more at ease than when railing at God's dominion, and arrogating to themselves unbounded license. Strange is it that the easy yoke of the Lord should so gall the shoulders of the proud, while the iron bands of Satan they bind about themselves as chains of honour: they boastfully cry unto God, "Who is lord over us?" and hear not the hollow voice of the evil one, who cries from the infernal lake, "I am your Lord, and right faithfully do you serve me."*²²⁷

Trapp: *Who is lord over us?]*... *To hinder us from speaking what and when we list with fineness and eloquence, though to the slaying of three at once, the tale bearer, the tale hearer, and the party traduced. R. Samuel Ben Jochai wrote this note concerning the text: A slanderous tongue is called Lashon...because it slays three; but here it slew four, viz. Doeg, Saul, Nob, the city of the priests, and Abner, who suffered it so to be (1Sam. 22:18-19)*.²²⁸

Whedon: *Who is lord over us—Here is the climax of their arrogance and impudence*.²²⁹

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge suggests: Gen. 3:5 Exodus 5:2 Job 21:14-15 Jer. 2:31 Dan. 3:15 2Thess. 2:4.²³⁰

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

²²⁴ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4 (passages added by me).

²²⁵ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

²²⁶ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4.

²²⁷ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12:3–4.

²²⁸ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:4.

²²⁹ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:4.

²³⁰ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Psalm 12:4.

Application: Lack of authority orientation has been one of the greatest ills of American society since the 60's. For some people, every authority figure must prove himself repeatedly to receive any respect; in life, we sometimes just do not have that kind of time. When a teacher is not given immediate respect and deference, then there is time lost which could be spent on learning. When a policeman's authority is not respected, lives are lost. One of the recent news stories from New York City is a man who was shot by 4 police officers the night before his wedding as he charged at them in a car; had he learned from his mother to respect police, that man would be alive today—no question. There are athletes who do not respect their coaches, soldiers who do not respect their officers, and a people who do not respect their president. There is a price to be paid for lack of authority orientation. This doesn't mean that you cannot question authority nor does it mean that you cannot disagree with those who have authority over you; but, you begin by giving due respect to authority, you don't begin by requiring every authority figure to prove him or herself to you—that is pure arrogance.

Application: It is interesting that those who do not respect authority, believe that their authority should be respected; they believe that their opinions are correct and should be recognized as such; and they abhor it when someone disrespects them.

Application: As an aside, I came upon the concept of authority orientation through Bible doctrine; not through my background. I had a natural disregard for authority throughout much of my life. Similarly, I developed a rather sarcastic, caustic tongue when I was young. I found out, though Bible doctrine (and through being a teacher), that expressing my every sarcastic thought was not the best approach in life.

Psalm 12:4 *...[and cut off those] who have said, "We will prevail because of our speech [lit., tongue]; our lips [are] our own; who is our lord [lit., who is a lord to us]?"*

Psalm 12:4 "Our tongues will prevail; who is our master?" (various commentators)

Alexander: *The idea of the whole verse is, by our own lips and our tongues we can accomplish what we will.*²³¹

C.A.B.: *They rely on their lips, their smooth, flattering speeches fitted to deceive; on their proud and haughty words, able to overcome. This (they say) is our artillery, with it we are invincible...thus indicating that by a word or breath they could destroy them.*²³²

Delitzsch: *They declare themselves to be absolutely free, and exalted above all authority.*²³³

Matthew Henry sums up v. 4: *When the enemies of God, and religion, and religious people, are impudent and daring, and threaten to run down all that is just and sacred, then the times are very bad, when proud sinners have arrived at such a pitch of impiety as to say, "With our tongue will we prevail against the cause of virtue; our lips are our own and we may say what we will; who is lord over us, either to restrain us or to call us to an account?"*²³⁴

Elsewhere, Henry writes: *[Such men demonstrate] insolent contempt of God's dominion as if he had no propriety in them - Our lips are our own (an unjust pretension, for who made man's mouth, in whose hand is his breath, and whose is the air he breathes in?) and as if he had no authority either to command them or to judge them.*²³⁵

²³¹ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

²³² The Rev. Dr. John P. Lange, *Lange's Commentary*; 1857–1864; in the Public Domain; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8 (Exegetical and Critical).

²³³ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

²³⁴ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

²³⁵ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

Psalm 12:4 “Our tongues will prevail; who is our master?” (various commentators)

C.A.B.: *With regard to our tongues we show strength.*—Hupf. translates: *We are masters of our tongues*; A. V.: *with our tongues will we prevail*; Ewald and Olsh. with Geier et al.: *we are confederates of our own tongues*; Hitzig: *we strengthen our tongues.*²³⁶

Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary: *Is not this pride, arrogance, defiance, a characteristic of our day?*²³⁷

Charles Haddon Spurgeon: *Not even a man’s lips are really his own. Who gave the gift of speech? Who created the mouth? Who is LORD over us? Why, the answer is simple enough! He that made us, he that redeemed us, he should be Lord over us. Let us willingly put ourselves in subjection to him.*²³⁸

Dr. Bob Utley: *This verse shows the true heart of the “double heart” (lit. “a heart and a heart”). This person is one who does not allow YHWH to control his/her life! This is the essence of fallen humanity’s attitude.*²³⁹

Wesley: *[W]ho can control or restrain us?*²⁴⁰

The people about whom David wrote were completely lacking in honesty and authority orientation.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Psalm 12:4 ...[and cut off those] who have said, “We will prevail because of our speech [lit., *tongue*]; our lips [are] our own; who is our lord [lit., *who is a lord to us*]?”

Jude speaks of the end times, which sounds very much like the previous few verses: *It was about such men also that Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied when he said: "See! The Lord comes with myriads of His people to execute judgment upon all, to convict all the godless of their godless deeds which in their godlessness they have committed, and of all the harsh things that godless sinners have said against Him." These persons are grumblers, ever complaining about their lot. They live to satisfy their evil passions, their lips boast arrogant things, and they flatter others for personal gain (Jude 14–16—Williams NT).*

Psalm 12:4 ...and those who have said, “We will prevail by our speech; we can say whatever we want to say; no one is our master.”

Many translations put vv. 3–4 together (in retrospect, I should have done the same).

Psalm 12:3–4 May Y^ehowah remove all flattering lips,
[and] tongues which boast great things, [and cut off those] who have said, “We will prevail because of our speech [lit., *tongue*];
our lips [are] our own;
who is our lord [lit., *who is a lord to us*]?” (Kukis nearly literal)

Psalm 12:3–4 May Jehovah cut down those with flattering lips
and those whose tongues boast great things,
and those who have said, “We will prevail by our speech;
we can say whatever we want to say;
no one is our master.” (Kukis reasonable paraphrase)

²³⁶ The Rev. Dr. John P. Lange, *Lange’s Commentary*; 1857–1864; in the Public Domain; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8 (Exegetical and Critical).

²³⁷ *The Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

²³⁸ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon’s Expositions Volumes 1-3A*; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

²³⁹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Psalm 12:1–5.

²⁴⁰ John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Psalm 12:4.

Psalm 12:3–4 May Y^ehowah remove all flattering lips,
[and] tongues which boast great things, [and cut off those] who have said, “We will prevail
because of our speech [lit., *tongue*];
our lips [are] our own;
who is our lord [lit., *who is a lord to us*]?” (Kukis nearly literal)

Psalm 12:3–4: Flattering lips; we will prevail by our speech (various commentators)

David Dicks on: *From the faults of the wicked we must learn three contrary lessons: 1. That nothing which we have is our own. But, 2. Whatever is given to us of God is for service to be done to him. 3. That whatever we do or say, we have a Lord over us to whom we must be answerable when he calls us to account.*²⁴¹

J. Vernon McGee: *The psalmist goes after the proud in this psalm. They say, "We are going to say what we please." We are seeing that apostasy in the church is noted by pride like this. Jude predicted the coming apostasy, **These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.** (Jude 1:16; ESV). In other words, those in apostasy are a bunch of liars.*²⁴²

William Nicholson: *[This is a] prophecy of the fall of the wicked, whose arrogance he describes (Psalm 12:4). The prophecy shows what shall be the end of their dissembling.*²⁴³

Dr. Peter Pett summarizes vv. 3–4: *YHWH assures him in his heart that it will not always be so. Those who have flattering lips will be cut off, as will those with a boastful tongue. They thought they could speak as they liked, they thought that their powerful words would enable them to achieve their own selfish ends, they challenged the right of anyone to be lord over them, they thought that none could gainsay them. But they will inevitably be proved wrong. They will discover that there is indeed One Who is Lord over them.*

*Very much in mind here are those in authority or seeking authority, those seeking to win people by half-truths and downright lies. Those seeking to get their own way by the power of speech. Thus they speak and think arrogantly, prior to their inevitable downfall.*²⁴⁴

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

This might be a good time to review the **Doctrine of the Sins of the Tongue** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

When the godly and grace oriented are in short supply, and one is surrounded by sycophants and arrogance, it makes sense to look towards God.

Keil and Delitzsch: *In Psalm 12:5 the psalmist hears Jahve Himself speak; and in Psalm 12:6 he adds his Amen.*²⁴⁵

The Biblical Illustrator speaks of the deliverance which David anticipates: *This deliverance is promised them in the form of the Divine interposition. The singer, filled with the spirit of prophecy, consoles himself, and those afflicted like himself, not in his own words but in the words of God (verse 6). And then, remembering how pure those words are, how unalterably true,—not like the words of men, which seem so fair, but are false,—he feels that there he can rest, calm in the conviction that, though the*

²⁴¹ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

²⁴² From <https://archive.org/download/19-Psalms/19-PSALMS.doc> accessed April 24, 2020.

²⁴³ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8.

²⁴⁴ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Psalm 12:3–4.

²⁴⁵ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 12:5–6.

wicked walk on every side, Jehovah will save them that love Him from all their machinations (verse 8).²⁴⁶

<p>“From devastation of poor, from clamor of destitute [ones], now I rise up,” says Y^ehowah “I will place in deliverance he blows to him.</p>	<p>Psalm 12:5</p>	<p>“On account of the oppression of the grace-oriented [or, poor] [and] on account of the clamor of the destitute, I will now arise,” says Y^ehowah, “[and] I will place [him] into the safety [or, deliverance] he pants [after] for [or, for which he longs].”</p>
<p>Because of the oppression of the grace-oriented believer and because of the crying out of the destitute, I will now arise,” says the Lord, “and I will put [him] into a place of safety that he desires.”</p>		

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	From devastation of poor, from clamor of destitute [ones], now I rise up,” says Y ^e howah “I will place in deliverance he blows to him.
Dead Sea Scrolls	[“Because of the oppression of the poor, because of the groaning of the needy—now I will rise] up,” says the LORD, “[for the right]eous; I will pla[ce (them) in the safety for which they yearn.”] Bear in mind that what is in the brackets is assumed to be in the Dead Sea Scrolls (it is unreadable). The phrase <i>for the righteous</i> is not found in the MT or in the LXX.
The Psalms targum	Because of the oppression of the poor, because of the cry of the needy, now I will arise, [in judgment.] says the Lord; I will give redemption to my people, <u>but against the wicked I will give testimony of evil.</u>
Aramaic Targum	“Because of the robbery of the poor and the groans of the ill, therefore I shall arise”, says Lord Jehovah, “and I shall work salvation openly.”
Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	By reason of the misery of the needy, and the groans of the poor, now will I arise, saith the Lord. I will set him in safety: I will deal confidently in his regard.
Latin Vulgate	“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.”
Lamsa’s Peshitta (Syriac)	Because of the oppression of the poor and the groans of the needy, now will I arise, says the LORD; and I will bring salvation openly.
Peshitta	Because of the oppression of the poor and the groans of the needy, now I will arise, says the LORD, and I will bring salvation openly.
Septuagint	Because of the misery of the poor, and because of the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says the Lord, I will set <i>them</i> in safety; I will speak <i>to them</i> thereof openly.
Significant differences:	Given the Latin and the Dead Sea Scrolls, it appears as though the final phrase should be <i>for which he desires [yearns]</i> . There are a variety of ways that the individual words can be rendered throughout the rest of the verse, and the translations appear to be in general agreement elsewhere.

One targum has an additional line at the end.

²⁴⁶ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8.

The short phrase *for the righteous*, found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, is one of the very few times that there is a moderately important discrepancy between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the MT.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	Because of the crushing of the poor and the weeping of those in need, now will I come to his help, says the Lord; I will give him the salvation which he is desiring.
Easy English	But the Lord says: 'Now I will do something! I know the cruel things that wicked people do to poor people. When weak people cry with pain, I hear them. So, I will make them safe, as they want me to do for them.'
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	But the Lord says: "Bad people stole from the poor people. They took things from helpless people. But now I will stand and defend those weary (tired) people."
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	They took advantage of the poor and stole what little they had. But the LORD knows what they did, and he says, "I will rescue those who are poor and helpless, and I will punish those who hurt them."
God's Word™	"Because oppressed people are robbed and needy people groan, I will now arise," says the LORD. "I will provide safety for those who long for it."
Good News Bible (TEV)	"But now I will come," says the LORD, "because the needy are oppressed and the persecuted groan in pain. I will give them the security they long for."
The Message	Into the hovels of the poor, Into the dark streets where the homeless groan, God speaks: "I've had enough; I'm on my way To heal the ache in the heart of the wretched."
NIRV	The Lord says, "The poor are being robbed. Those who are in need groan. So I will stand up to help them. I will keep them safe from those who tell lies about them."
New Simplified Bible	»Because oppressed people are robbed and needy people groan, I will now arise,« says Jehovah. »I will provide safety for those who long for it.«

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press paraphrase	The Lord replies, "I will arise and defend the oppressed, the poor, the needy. I will rescue them as they have longed for Me to do."
Contemporary English V.	But you, LORD, tell them, "I will do something! The poor are mistreated and helpless people moan. I'll rescue all who suffer."
The Living Bible	The Lord replies, "I will arise and defend the oppressed, the poor, the needy. I will rescue them as they have longed for me to do."
New Berkeley Version	Because of the oppression of the poor and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise, says the LORD; I will grant him the safekeeping for which he longs.
New Life Version	"Because of the suffering of the weak, and because of the cries of the poor, I will now rise up," says the Lord. "I will keep him safe as he has wanted to be."

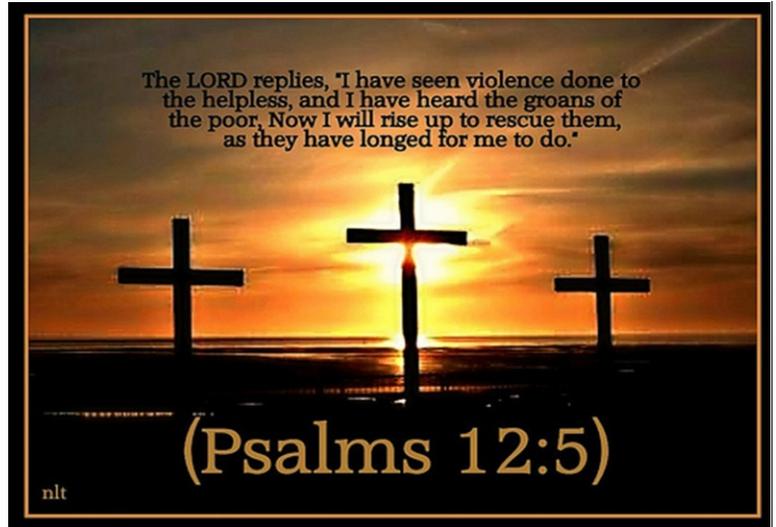
Psalm 12:5 (NLT) (a graphic); from **the Dream Factory**; accessed April 18, 2020.

New Living Testament

The LORD replies, "I have seen violence done to the helpless, and I have heard the groans of the poor. Now I will rise up to rescue them, as they have longed for me to do."

Unlocked Dynamic Bible

But Yahweh replies, "I have seen the violent things that they have done to helpless people; I have heard those people groaning, so I will arise and rescue the people who are wanting me to help them."



Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible

'Because of the misery of the poor
And the moaning cries of the needy,
I'll arise and offer them safety...
To them, I will openly speak.'

Beck's American Translation

"Because the poor are robbed, and the needy groan,
I will now rise," says the LORD.
"I will provide safety to the one who longs for it."

Common English Bible

But the Lord says,
"Because the poor are oppressed,
because of the groans of the needy,
I'm now standing up.
I will provide the help they are gasping for." [Heb uncertain]

New Advent (Knox) Bible

Now, says the Lord, I will bestir myself, on behalf of the helpless who are so ill used,
of the poor who cry out so bitterly; I will win them the redress they long for.

Translation for Translators

But Yahweh replies, "I have seen the violent things that they have done to helpless people;
and I have heard those people groaning,
so I will arise and rescue the people who are wanting me to help them."

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Revised Ferrar-Fenton Bible

STANZA 3.
"For the groans of the poor;
For the wretched who sigh,
I now will arise," says the LORD,
"And put those who pant into ease."

God's Truth (Tyndale)

Now for the troubles sake of the oppressed, and because of the company of the poor, I will up (says the Lord) I will help them, and set them at rest.

HCSB

"Because of the oppression of the afflicted and the groaning of the poor, I will now rise up," says the LORD. "I will put in a safe place the one who longs for it."

International Standard V

"Because the poor are being oppressed,
because the needy are sighing,

	I will now arise," says the LORD, "I will establish in safety those who yearn for it."
Lexham English Bible	"Because of <i>the</i> oppression of <i>the</i> afflicted, because of <i>the</i> groaning of <i>the</i> poor, now I will rise up," Yahweh says. "I shall put <i>them</i> in <i>the</i> safety for which they long."
Unlocked Literal Bible	"Because of violence against the poor, because of the groans of the needy, I will arise," says Yahweh. "I will provide the safety for which they long."
Urim-Thummim Version	For the ruin of the poor, for the groaning of the needy, now I will arise says YHWH; I will put in safety him that breathes at him.
Wikipedia Bible Project	"For the plunder of the poor, the cry of the impoverished, now I arise", said Yahweh: "I will lead to salvation, those they snort at."

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

The Heritage Bible	For the violence toward the depressed, for the crying of the poor, Jehovah says, now I will rise; I will place him in salvation from him who puffs at him.
New American Bible (2011)	III "Because they rob the weak, and the needy groan, I will now arise," says the LORD; "I will grant safety to whoever longs for it." Is 33:10.
New Jerusalem Bible	'For the poor who are plundered, the needy who groan, now will I act,' says Yahweh, 'I will grant salvation to those who sigh for it.'

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	"Because the poor are oppressed, because the needy are groaning, I will now rise up," says Adonai, "and grant security to those whom they scorn."
Hebraic Roots Bible	For the pain of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, I will now rise up, says YAHWEH; I will set in safety; he pants for it.
JPS (Tanakh)	"Because of the groans of the plundered poor and needy, I will now act," says the LORD. "I will give help," He affirms to him. [The meaning of this final line in the Hebrew is uncertain].
Tree of Life Version	"Because of the oppression of the poor, because of the groaning of the needy, now will I arise," says Adonai. "I will put him in the safe place—he pants for it."

Weird English, 𐤀𐤃𐤅 English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible	BECAUSE OF THE MISERY OF THE POOR, AND BECAUSE OF THE SIGHING OF THE NEEDY, NOW WILL I ARISE, SAITH JESUS, I WILL SET THEM IN SAFETY; I WILL SPEAK TO THEM THEREOF OPENLY.
Awful Scroll Bible	"For the havoc of they looked down on, and the lamentation of they needy was I to rise up", was to says Jehovah, "I was to appoint to him deliverance, who was to pant for it."
Concordant Literal Version	Because of the devastation of the humbled, Because of the groaning of the needy, Now I shall arise, says Yahweh; I shall set him in safety; I shall shine forth for him.
exeGeses companion Bible	For the devastation of the humble, for the shrieking of the needy, I now rise, says Yah Veh; I set him in safety from him who puffs at him.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	For the oppression of the aniyim, for the groaning of the needy, now will I arise, saith Hashem; I will set him in safety from him that sneers at him.

Rotherham's *Emphasized B.* Because of violence done to the poor, because of the crying of the needy, Now, will I arise! O may Yahweh say,—I will place him in safety—let him puff at him!

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

- The Amplified Bible* Now will I arise, says the Lord, because the poor are oppressed, because of groans of the needy; I will set him in safety *and* in the salvation for which he pants.
- The Expanded Bible But the Lord says,
 "I will now rise up,
 because the ·poor [weak] are ·being hurt [destroyed; plundered; oppressed].
 Because of the ·moans [groans; sighs] of the ·helpless [needy],
 I will give them the ·help [victory] they ·want [long for]."
- Kretzmann's Commentary For the oppression of the poor, those in misery and distress, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord, as the almighty Avenger of wrong; I will set him, the poor and downtrodden, in safety from him that puffeth at him, with a gesture of proud disdain, or, "I will place him in safety who panteth after it," being filled with eager longing to escape the continual oppression of the mighty. This being the attitude of the Lord, the psalmist praises Him.
- The Pulpit Commentary For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord. The ungodly having been threatened, a promise of assistance is made to the righteous whom they oppress. God declares that, in response to the many calls made upon him (Psalm 3:7; Psalm 7:6; Psalm 9:19; Psalm 10:12), he will "now," at last, "arise"—interpose on behalf of the oppressed, and deliver them (comp. Exodus 3:7, Exodus 3:8). I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him. This is a possible meaning; but it is perhaps better to render, with Hengstenberg and Cheyne, "I will place him in the safety for which he sighs," or "pants."
- The Voice "I will rise up," says the Eternal,
 "because the poor are being trampled, and the needy groan for *My saving help*.
 I will lift them up to the safety they long for."

Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

- College Press Bible Study "Because of the spoiling of humbled ones because of the sighing of needy ones now will I arise" saith Jehovah:
 "I will place him in safety who panteth for it^[105]."
 [105] "I will shine forth for him"—Br.
- The Complete Tanach Because of the plunder of the poor, because of the cry of the needy, Now I will rise, the Lord shall say; I will grant them salvation, He shall speak concerning them.
- Because of the plunder of the poor:** Because of the plunder of the poor who are robbed by you for example, I myself and my men and the priests of Nob and because of the cry of the needy, the Lord shall say, "Now I will rise to their help."
- I will grant them salvation, He shall speak:** I will grant them salvation, He will speak concerning them. יִפִּי is an expression of speech. There are many [examples] in the Book of Proverbs, and in Habakkuk (2:3): "and He shall speak (יִפִּי) of the end, and it shall not fail." However, Menachem (p. 141), interpreted it as an expression of a snare, as (below 124:7) "the snare (פֶּה) broke."
- NET Bible® "Because of the violence done to the oppressed,¹⁵
 because of the painful cries¹⁶ of the needy,
 I will spring into action,"¹⁷ says the Lord.
 "I will provide the safety they so desperately desire."¹⁸

¹⁵tn The term translated "oppressed" is an objective genitive; the oppressed are the recipients/victims of violence.

¹⁶tn Elsewhere in the psalms this noun is used of the painful groans of prisoners awaiting death (79:11; 102:20). The related verb is used of the painful groaning of those wounded in

combat (Jer 51:52; Ezek 26:15) and of the mournful sighing of those in grief (Ezek 9:4; 24:17).

¹⁷tn Heb "I will rise up."

¹⁸tn Heb "I will place in deliverance, he pants for it." The final two words in Hebrew (יָפִיֶּאֱכֹל; yafiakh lo) comprise an asyndetic relative clause, "the one who pants for it." "The one who pants" is the object of the verb "place" and the antecedent of the pronominal suffix (in the phrase "for it") is "deliverance." Another option is to translate, "I will place in deliverance the witness for him," repointing יָפִיֶּאֱכֹל (a Hiphil imperfect from פָּנָה, puakh, "pant") as יָפִיֶּאֱכֹל (yafeakh), a noun meaning "witness." In this case the Lord would be promising protection to those who have the courage to support the oppressed in the court of law. However, the first part of the verse focuses on the oppressed, not their advocates.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Bullinger (text/interpretation)	For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now I will arise, says Jehovah; I will set him [i.e., <i>each one</i>] in safety; he blows upon [i.e., <i>he despises</i>] it [i.e., <i>the oppression</i>].
Charles Thompson OT	Because of the oppression of the poor; because of the groans of the needy; now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set in safety and speak boldly.
Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	Because of violence done to the poor, Because of the crying of the needy Now I will arise! I may Yahweh say, "I will place [him] in safety—let him puff at him [or, <i>he pants for it</i>]!"
English Standard Version	"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."
Modern Literal Version	Because of the oppression of the poor, because of the sighing of the needy, now I will arise, says Jehovah. I will set him in the safety he gasps for.
New American Standard B.	"Because of the devastation of the afflicted, because of the groaning of the needy, Now I will arise," says the Lord; "I will set him in the safety for which he longs."
New King James Version	"For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, Now I will arise," says the LORD; "I will set <i>him</i> in the safety for which he yearns."
World English Bible	"Because of the oppression of the weak and because of the groaning of the needy, I will now arise," says Yahweh; "I will set him in safety from those who malign him."
Young's Updated LT	Because of the spoiling of the poor, Because of the groaning of the needy, Now do I arise, says Jehovah, I set in safety <i>him who</i> breathes for it.

What is the gist of this verse? Because the poor and weak have been oppressed and because they have prayed to God, Y^ehowah will place the poor and the needy in a safe place that they long for.

The translation of this verse, and therefore, the interpretation, is quite difficult, despite the agreement that we find above.

In any case, this begins a quote from God, as will be clear in this verse, and is quite interesting that here, and in many places throughout the Bible, a writer speaks for God or from God's viewpoint. People disparage the Bible for a variety of reasons, and some even for passages like this. However, it is amazing that, in Scripture, a huge variety of men, over hundreds of years, took the same liberty. It would appear to be a very random selection of men, if one were to view Scripture impartially (an approach which is almost impossible for anyone to take; a huge number of people have made up their minds, with or without research, that the Bible either *is* or *is not* the Word of God). We have several military leaders, priests, shepherds, political leaders who seem to come from a variety of backgrounds, and suddenly come onto the scene, and they all propose to be speaking from divine viewpoint. Furthermore, their pictures of God coincide, despite their disparate backgrounds and personalities.

Contrast this with the Muslim world, where, after having received their Scriptures from Mohammed, and after bastardizing Old Testament Scriptures in order to conform to their philosophy, are unable to come to any sort of consensus. We have radical and non-radical versions of Islam, and we have one group of Muslims killing a multitude of people, which is primarily other Muslims. They have an accepted authority, and they cannot come to an agreement.

Even *Christian* groups today vary widely on their interpretation of Scripture, we tend to be less likely to blow ourselves up in the sanctuary of a group with whom we disagree. I have known and interacted with many Catholics, Mormons, JW's, and I even knew one of the *Children of God* cult—and yet, I have nothing to fear from them or they from me. We disagree strongly about so many fundamental issues; but, I am not the least bit worried about physical conflict to erupt at my church.

By the way, for those who believe that armed conflicts between various Christian groups is just like those between different Muslim groups, they are quite mistaken. There are various websites dedicated to various armed conflicts throughout the world, and where are most of them? In Muslim countries—in majority Muslim countries. A distant second right now would be conflicts involving the imposition of socialism or communism.

The original writers of Scripture continue to present God as perfect righteousness, perfect justice, omnipotent and omnipresent, and as a God of love. The God of the Bible is the Creator of all things, yet He is specially connected to Israel. If we were to take the fundamental principles of Bible doctrine, we could go to any one of these writers and find these principles as their core beliefs. I've spent years in the book of 1Samuel, and it is clear, again and again, even in a narrative format, Who God is and how He interacts with His people, Israel (and His servant David).

To me, this is fascinating. This is one of the reasons I have, on several occasions, gone back and approached the **Doctrine of Inspiration**. The variety of backgrounds, the variety of men who composed Scripture, who do so in a variety of circumstances, all lend themselves to a presentation of the same God of justice, a God Who loves us, and God Who has provided for us in every way, despite our continued rebellion against Him. To me, it is absolutely fascinating that so many would claim to speak for God, and still, present God consistently, and still present themselves as failed men. Every person who writes Scripture is a man with an old sin nature and, when it comes to presenting himself in Scripture, he so evaluates himself. In our examination of David in the book of Samuel, we see him warts and all. There is no doubt about it—David was a great man of great spiritual integrity—and yet, he was a man who had feet of clay, who failed again and again and again. Yet, every time, David got up and moved forward spiritually. Here, God the Holy Spirit allowed David to speak for Him, God the Holy Spirit spoke through David.

I personally spend hours every day examining the Word of God, and I record what I believe to be the proper interpretation of each word, verse and passage which I examine. There are times that I am quite pleased with the result and times when it does not seem to come together as a coherent whole or a verse seems to make little sense. In those cases, I endeavor to give what I believe is an accurate explanation, and when I am uncertain, I general caveat my explanation or offer alternative approaches. I've done this writing for 25 years now (writing these words now in 2020), and, at no point, apart from the backing of Scripture, would I purport to speak for God, or to quote God and then to throw out some random sentence which just came out of my mind. V. 5—these are the words of God, as it says—and we can examine and extrapolate principles from these words, but no way would I begin pretending that God is speaking through me, saying this or that. Yet, men of Scripture did just that very thing. Not only does David give us an accurate representation of men during this particular part of his life, but he offers up God's promise to us as well, as spoken by God.

Psalm 12:5a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>mihn</i>]	<i>from, off, out from, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
shôd (שׁוֹד or שָׁד) [pronounced <i>showd</i>]	<i>havoc, (domestic) violence, devastation, ruin, national disaster [unrest]; intense unrest [street rioting, looting]; general lawlessness; oppression; desolation, destruction</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #7701 BDB #994
<p>My feeling is that this would refer to intense national unrest, such as street rioting and looting, and general lawlessness. This works well with Isa. 51:19 Ezek. 45:9 Joel 1:15 Habak. 1:3, and less well with Psalm 12:5 Prov. 24:2. To grasp why it works with one and not another, civil unrest and strife was not as often the cause in the old world for rioting, looting and rape. These things usually accompanied attacks from without.</p>			
<p>The homonym means <i>breast, bosom, teat</i>. Strong's #7699 BDB #993 & #994.</p>			
ʿânîy (עֲנִי) [pronounced <i>gaw-NEE</i>]	<i>poor, afflicted; humble, grace oriented; those in circumstances of humiliation and poverty</i>	masculine plural adjective (functions here as a noun)	Strong's #6041 BDB #776

Translation: “On account of the oppression of the grace-oriented [or, poor]...”

The masculine singular construct found here sometimes indicates national unrest, which would include possibly rioting and looting. I don't know if we have anything in the history of the Jewish people which would suggest this kind of action; I just don't picture them rioting in the streets like the **Watts riots**, for instance (although, for their day and time, the unrest may *seem* to be quite radical. This word can also mean *unrest, oppression, and destruction*. Therefore, we may more reasonably be speaking of the *oppression of the poor* (or, of the **grace oriented**). The preposition found here can mean *on account of, because*. Although the construct can have several meanings, the masculine plural adjective here is not generally found used other than for *the poor, the afflicted, the humble, the grace oriented, the impoverished*.

Now, recall how this psalm has begun: David calls out to God, for the godly man seems to have disappeared, and how God is going to cut off all those who flatter. Suddenly, we are dealing with the *oppression of the afflicted*.

Application: I have to be careful in exploring this subject: there are situations where those in power exploit their power and take advantage of others. In Israel, families were to retain certain blocks of land, and, even if they lost these tracts of land due to mismanagement, bad luck or neglect, God set up a system where their land was restored to their family after 49 years. So, when you bought or took the land of one family, even in a legitimate way, this land had to be returned to that family every 49 years. Now, it is possible that it was not, and that is the oppression which is spoken of. It is possible that those who had financial dealings with their fellow Jews cheated them (for instance, charged them interest on a loan; Jews were not to charge other Jews interest).

Application: Now, there are companies which certainly exploit the poor and there are individuals today which exploit the poor; this does not mean that every large business or every successful businessman is guilty of doing this. Loyalty is a two-way street, and a business owner should be loyal to his employees, just as they should be loyal to their company. This does not mean that the government needs to step in and set up specific percentages and ratios of profit to wages or anything like that. However, this definitely means that the owner of a company needs to look out for his employees; which would include paying them a decent wage, making the workplace safe,

and being mindful of their individual situations. An executive should be able to do this and still maintain a decent salary for himself (which can even seem to some to be extraordinary). When this does not occur, as we have found, other groups—e.g., unions—step in, and they can throw things way out of wack.

Psalms 12:5a “On account of the oppression of the grace-oriented [or, poor]...”

Application: We may have a harder time, in this generation in the United States, understanding this verse (this is my writing in 2007). There are very few true poor in the United States. Now, of course, according to government numbers, we have a huge population of those living below the poverty line, but these include an overwhelming percentage of people who receive food stamps, section 8 housing vouchers, and are the recipients of a number of governmental programs. I’ve been inside their houses, and the sheer number of possessions which they own is surprising, when I compare them to what my family had when I was growing up. Almost all of them own large screen televisions, a small library of dvd’s, a vehicle, and live in a house which I worked for years in order to live in a house that size. Quite frankly, I have no idea as to how many truly destitute people that we have in the US; how many are truly poor.

Application: We do have homeless people, but these are not people who work—for the most part (obviously, there are going to be exceptions here)—so, these are not people who are being oppressed or exploited here. So, again, it is more difficult for us to understand this concept.

Application: There is the liberal myth that there are two America’s, and you have two huge populations of people, some of whom are doing very well and the other group who are oppressed, poorly paid, living in great poverty, etc., but, as I have pointed out, the percentage of truly poor in the United States, as I write this, is extremely small, and government programs provide for a great many of them. In fact, in many cases, the government programs rob many of these people of their will to work. I suggested to one family that I know, that she get a job or that her teenage son mow lawns, and she called me racist and told me that she was not going to make her son into a slave. When the government provides too much, then there is little motivation to work (don’t misunderstand me in this point; many of those who receive government aid do have jobs). But, my point is, we have a more difficult time understanding this verse in the United States. However, we are coming to a point where a large segment of our population, the baby boomers, are reaching retirement age, and there is going to be fewer people paying taxes, which means fewer government programs, which could cause a number of people to become impoverished in the short span of a decade or so. I am not saying that this could happen, as our nation has been graced out by God again and again. So, in order to understand this verse, we have to think of those who are truly destitute, who have few if any options, and who are taken advantage of, oppressed, and/or exploited.

Application: We do have this sort of thing taking place in huge quantities in other countries. So, we have to understand it more theoretically than through our own experience (that could change at any point in time; I write this in the year 2007, after the US has enjoyed several decades of great prosperity).

Application: Time has passed since I wrote that; I am now writing this in 2020. What has exploded in specific areas of the United States is outdoor living spaces for the homeless. Certain cities boast thousands of homeless, most of them on the street due to mental illness and/or drug abuse.

Psalms 12:5a “On account of the oppression of the grace-oriented [or, poor]...”

Psalms 12:5a For the oppression of the poor (various commentators)

Barnes offers this explanation: *For the oppression of the poor – That is, on account of the wrong done to the poor in the manner specified above – by the abuse of the power of speech. On account of the slanders uttered against them, or the frauds perpetrated on them by the abuse of this power. The reference is to the wrongs done when no confidence could be placed in men’s words; when they uttered words of “vanity” and “flattery” (Psalm 12:2); when promises were made only to be broken, and obligations assumed never to be fulfilled.*

Psalm 12:5a For the oppression of the poor (various commentators)

Barnes continues: *In such a state of things the “poor” were the most likely to suffer. In performing service for others – in daily labor on a farm or in a mechanical employment – they would depend for support, on the promises made by their employers; and when their pay was withheld, they and their families must suffer.*

Barnes continues: *Compare James 5:4. Rich men, having other resources, would not thus suffer; but the poor must always suffer when there is in the community a disregard of the obligation of promises. In like manner, the poor would be most likely to be taken in by the acts of unprincipled men, and to be deceived in their small dealings with them.*

Barnes concludes: *Other classes of the community would be on their guard; but the poor, unacquainted with the arts of cunning men, are always liable - though on a small scale, yet of importance to them - to be wronged by the false statements and promises of those against whom they can have no redress.²⁴⁷*

Benson: *For the oppression of the poor* — *Because the poor that put their trust in Me, and send up their prayers to Me for help, are thus oppressed.²⁴⁸*

Clarke: *For the oppression of the poor* - *This seems to refer best to the tribulations which the poor Israelites suffered while captives in Babylon. The Lord represents himself as looking on and seeing their affliction; and, hearing their cry, he determines to come forward to their help.²⁴⁹*

Dr. John Gill: *For the oppression of the poor,....* *The servants and people of God, who, for the most part, are poor in a temporal sense, and are all of them, and always, so in a spiritual sense, standing continually in need of fresh supplies of grace; and being often afflicted, as the word signifies, are mean and despicable in the eyes of the men of this world, and so oppressed by them, as the poor generally are by the rich; and as the people of Israel were oppressed by the Egyptians, so are the people of God by antichrist, and by his tyrannical laws and edicts, and by such haughty and insolent persons as before described.²⁵⁰*

Matthew Poole: *For the oppression of the poor;* *oppressed by Saul through the instigation and artifices of his fawning courtiers.²⁵¹*

Spurgeon: *In due season the Lord will hear his elect ones, who cry day and night unto him, and though he bear long with their oppressors, yet will he avenge them speedily. Observe that the mere oppression of saints, however silently they bear it, is in itself a cry to God: Moses was heard at the Red Sea, though he said nothing; and Hagar's affliction was heard despite her silence.²⁵²*

Trapp: *For the oppression of the poor]* *Whose very oppression, though they complain not, hath a voice, and God will hear it, for he is gracious, Exodus 22:27. He heard Hagar's affliction, though she said nothing, Gen. 16:11.²⁵³*

Whedon: *because of the oppression,* *[this] marks the point [in the psalm] where the divine forbearance ends and the work of judgment begins.²⁵⁴*

²⁴⁷ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁴⁸ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁴⁹ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁵⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁵¹ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁵² Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁵³ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁵⁴ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from e-Sword; Psalm 12:5.

There is quite a bit in the Bible about the oppression of the poor. Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge suggests: oppression: Psalm 10:12 74:21-22 79:10-11 146:7-8 Exodus 2:23-24 3:7-9 Judges 10:16 Prov. 14:31 22:22-23 Ecclesiastes 4:1 5:8 Isa. 19:20 Ezek. 18:12-13 18:18; James 5:4.²⁵⁵

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Another way to understand this is, those who are grace oriented are being oppressed. This is easier to understand. In the United States, where something like 80–90% of the people believe in God,²⁵⁶ and about 80% of the American population identifies themselves as Christians, yet, the one group which tends to receive a great deal of slander and negative speech is Christians. Checking back into this particular percentage in 2020, apparently it depends a great deal upon how the question is asked. In 2017, the percentage of those who believe in God varied from 64% on up to 87%, depending upon how the question is asked, according **Gallup**.

In films and television, rarely is a Christian ever portrayed as intelligent, open-minded, articulate, introspective, intellectually curious, etc. This occurs in a culture which is overwhelmingly Christian; imagine how we would be portrayed if our numbers were much smaller. Satan despises believers and would do anything within his power to attack them. Therefore, we should not be surprised when believers are slandered, defamed, ridiculed, persecuted or oppressed. In most Arabic nations, even if being a Christian is not against the law, Christians are still likely to find themselves persecuted.

Now, lets bring this back around to David writing this psalm. I don't know of a period of time in David's life where he would have been persecuted for believing in the **Revealed God** (that is, Jesus Christ). The only time this might have been an issue is when David was young and apparently somewhat of an outcast within his own family. However, just as when he was persecuted by King Saul, there is no indication in Scripture that this had to do with David believing in Jehovah Elohim. It may have, but I cannot find any indication of this in my most detailed examinations of the historical narratives of these two time periods. Similarly, I do not find any indication that David was ever oppressed as a poor man. This suggests several possibilities: (1) David did not write this psalm (which is apparently the view of some, despite his name being found in the inscription). (2) David was inspired by God the Holy Spirit to include this verse, even though it was not directly David's experience. That is, despite the fact that David had not been persecuted, defamed or oppressed for believing in Jesus Christ, he sees this as a possible experience for some believers under some circumstances. Or, (3) David may have in mind right here the grace oriented. They might be persecuted; and he might be persecuted for the details of his faith. However, I believe that there is a 4th explanation which guides us here: (4) David, when caused to flee from Saul, lacked everything. He did not have a savings account; he did not have some hidden gold to dig up; he did not have a plot of land somewhere that he could live on. So, when David was forced into hiding from Saul, he understood what it was like to be poor and without prospects.

As an aside, I think that it is a good idea to, when determining the context for a line or a verse, to consider the person who is said to write that verse and determine if there are any circumstances in his life which would explain his point of view.

Most of us have not been persecuted specifically for believing in Jesus Christ, although, no doubt, there have been demonic attacks launched against us for that reason. However, Israel, as a nation, would face great oppression for its relation to Jehovah Elohim; believers in certain nations and during specific periods of time face persecution for their faith in Christ Jesus; therefore, I believe what is happening here is the latter option: much of this psalm is personal to David, even though this particular verse is not. However, writing under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, David includes these words which refer to the oppression and persecution of the grace oriented throughout history.

²⁵⁵ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁵⁶ I write this in 2007 and the stats for the past 10 years show a quick decline from 94% in 1998 to 82% in 2006

E. W. Bullinger: *poor* = *wretched*. Hebrew 'ain.²⁵⁷

The Six Words Used for the Poor in Proverbs (from E. W. Bullinger)

poverty = need. There are six words rendered poor or poverty in Proverbs:

- (1) *rush* = in want of necessities of life (Prov. 6:11; Prov. 10:4, Prov. 10:15; Prov. 13:7, Prov. 13:8, Prov. 13:18, Prov. 13:23; Prov. 14:20; Prov. 17:5; Prov. 18:23; Prov. 19:1, Prov. 19:7, Prov. 19:22; Prov. 22:2, Prov. 22:7; Prov. 24:34; Prov. 28:3, Prov. 28:6, Prov. 28:19, Prov. 28:27; Prov. 29:13; Prov. 30:8; Prov. 31:7).
- (2) *dal* = impoverished, reduced (Prov. 10:15; Prov. 14:31; Prov. 19:4, Prov. 19:17; Prov. 22:9, Prov. 22:16, Prov. 22:22, Prov. 22:22; Prov. 28:3, Prov. 8:11, Prov. 8:15; Prov. 29:7, Prov. 29:14).
- (3) *heser* = in want (Prov. 11:24; Prov. 21:17; Prov. 28:22).
- (4) 'anah = wretched (Prov. 14:21).
- (5) 'ebyon = destitute, helpless; deficient in will and wealth (Prov. 14:31).
- (6) *yarash* = dispossessed (Prov. 20:13; Prov. 23:21; Prov. 30:9).

From E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Prov. 6:11.

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Psalm 12:5b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>mihn</i>]	<i>from, off, out from, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
'ānāqāh (אֲנָקָה) [pronounced <i>uh-naw-KAW</i>]	<i>clamor; crying; groaning; lamenting</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #603 BDB #60
'eb ^e yôn (עֲבֵיּוֹן) [pronounced <i>eb^{ve}-YOHN</i>]	<i>destitute, in want or need [of food, clothing, shelter, money], needy, poor, bankrupt</i>	masculine plural singular noun/adjective	Strong's #34 BDB #2

This is a homonym for some kind of a lizard or reptile, so named for the sound it makes (although the LXX and the Vulgate render this *shrew-mouse*). Strong's #604 BDB #60.

The NET Bible® gives us more information about the use of this particular word: *Elsewhere in the psalms this noun is used of the painful groans of prisoners awaiting death (Psalm 79:11 102:20). The related verb is used of the painful groaning of those wounded in combat (Jer. 51:52 Ezek. 26:15) and of the mournful sighing of those in grief (Ezek. 9:4 24:17).*²⁵⁸

This second word can also be applied to those without the means to secure their own salvation; they are the slaves on the slave market of sin, unable to purchase their own freedom. This does not mean that they are *spiritually destitute* or *spiritually bankrupt*, per se; but simply lack the *inherent* means to secure a place with God and to grow spiritually.

Translation: ...[and] on account of the clamor of the destitute,...

²⁵⁷ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁵⁸ *The Net Bible®*; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 12:5 (footnote).

We understand the meaning of the previous phrase based upon this phrase, as it does not have a number of different meanings; here we have the *clamor or crying of the destitute (needy, poor)*.

The idea is, during times of national degeneracy, the poor and needy find themselves in even more desperate straights.

As you can see, I have had no little difficulty in interpreting this particular verse. Are we dealing with believers? Are we dealing with mature believers? Are we dealing with the poor and the destitute? I believe that I have presented both sides in v. 5a—I approached this as if we are speaking of the poor and I approached this as if we are speaking of the grace oriented. In poetry and prophetic writings, it is common to find passages which have more than one meaning. That being said, we find these two words—the *poor and the destitute*—placed together over and over again in the Law and elsewhere (Deut. 15:11 24:14, Job. 24:4, 14, Psalm 9:18 12:5 35:10 37:14 40:17 70:5 72:4, 12–13 74:21 82:4 86:1 109:16, Psalm 109:22 113:7 Prov. 30:14 31:9, 20 Isa. 14:30 25:4 32:7 41:17 Jer. 22:16, Ezek. 16:49 18:12 22:29 Amos 4:1 8:4 8:6). In fact, these words occur together so often, that I think this requires me to examine the **Doctrine of the Poor and the Needy** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

To give you the skinny on these two terms, they have two sets of meanings: (1) those who are temporally impoverished and (2) those who are believers with some doctrine (the grace-oriented ones) and those who recognize that they do not have the wherewithal within themselves to save themselves (the needy). That essentially sums up this doctrine, where these ideas are pursued more carefully.

We need to take in the entire Bible and not simply the parts which fit a liberal or a conservative agenda. There were provisions for debt relief, which did not include going bankrupt. When a person got into debt, they had the opportunity to sell themselves into slavery in order to pay off their debt (which is an outstanding idea, in my opinion). Obviously, when a person becomes a servant, then there is a tremendous potential for abuse, and perhaps this is to what this refers. On the other hand, a servant can be treated well and fairly, and things can be quite different.

At the time of the Civil War, several things happened in the south which some do not realize. Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee, if I recall correctly, set their slaves free, in order to make it clear that they were fighting for state's rights and not for slavery (this is a disputed claim). Other slave owners left their women, children and plantations in the charge of their slaves, as they trusted them that much. Of course, there were certainly some slaves who had been mistreated, and those no doubt left their masters when they had the chance.

Psalm 12:5b ...[and] on account of the clamor of the destitute,...

Psalm 12:5b Because of the sighing of the needy (various commentators)

Barnes: *For the sighing of the needy ... - The word "needy" here is synonymous with "poor." It refers to those in humble circumstances, who were especially liable to be wronged by deceitful statements and promises.*²⁵⁹

Dr. John Gill: *for the sighing of the needy; who groan under their oppressions; being stripped of all good things, their friends, and worldly substance, they sigh inwardly, and cry unto the Lord, who sees their oppressions, hears their groans; and though he cannot be moved, as men are, by anything without himself, yet, according to his abundant mercy and sovereign will, he appears and exerts himself on the behalf of his people, and for their relief and assistance.*²⁶⁰

Trapp: *For the sighing of the needy] If it be but their breathing, Lam. 3:56, God can feel it, but the sighs of his people are effectual orators, Exodus 2:23-25; Exodus 3:7 Psalm 56:9.*²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁶⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁶¹ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:5.

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Psalm 12:5a-b “On account of the oppression of the grace-oriented [or, *poor*] [and] on account of the clamor of the destitute,...

Psalm 12:5a-b Because of the poor and the needy (various commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *Render: Because of the spoiling of the poor, because of the groaning of the needy. Cp. Exodus 2:24 (And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.—ESV).*²⁶²

Matthew Henry: *[We know that] the times are very bad...[because] God himself takes notice of the oppression of the poor and the sighing of the needy; they are oppressed because they are poor, have all manner of wrong done them merely because they are not in a capacity to right themselves. Being thus oppressed, they dare not speak for themselves, lest their defence should be made their offence; but they sigh, secretly bemoaning their calamities, and pouring out their souls in sighs before God.*²⁶³

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Psalm 12:5c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
‘attâh (הַתַּע) [pronounced <i>ghat-TAWH</i>]	<i>now, at this time, already</i>	adverb of time	Strong's #6258 BDB #773
qûwm (קוּם) [pronounced <i>koom</i>]	<i>to stand, to rise up, to get up; to establish, to establish a vow, to cause a vow to stand, to confirm or to fulfill a vow</i>	1 st person singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6965 BDB #877
’âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: ...I will now arise,” says Y^ehowah...

God now enters into the picture. He has already said that He will cut off the sycophants of the land; now He will rise up or he will vow to do something more. Since God is a spirit, this is an **anthropopathism**; God does not actually stand up or rise up. He was not sitting down in the midst of a meal, saw what was happening below on earth, and then stood up, figuring out, *how should I handle this?* However, this indicates that His involvement is going to become more apparent to mankind; in particular, to the *poor and the needy*.

²⁶² *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12:5 (I included the text of the verse cited).

²⁶³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

Psalm 12:5c ...I will now arise," says Y^ehowah...

Psalm 12:5c Y^ehowah says, "Now I will arise!" (various commentators)

Benson: *now I will I arise, says the Lord* — Speedily, sooner than they imagine or expect.²⁶⁴

E. W. Bullinger: *saith the LORD* = let Jehovah say.²⁶⁵

The Cambridge Bible: *Now will I arise &c.] Cp. Isa. 33:10 ("Now I will arise," says the LORD, "now I will lift Myself up; now I will be exalted.—ESV; capitalized). The moment for action has at length come.*²⁶⁶

Clarke: *Now will I arise - I alone delivered them into the hands of their enemies, because of their transgressions; I alone can and will deliver them from the hands of their enemies; and the manner of their deliverance shall show the power and influence of their God.*²⁶⁷

Dr. John Gill: *now will I arise, says the Lord; to have mercy on the poor and needy, and to avenge them on their oppressors, and free them from them. And this the Lord promises to do "now", speedily, immediately; God arises in the most seasonable time, when his people are in the greatest straits, and in the utmost distress and herein displays his wisdom, power, and goodness. This is an answer to the petition of the psalmist in Psalm 12:1.*²⁶⁸

David Guzik: *These destructive talkers spoke as they pleased; but they could not stop the Lord God from speaking as He pleased. In a wonderful and dramatic way the Lord announced that He would act on behalf of the poor and needy victimized by these proud, unstoppable talkers.*²⁶⁹

Matthew Henry: *Now, will I arise, says the Lord. This promise of God, which David here delivered by the spirit of prophecy, is an answer to that petition which he put up to God by the spirit of prayer. "Help, Lord," says he; "I will," says God.*

Henry continues: *When the oppressed are in the depth of their distress and despondency, when they are sighing like Israel in Egypt by reason of the cruel bondage, then is God's time to appear for them, as for Israel when they were most dejected and Pharaoh was most elevated. Now will I arise.*²⁷⁰

Morgan G. Campbell: *in answer to the cry and the affirmation of confidence, Jehovah speaks so that the singer hears Him and is able to announce Jehovah's response before the song ceases.*

Spurgeon: *Think of God arising in his might. When he ariseth, he shakes terribly the earth; nothing stands before him when he once arises. Poor, sick, needy, sorrowing, sighing child of God, it is you who can bring him into this marvellous state of activity.*²⁷¹

Trapp: *Now will I arise] In the nick of time, when all seems to be lost. Man's extremity is God's opportunity.*²⁷²

Whedon: *Says the Lord—This is the date of the answer of prayer; Jehovah says, or will say. The word goes forth, and faith is assured.*²⁷³

²⁶⁴ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁶⁵ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁶⁶ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5 (I included the text from the cited verse).

²⁶⁷ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁶⁸ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁶⁹ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

²⁷⁰ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

²⁷¹ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

²⁷² John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁷³ Whedon's *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:5.

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge suggests: Isa. 33:10 Micah 7:8-9.²⁷⁴

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Application: There will be times when we find ourselves under great pressure, where there appear to be no human solutions. God periodically places us into these situations, and then He allows some time for these things to percolate, so to speak. However, at some point in time, He will arise; He will step in and take care of the things which we cannot take care of.

Psalm 12:5c ...I will now arise," says Y^ehowah...

Psalm 12:5c David quotes God (various commentators/discussion)

It is fascinating that David here has a quotation from God. I would suggest that David did not see God; nor did David hear God audibly; he simply knows and understands God and, therefore, is able to speak for God.

The Cambridge Bible disagrees and seems to indicate they believe this to be God's audible voice: *It is no doubt possible that he is quoting some prophetic utterance (cp. Psalm 89:19 ff.), but there is no need of the supposition. He can himself hear God speak, and deliver His word as an authoritative message. Cp. Psalm 2:6-7 ff., Psalm 50:1 ff., Psalm 60:6 ff., Psalm 81:6 ff., Psalm 82:2 ff., Psalm 91:14 ff.*²⁷⁵

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Psalm 12:5a-c "On account of the oppression of the grace-oriented [or, *poor*] [and] on account of the clamor of the destitute, I will now arise," says Y^ehowah,...

This ought to give pause to the person who is attempting to take advantage of those who are impoverished. God sees this; God sees the oppression; God hears the prayers of the destitute, and He will rise up (which means, God will act on their behalf). You do not want to be on the wrong side of God rising up. You do not want God rising up against you.

Psalm 12:5d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shîyth (שִׁיִּת) [pronounced <i>sheeth</i>]	<i>to put, to set, place; to appoint; to arrange, to set in order; to found; to station</i>	1 st person singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7896 BDB #1011

Gesenius tells us that shîyth means ❶ *to set up* that which is supposed to be upright; ❷ *to place* or *to put* something where it properly belongs, ❸ *to put* in the sense of *directing* or *turning* in some direction, ❹ *to make* or *to render* when followed by an accusative or an accusative with the lamed or bêyth prepositions; and ❺ more rarely *to make, to prepare* (for someone) when followed by a dative and even *to give*. My thinking is that with this verb you are placing something or doing something to something to make it the way it is supposed to be. Something should properly be upright, so you set it upright. Something should be turned in a specific direction, so you turn it in that direction.

²⁷⁴ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁷⁵ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

Psalm 12:5d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
yêsha ^c (עֲשָׂה) [pronounced YAY-shahg̃]	<i>deliverance; aid; salvation; safety, welfare</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3468 BDB #447

Dr. Bob Utley: *This noun (BDB 447) is from the verb "help" (BDB 446, KB 448) used in Psalm 119:1. It seems to be similar to an Arabic root which denotes that which is wide or spacious (cf. Psalm 4:1; Psalm 31:8; Psalm 118:5). This is the opposite idiom from "narrow" or "stressed."*²⁷⁶

Translation: ..."[and] I will place [him] into the safety [or, deliverance]...

We are told here that God will deliver or place someone or something into safety, although we do not have an object here, which is why the next phrase is interpreted as the object.

Psalm 12:5d ..."[and] I will place [him] into the safety [or, deliverance]...

Psalm 12:5d God: "I will set him in a safe place" (various commentators)

Barnes: *I will set him in safety - I will make him safe. I will save him from the evils which they thought to bring upon him. The general idea is, that God is the vindicator of the poor and the oppressed.*²⁷⁷

Benson connects this with the next phrase, and interpreted it differently from me: *I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him — That despises him, and hopes to destroy him with a puff of breath.*²⁷⁸

David Guzik: *I will set him in the safety for which he yearns: David believed that this was God's word for him. He was one of the poor and needy yearning for safety from these destructive critics and talkers.*

Matthew Henry: *[God's rescue at the right time] is effectual: I will set him in safety, or in salvation, not only protect him, but restore him to his former prosperity, will bring him out into a wealthy place (Psalm 66:12), so that, upon the whole, he shall lose nothing by his sufferings.*

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Application: Being in the United States, very few of us have ever lived under oppression; and most of us have no clue as to what real poverty is like. However, we have been under great stress and pressure at times; we have all been in difficult straits; and we have all had problems that seemed to be without answers; it is in situations like these, when there are no human solutions, that we look toward God to step in, to arise, and to deliver us to a place of safety. Most of us will be in situations like this.

²⁷⁶ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Psalm 12:1–5.

²⁷⁷ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁷⁸ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

Application: As an aside, one of the reasons that few people in the United States have suffered severe poverty is, God has blessed the United States and its citizens because of the large Christian population within the US borders. This is known as **blessing by association**.

Psalm 12:5e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
pûwach (פּוּחַ) [pronounced <i>poo-AHKH</i>]	<i>to blow [through, upon, against, out]; to utter; to pant, to hasten; to rail against, to reproach</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #6315 BDB #806
Dr. Bob Utley: <i>This verb (BDB 806, KB 916, Hiphil imperfect) basically means "to breathe" or "to blow out breath."</i>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is used of YHWH's snorting in disgust — Psalm 10:5 2. It is used of testimony in court — Prov. 6:19; Prov. 12:17; Prov. 14:5; Prov. 14:25; Prov. 19:5; Prov. 19:9 3. It is in the cool of the day — Song of Songs. 2:17; Song of Songs. 4:6 4. It is used of panting or sighing for something <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. It can refer to a place of safety — Psalm 12:5 b. It can refer to a vision being fulfilled — Hab. 2:3.²⁷⁹ 			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional preposition with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

The panting here may represent huffing and puffing as you run after something? Gesenius offers 5 sets of definitions under the Hiphil of the Hebrew verb, all given above, and not one of them seems to fit. The Latin Vulgate and the Dead Sea Scrolls seem to agree that this final phrase should be *for which he longs* [referring back to the poor and destitute longing for salvation or deliverance].

I'm not the only person who struggled with the end of this verse; Barnes writes: *Prof. Alexander renders this, "I will place in safety him that shall pant for it." Gesenius renders it, "whom they puffed at; that is, the oppressed." The language in the original is difficult. It may mean either "he pants for it," or "he puffs at him;" and the meaning can only be determined by the connection. That would rather seem to be what is indicated in our common version; to wit, that the persons referred to as oppressing the poor and needy, "puffed" at them; that is, they looked upon them with contempt, and felt that with a puff of their breath they could blow them away. They regarded them as insignificant and worthless. By this construction, also, the connection with the main statement will be best preserved - that the injury referred to in the psalm was done by "words," by the breath of the mouth - thus indicating that by a "word" or a "breath" they could destroy them.²⁸⁰*

The NET Bible® offers its explanation here: *"I will place in deliverance, he pants for it." The final two words in Hebrew comprise an asyndetic relative clause, "the one who pants for it." "The one who pants" is the object of the verb "place" and the antecedent of the pronominal suffix (in the phrase "for it") is "deliverance." Another option is to translate, "I will place in deliverance the witness for him," repointing [the Hebrew verb] (a Hiphil imperfect from "To pant") as a noun meaning "witness." In this case the Lord would be promising protection to those who have the courage to support the oppressed in the court of law. However, the first part of the verse focuses on the oppressed, not their advocates.*

Again, it may be simpler to simply accept the Latin and the Dead Sea Scrolls as being correct here, and to understand this to mean *for which he longs*.

²⁷⁹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright© 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Psalm 12:1-5 (appended).

²⁸⁰ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

Psalm 12:5e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
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Dr. Bob Utley: *The LXX translates this line of poetry as YHWH speaking, "I will place in safety; I will speak freely against it (or 'him')." The JPSOA has "I will give help, He affirms him."*²⁸¹

Translation: ...he pants [after] for [or, for which he longs]."

This is an odd verb to find here, and it actually reads, *he blows against it*. It is possible that the idea is, he pants after it—he desires a place of safety. I don't know if this is a stretch in terms of interpreting this verse, but it is how most interpret this verse. What possibly has happened is, there is an error in the Hebrew text, and the Latin and Dead Sea Scrolls represent the true text, *for which he longs*. Then the idea is, God will step in and provide them with the deliverance that they desire.

A good illustration of this verse would have been the exodus generation. These were poor and oppressed people whom the Egyptians exploited and violated. At a specific point in time, God did arise and God did deliver them.

Psalm 12:5e ...he pants [after] for [or, for which he longs]."

Webster translates Psalm 12:5d-e *I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him*. When you compare my translation to this, you can see there is quite a bit of difference.

Psalm 12:5e God will give him what he desires (various commentators)

E. W. Bullinger: *from him that puffs at him = let him [the oppressed] despise it [the oppression], him = it: i.e. the oppression.*²⁸²

Clarke is unhelpful here: *From him that puffs at him - Here is much interpolation to make out a sense. Several of the versions read, "I will give him an open salvation." My work shall be manifest.*²⁸³

Spurgeon: *A puff is too much for the child to bear, and the foe is so haughty, that he laughs the little one to scorn; but the Father comes, and then it is the child's turn to laugh, when he is set above the rage of his tormentor.*²⁸⁴

Trapp: *From him that puffs at him] That defies him, and thinks he can blow him away at a blast; but if God arise only his enemies shall be scattered, as thistle down is by a puff of wind, Psalm 68:1. Some render the text, He will puff at him, that is, the oppressed will now dare to speak freely, who before durst not mute (R. David).*²⁸⁵

Wesley: *From him that despises him, and hopes to destroy him with a puff of breath.*²⁸⁶

Whedon: *From him that puffs at him—Many critics read, "I will set him in safety who pants after it;" but it seems more in conformity with the connexion to understand...[this to men] to breathe, blow, puff, in the contemptuous sense of scorn.*²⁸⁷

²⁸¹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Psalm 12:1–5.

²⁸² E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁸³ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁸⁴ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁸⁵ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁸⁶ John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁸⁷ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:5.

Psalm 12:5e God will give him what he desires (various commentators)

Elsewhere, Whedon writes: *His enemies, he puffs at them*—An expression of scorn. He treats all opposition with contempt and derision.²⁸⁸

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: puffs at: or, would ensnare, Psalm 10:5; Job 5:15, Job 5:21.²⁸⁹

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Psalm 12:5d-e ...“[and] I will place [him] into the safety [or, *deliverance*] he pants [after] for [or, *for which he longs*].”

Psalm 12:5d-e I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him. (Bond Slave Version)

Psalm 12:5d-e I will set him in the safe place that he desires (commentators)

Barnes: *From him that puffs at him* - Prof. Alexander renders this, “I will place in safety him that shall pant for it.” Gesenius renders it, “whom they puffed at; that is, the oppressed.” The language in the original is difficult. It may mean either “he pants for it,” or “he puffs at him;” and the meaning can only be determined by the connection. That would rather seem to be what is indicated in our common version; to wit, that the persons referred to as oppressing the poor and needy, “puffed” at them; that is, they looked upon them with contempt, and felt that with a puff of their breath they could blow them away. They regarded them as insignificant and worthless.

Barnes continues: *By this construction, also, the connection with the main statement will be best preserved - that the injury referred to in the psalm was done by “words,” by the breath of the mouth - thus indicating that by a “word” or a “breath” they could destroy them.*²⁹⁰

E. W. Bullinger: *The poor and needy being set in safety by Jehovah, despise the oppression of the enemy.*²⁹¹

The Cambridge Bible: *I will set him &c.] An obscure clause. Either (1) as R.V., I will set him in safety at whom they puff. Cp. Psalm 10:5. The despised victim will be put beyond the reach of his tormentors. Or (2) as R.V. marg., I will set him in the safety he panteth for. Or perhaps (3) I will set him in safety when they pant for him; i.e. pursue him like wild beasts with gaping jaws ready to devour him. Cp. Psalm 56:1-2; Amos 8:4.*²⁹²

Dr. John Gill: *I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him; or “in salvation” (i); in Christ the Saviour. All God’s people are put into the hands of Christ, and are preserved in him; there they are in safety, for out of his hands none can pluck them; and being built on him, the Rock, they are safe, notwithstanding the waves and winds of temptation, persecution, &c. come with ever so much force upon them. Here it seems to signify, that God would deliver his poor and needy from their oppressions, and put them into a comfortable, prosperous, safe, and happy situation, in which they will be out of the reach of their enemies; as will be the witnesses, when they will ascend to heaven, Rev. 11:11; even out of the reach of him that “puffs at” them, despises them, and treats them with the utmost scorn and contempt; see Psalm 10:5. Or that “breathes”, or “let him breathe” (k) threatenings and slaughters; as Saul did against the disciples of Christ, Acts 9:1; or that “lays snares for him” (l), as the wicked do for the righteous; or that “speaks unto him” in such haughty and insolent language as before expressed.*

²⁸⁸ Whedon’s Commentary on the Old and New Testaments; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 10:5.

²⁸⁹ Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁹⁰ Albert Barnes, Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁹¹ Figures of Speech Used in the Bible; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p. 605.

²⁹² The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12:5.

Psalm 12:5d-e I will set him in the safe place that he desires (commentators)

Gill continues: *Some make this clause a proposition of itself, "he puffs at him"; meaning either that he that is secure, safety puffs at his enemy, despises him, as he has been despised by him; or God, who breathes upon him, and whose breath is as a stream of brimstone, which kindles in him a fire of divine wrath, which is unquenchable; or else the sense is, God will "speak to himself", or "to him" (m); in which sense the word is used Hab. 2:4; that is, good and comfortable words to the poor; or "he will give him refreshment", or "rest": which he will determine in himself to speak to him: or "he will have breathing", or "let him breathe" (n): he will have times of refreshing from the Lord, and rest from adversity, from the oppositions and persecutions of his enemies.*²⁹³

J. Vernon McGee: *the Lord says, "I will set him in safety at whom they puff." Today the enemy huffs and puffs like the wolf did in the story of the three little pigs. Two little pigs lost their homes because the big bad wolf blew them down. But the last little pig had a house that stood up under the huffing and puffing. The story of the three little pigs illustrates what David is saying here. God says, "I will set him in safety at whom they puff. I will hide him in the clefts of the rocks. I will put him in a place of safety."*²⁹⁴

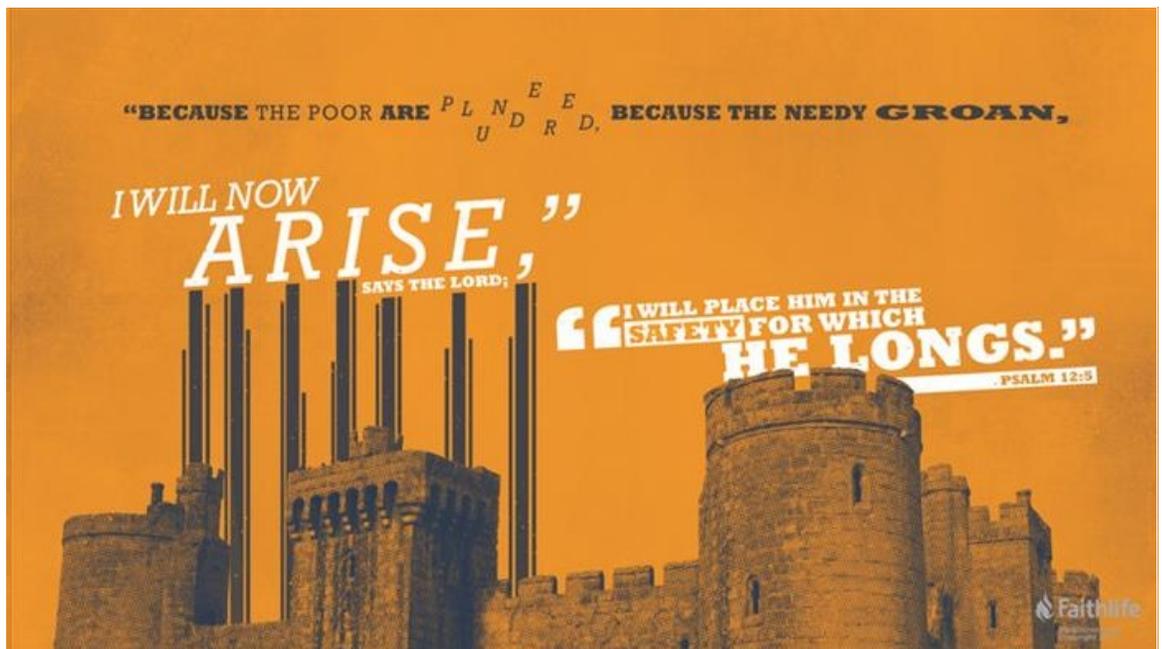
Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Psalm 12:5 “On account of the oppression of the grace-oriented [or, poor] [and] on account of the clamor of the destitute, I will now arise,” says Y^ehowah, “[and] I will place [him] into the safety [or, deliverance] he pants [after] for [or, for which he longs].”

Psalm 12:5 (ESV)
(a graphic); from [Bibliia.com](https://www.bibliia.com); accessed April 18, 2020.

The trickiest part of this verse is a proper understanding of the final phrase.



Psalm 12:5 “On account of the oppression of the grace-oriented [or, poor] [and] on account of the clamor of the destitute, I will now arise,” says Y^ehowah, “[and] I will place [him] into the safety [or, deliverance] he pants [after] for [or, for which he longs].”

²⁹³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5 (check reference for his references).

²⁹⁴ From <https://archive.org/download/19-Psalms/19-PSALMS.doc> accessed April 24, 2020.

Psalm 12:5 God says He will rise up on behalf of the poor (various commentators)

Benson: *“The beauty and energy of this fine prosopopœia,”* says Dr. Dodd, *“must be felt by every reader.”* When oppressors are in the height of their pride and insolence; when they say, Who is lord over us? then is God’s time to let them know, to their cost, that he is above them. And when the oppressed are in the depth of their distress and despondency; when they are sighing like Israel in Egypt, by reason of the cruel bondage, then is God’s time to appear for them, as he did for Israel when they were dejected, and Pharaoh was most elevated and determined to carry things with a high hand.²⁹⁵

Clarke puts a whole different spin on this verse, by placing it in a specific period of time: *For the oppression of the poor* - This seems to refer best to the tribulations which the poor Israelites suffered while captives in Babylon. The Lord represents himself as looking on and seeing their affliction; and, hearing their cry, he determines to come forward to their help. *Now will I arise* - I alone delivered them into the hands of their enemies, because of their transgressions; I alone can and will deliver them from the hands of their enemies; and the manner of their deliverance shall show the power and influence of their God.²⁹⁶ Now, whereas I like this interpretation, the problem with applying it here is, this is a psalm written for the Choirmaster and there are musical specifications suggested by the writer of the psalm. Furthermore, it is said to be a psalm of David. In case you don’t have the time line in your mind, the captivity of Babylon occurs several centuries after the reign of David. So this interpretation, although it makes sense, would have to be a prophetic application. David may be applying this to his own time, but God the Holy Spirit is looking down the road a few centuries, to where Israel’s poor are truly oppressed as a whole, and when God would, at some point, arise, and deliver them to a place of safety (back into the Land of Promise).

Chrysostoma: *Fear, whoever you might be, to do wrong the poor; you have power and wealth, and the favour 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.*²⁹⁷

James Burton Coffman: *These words constitute a direct answer to David’s cry for help from the Lord.*²⁹⁸

The Geneva Bible: *The Lord is moved with the complaints of His [poor], and delivers in the end from all danger.*

The Geneva Bible continues: *Because the Lord’s word and promise is true and unchangeable he will perform it and preserve the poor from this wicked generation.*²⁹⁹

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *The writer intimates his confidence by depicting God’s actions (compare Psalm 9:19; Psalm 10:12) as coming to save the poor at whom the wicked sneer (Psalm 10:5).*³⁰⁰

William Nicholson: *God’s answer to David’s petition. Is it so that the wicked are thus numerous, thus tyrannous, so proud, so arrogant, then “I will arise”; “I will not delay”; “I will set him in safety.” That which moves Me is his pitiful condition, his sighs and groans. Of this let no man doubt. In God’s words there is no fallacy.*³⁰¹

Dr. Peter Pett sums up this verse: *But they should recognise that YHWH sees all that happens on earth, and He was aware of the oppression of the poor. He heard the sighing of those in need. He saw their panting after deliverance. And because of such things He will arise, and will remedy the situation, and give them the security that they long for. Truth and righteousness will be made to prevail in the end.*³⁰²

²⁹⁵ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁹⁶ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

²⁹⁷ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments) (slightly edited).

²⁹⁸ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/psalms-12.html> accessed April 24, 2020.

²⁹⁹ Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Psalm 12:5.

³⁰⁰ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Psalm 12:5.

³⁰¹ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8.

³⁰² Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Psalm 12:5.

Psalm 12:5 God says He will rise up on behalf of the poor (various commentators)

C. Smith: *He is praying, "Help, Lord. The godly ceases." People are just, you know, speaking vanity, everyone with his neighbor, flattering, and they are saying 'Hey, we'll do it with our lips, you know. We'll prevail with our tongues and all.'" And so God answers, "For the oppression of the poor and for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord."*³⁰³

Spurgeon: *[T]hey begin to sigh and express their misery, and then relief comes post-haste. Nothing moves a father like the cries of his children; he bestirs himself, wakes up his manhood, overthrows the enemy, and sets his beloved in safety.*

Spurgeon continues: *The needy...could only sigh in secret, but the Lord heard, and could rest no longer, but girded on his sword for the battle. It is a fair day when our soul brings God into her quarrel, for when his bare arm is seen, Philistia shall rue the day...Man's extremity is God's opportunity.*³⁰⁴

Dr. Bob Utley: *YHWH is affected by the prayers and circumstances of His people (i.e., Exodus 3:7; Exodus 2:25; Neh. 9:9; Isa. 63:9; Acts 7:34). YHWH (unlike the idols) is the God who hears, sees, and acts!*³⁰⁵

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Psalm 12:5 Because of the oppression of the grace-oriented believer and because of the crying out of the destitute, I will now arise," says the Lord, "and I will put [him] into a place of safety that he desires."

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Man is Preserved by the Word of God, though Lawless Men are Everywhere

**Words of Y^ehowah,
words pure;
silver being refined in a furnace to the ground,
being purified seven times.**

Psalm
12:6

**The words of Y^ehowah [are] pure words,
[like] silver being refined in an earthen
furnace,
having been purified seven times.**

**Jehovah's promises are pure,
like silver which has been refined;
words of the earth,
having been purified seven times.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew) **Words of Y^ehowah,
words pure;**

³⁰³ Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

³⁰⁴ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

³⁰⁵ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Psalm 12:1–5.

	silver being refined in a furnace to the ground, being purified seven times.
The Psalms targum	The words of the Lord are pure words, silver [like silver] purified in the furnace on the ground, refined seven times.
Aramaic Targum	The words of Lord Jehovah are pure words, choice silver in a furnace in the Earth, and purified each by seven.
Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried by the fire, <u>purged from</u> the earth, refined seven times.
Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	The words of the LORD are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on earth, they are purified seven times.
Septuagint	The oracles of the Lord are pure oracles; as silver tried in the fire, proved <i>in a furnace</i> of the earth, purified seven times.
Significant differences:	There is an extra verb in the Greek (and in the Latin and the targum), but it does not appear to alter the overall meaning. The Latin appears to have the additional words, <i>purged from</i> .

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	The words of the Lord are true words: like silver tested by fire and burned clean seven times.
Easy English	The Lord's promises are true. We can trust them, because they are pure. They are as pure as silver that people have put in a hot fire seven times.
	People dig silver from the ground. They use a hot fire to make it clean and pure. It is then very beautiful and of great value. David is saying that God's words are also like this. We can trust that he will do what he says.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	The Lord's words are true and pure like silver melted in a hot fire. They are pure like silver that was melted and made pure seven times.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	The LORD'S words are true and pure, like silver purified by fire, like silver melted seven times to make it perfectly pure.
Good News Bible (TEV)	The promises of the LORD can be trusted; they are as genuine as silver refined seven times in the furnace.
<i>The Message</i>	God's words are pure words, Pure silver words refined seven times In the fires of his word-kiln, Pure on earth as well as in heaven.
NIRV	The words of the Lord are perfect. They are like silver made pure in a clay furnace. They are like gold made pure seven times over.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press paraphrase	The Lord's promise is sure. He speaks no careless word; all He says is purest truth, like silver seven times refined.
Contemporary English V.	Our LORD, you are true to your promises, and your word is like silver heated seven times in a fiery furnace.
The Living Bible	The Lord's promise is sure. He speaks no careless word; all he says is purest truth, like silver seven times refined.
New Life Version	The words of the Lord are pure words. They are like silver that has been made pure seven times in a stove of earth.
New Living Testament	The LORD promises are pure, like silver refined in a furnace, purified seven times over.

Unlocked Dynamic Bible Yahweh, you always do what you have promised to do; what you have promised is as precious and pure as silver that has been heated seven times in a furnace to get rid of all the impure material. I have just noticed that the UDB appears to be the same as the Translation for Translators. They are not the same in v. 7, however.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible These wise words of Jehovah are like refined silver...
They are wisdom refined seven times in a fire.
Though you stand tall in the heights, O our Lord,
On the sons of men, You still keep an eye. I am not sure where these additional two lines came from.

Common English Bible The LORD's promises are pure,
like silver that's been refined in an oven,
purified seven times over!

New Advent (Knox) Bible The promises of the Lord are true metal, like silver that is tested in the crucible, the stains of earth gone, seven times refined.

Translation for Translators Yahweh, you always do what you have promised to do;
what you have promised is *as precious and pure as silver*
that has been heated seven times in a furnace *to get rid of all the impure material.*

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Revised Ferrar-Fenton Bible **STANZA 4.**
JEHOVAH! Your words are bright words,
Like silver refined with a flame,
And cleansed from its earth seven times,...

God's Truth (Tyndale) The words of the Lord are pure words: even as the silver, which from the earth is tried and purified seven times in fire.

International Standard V The words of the LORD are pure,
like silver refined in an earthen furnace,
purified seven times over.

Urim-Thummim Version The Words of YHWH are pure Words: as silver smelted in a furnace of earth,
purified (refined) 7 times.

Wikipedia Bible Project The sayings of Yahweh
are pure sayings: silver
annealed in the crucible of
the Earth; refined
sevenfold.

Psalm 12:6 (NIV) (a graphic); from **Second Union Church**; accessed April 18, 2020.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988) The promises of the Lord are sure and lasting – silver refined in the furnace seven times and freed from dross.

New American Bible (2011) **IV**
The promises of the LORD are sure,
silver refined in a crucible,*



silver purified seven times. Ps 18:31; 19:8; Prv 30:5.

* [Psalm 12] A lament. The psalmist, thrown into a world where lying and violent people persecute the just (Ps 12:2–3), prays that the wicked be punished (Ps 12:4–5). The prayer is not simply for vengeance but arises from a desire to see God's justice appear on earth. Ps 12:6 preserves the word of assurance spoken by the priest to the lamenter; it is not usually transmitted in such Psalms. In Ps 12:7–8 the psalmist affirms the intention to live by the word of assurance.

New Jerusalem Bible

Yahwe's promises are promises unalloyed,
natural silver which comes from the earth seven times refined.

Revised English Bible

The words of the LORD are unalloyed:
silver refined in a crucible,
gold purified seven times over. *Gold* is the probable reading; Hebrew reads *to the earth*.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible

The words of Adonai are pure words,
silver in a melting-pot set in the earth,
refined and purified seven times over.

JPS (Tanakh)

The words of the LORD are pure words,
silver purged in an earthen crucible,
refined sevenfold.

The Scriptures 1998

The Words of יהוה are clean Words, Silver tried in a furnace of earth, Refined seven times. Ps. 18:30, Ps. 119:140, Prov. 30:4.

Tree of Life Version

The words of Adonai are pure words—like silver refined in an earthly crucible, purified seven times.

Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible

THE ORACLES OF JESUS ARE PURE ORACLES; AS SILVER TRIED IN THE FIRE, PROVED IN A FURNACE OF EARTH, PURIFIED SEVEN TIMES.

Awful Scroll Bible

The word of Jehovah is to pure words, as silver being refined in a crucible of the solid grounds, being purified seven times.

Concordant Literal Version

The words of Yahweh are clean words, Silver refined in a kiln, Fine gold cupelled seven times.

exeGesés companion Bible

The sayings of Yah Veh are pure sayings;
as silver refined in a furnace of earth
- refined sevenfold.

Orthodox Jewish Bible

The words of Hashem are amarot tehorot (pure words); as kesef refined in the furnace on the earth, purified seven times.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible

The Lord's ·words [or promises] are ·pure [flawless],
like silver ·purified [refined] ·by fire [or in a furnace],
·purified [refined] seven times over [18:30; 119:140].

Kretzmann's Commentary

The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, a workshop with its crucible surrounded with earth being in the poet's mind, purified seven times, to insure the highest possible degree of purity.

The Pulpit Commentary

The words of the Lord are pure words. There is no base alloy in them: therefore they may be trusted. What God promises, he will perform. As silver tried in a furnace of earth; rather, perhaps, silver assayed in a crucible on earth (Kay). Purified seven times (comp. Psalm 18:30; Psalm 19:8; Psalm 119:140; Prov. 30:5).

Syndein/Thieme	The words of the Lord are pure words {in contrast to the sins of the tongue} . . . as silver refined in a furnace on the earth . . . refined seven times.
The Voice	The promises of the Eternal, <i>they are true, they are pure</i> —like silver refined in a furnace, purified seven times, <i>they will be without impurity.</i>

Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

College Press Bible Study	he promises of Jehovah are promises that are pure, silver smelted down in a furnace to the ground ^[106] —refined seven times. [106] So Del. and similarly Dr. But Br. reads and renders the verse: “When thrust down to the earth he shall be purified seven times.”
The Complete Tanach	The sayings of the Lord are pure sayings, like silver refined, exposed to the earth, clarified sevenfold.

The sayings of the Lord are pure sayings: for He has the ability to fulfill them, but the sayings of the sons of men are not sayings when they die and are unable to fulfill [them].

pure: Clear and permanent. Whatever He promises He does, for He promised me salvation and the throne.

silver refined: They are like refined silver that is exposed to the entire land.

exposed: Heb. לילעב, an expression of revealing; in the language of the Mishna (Rosh Hashanah 21b, see Gemara): “whether it was plainly (לילעב) visible or whether it was not plainly (לילעב) visible, etc.” Others explain לילעב as an expression of elevation, and this is its explanation: silver refined with the best earth. That is to say, like silver that is refined with the best earth and its upper layer, because a person makes a crucible to refine the silver from the best earth. Another explanation: לילעב is like ילעב, with a mortar (as in Prov. 27: 22): “among grain with a pestle,” which is the name of a utensil in which [grain] is crushed. Similarly, לילעב is the crucible in which gold and silver are smelted. However, this does not seem correct because he does not call ילעב the mortar in which [the grain] is crushed, but the handle of the pestle with which they crush. This is called pilon in French, pestle. Another explanation: לילעב is an expression of the master of a hand, i.e., the master of the earth, and the praise of the word applies to God. Targum Jonathan, too, renders it as an expression of lordship. He says that His sayings are like silver, refined by the Lord of the earth, Who is God, for He refined and clarified them.

NET Bible®	The LORD’s words are absolutely reliable. ¹⁹ They are as untainted as silver purified in a furnace on the ground, where it is thoroughly refined. ²⁰ ¹⁹ tn Heb “the words of the Lord are pure words,” i.e., untainted by falsehood or deception (in contrast to the flattery of the evildoers, v. 2). ²⁰ tn Heb “[like] silver purified in a furnace of [i.e., “on”] the ground, refined seven times.” The singular participle מְזַקֵּק (mÿzuqqaq, “refined”) modifies “silver.” The number seven is used rhetorically to express the thorough nature of the action. For other rhetorical/figurative uses of שִׁבְעָתִים (shiv’atayim, “seven times”), see Gen 4:15, 24; Ps 79:12; Prov 6:31; Isa 30:26.
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Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Bullinger (text/interpretation)	“The words of the LORD are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace; [words] of the earth (or, pertaining to the earth), purified seven times.” His explanation will be a part of the exegesis.
Charles Thompson OT	The oracles of the Lord are pure oracles; tried silver, clear of dross, seven times purified.
English Standard Version	The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.

Hebrew Names Version	The words of the LORD are flawless words, as silver refined in a clay furnace, purified seven times.
New European Version	The words of Yahweh are flawless words, as silver refined in a clay furnace, purified seven times.
World English Bible	Yahweh's words are flawless words, as silver refined in a clay furnace, purified seven times.
Young's Literal Translation	Sayings of Jehovah are pure sayings; Silver tried in a furnace of earth refined sevenfold.

What is the gist of this verse? God's words are pure like silver which has been refined seven times.

In the previous verse, when the poor have been oppressed, God has promised that He will arise; in this verse, we are told that we can depend upon His Word.

Psalm 12:6a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾāmârôwth (תּוֹרָמָא) [pronounced <i>uh-mawr-OHTH</i>]	<i>words; promises; commandments</i>	feminine plural construct	Strong's #565 BDB #57
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: The words of Y^ehowah [are]...

The noun here could refer to *promises, words or commandments*, which can be quite different and change the thrust of the verse. In the next verse, we speak of God's protection, so I will go with *promises* here. The insertion of a verb is also a matter of interpretation.

This is in contrast to the words of men, which are spoken only to deceive, flatter and exploit.

God's words were expressed in the previous verse.

Psalm 12:6a The words of Y ^e howah [are]..
Psalm 12:6a The words of Y^ehowah (various commentators)
Barnes: <i>The words of the Lord - In contrast with the words of the persons referred to in Psalm 12:2-4. Their words were vanity, flattery, and falsehood; and no reliance could be placed on them.</i> ³⁰⁶
E. W. Bullinger: <i>words = the spoken words, sayings, or utterances. Compare Psalm 119:38 (Confirm to Your servant Your promise, that You may be feared.—ESV; capitalized).</i> ³⁰⁷
Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: <i>The words — literally, "saying of" (Psalm 12:5).</i> ³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

³⁰⁷ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

³⁰⁸ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Psalm 12:6.

Psalm 12:6a The words of Y^ehowah (various commentators)

J. Vernon McGee: *Now the wicked boast and use flattery. You cannot believe what they say. But the words of the Lord are pure. That is one reason why we need to spend more time in the Word of God. It is the fortress into which God wants to put us.*³⁰⁹

NIV Study Bible: *[The words of the LORD are] Set in sharp contrast with the boastful words of the adversaries.*³¹⁰

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Psalm 12:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'ămârôwth (אָמְרוֹת) [pronounced <i>uh-mawr-OHTH</i>]	<i>words; promises; commandments</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #565 BDB #57
ṭâhôr (טָהֹר) [pronounced <i>taw-HOHR</i>]	<i>clean, ceremonially clean; pure, physically pure (like pure gold)</i>	feminine plural adjective	Strong's #2889 & #2890 BDB #373

Translation: ...pure words,...

The promises of God are seen as pure, and the word used here can mean *physically pure*, like metal which has been refined. Men say one thing, but they may mean something entirely different (for instance, men may be flattering you, but their intention is to exploit you). God's promises are accurate, true and are not designed to exploit or to use us. God does not have an exterior motive; there is not something else mixed in with what He has said to us. God's promises and words are contrasted with those of man in vv. 2–3.

We are apparently being told that God's Word is incorruptible.

Let's just take a few points on this:

God's Words and Promises Contrasted with Man's Words and Promises

1. God's words are true; what man says may or may not be true.
2. God's promises are reliable; when God promises that He will do something, then we can depend upon Him to do it.
3. God does not flatter us in order to manipulate us or to exploit us.
4. God's promises are pure; He does not think one thing, but say another; He does not have a secret agenda for us which is beneficial to Him but not to us.
5. God's words are uncorrupted by sin, ulterior motive, or double-mindedness.

This is in contrast with man's words and flatteries, designed to manipulate or to exploit us.

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Psalm 12:6a-b The words of Y^ehowah [are] pure words...

³⁰⁹ From <https://archive.org/download/19-Psalms/19-PSALMS.doc> accessed April 24, 2020.

³¹⁰ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 790 (footnote).

Psalm 12:6a-b The words of God are pure words (various commentators)

Barnes: *[T]he words of the Lord were pure. They were to be relied on. All his sayings were true and faithful.*

Barnes continues: *[God's words are] pure words - That is, they are without any mixture of falsehood - for this idea is implied in the comparison which the psalmist makes when he says that they are like silver purified in the furnace, that is, from which all the dross has been removed.*³¹¹

Clarke: *The words of the Lord are pure words - None of His promises shall fall to the ground; the salvation which he has promised shall be communicated.*³¹²

David Guzik: *This means that the word of God can be trusted in every sense. It is good, pure, and tested thoroughly. We can trust that God has tested His own word; but it has also been tested by students, scholars, critics, and doubters through the centuries — and the Word of God still stands. It is like a mighty anvil that has worn out countless hammers that have pounded upon it.*³¹³

Matthew Henry: *That, though men are false, God is faithful; though they are not to be trusted, God is. They speak vanity and flattery, but the words of the Lord are pure words.*³¹⁴

Home: *The words of Jehovah are holy in his precepts, just in his laws, gracious in his promises, significant in his institutions, true in his narrations, and infallible in his predictions. What are thousands of gold and silver compared to the treasures of the sacred page!*³¹⁵

Matthew Poole: *Pure; or, sincere; without the least mixture of vanity or falsehood; and therefore shall infallibly be fulfilled. This he seems to add to answer an objection which might arise in some men's minds concerning what was last said. You tell us, The, Lord saith, I will set him in safety, &c.; but saying and doing are two things. They are so indeed in men, who oft speak rashly what they cannot perform, and deceitfully what they never intend: but all God's words are pure from all manner of dross; from all folly, or fraud, or uncertainty; he is holy and true in all his doctrines, threatenings, predictions, and promises.*³¹⁶

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: Psalm 18:30, Psalm 19:8, Psalm 119:140; 2Sam. 22:31; Prov. 30:5.³¹⁷

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Psalm 12:6a-b The words of Y^ehowah [are] pure words...

Psalm 12:6a-b Contrasting the pure words of God with man's words (comments)

There is a specific contrast being set up in this psalm between the words of man (flattery and boasting) and the words of God, which are pure. You cannot depend upon man's words—often you are simply being flattered (so you might agree with what you are hearing); and other times, you are just hearing a man express his arrogance. But God's words are much different.

³¹¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

³¹² Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

³¹³ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

³¹⁴ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

³¹⁵ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

³¹⁶ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

³¹⁷ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Psalm 12:6.

Psalm 12:6a-b Contrasting the pure words of God with man's words (comments)

Barnes: *The design is to bring his words into contrast with the sayings of such men, and to show how much more safety there is in relying on his promises than on the promises made by such men. Man failed, but God would not. Reliance could not be placed on the words of even the professedly "godly" and "faithful" Psalm 12:1, but entire confidence might be placed in the words of Yahweh. All his words were true, pure, faithful, so that even when his own professed friends failed, and confidence could be placed in them, yet there was still reason for unwavering confidence in God himself.*³¹⁸

Benson: *The words of the Lord are pure* — *Without the least mixture of falsehood, and therefore shall be infallibly fulfilled. Men often speak rashly, and promise what they cannot perform, and deceitfully, what they never intend to perform. But God's words are different; they are pure from all manner of dross; from all folly, or fraud, or uncertainty.*³¹⁹

The Cambridge Bible: *A general truth with direct application to the promise of the preceding verse. In Jehovah's words there is no dross of flattery or insincerity or falsehood. Unlike the words of men, they are wholly to be relied on.*³²⁰

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *The listening psalmist rapturously responds in Psalm 12:6 to God's great word. That word stands, with strong force of contrast, side by side with the arrogant chatter of irresponsible frivolity, and sounds majestic by the side of the shrill feebleness of the defiance. Now the psalmist lifts his voice in trustful acceptance of the oracle.*³²¹

Dr. John Gill: *The words of the Lord are pure words,.... This observation the psalmist makes in reference to what is just now said in Psalm 12:5, and in opposition to the words of wicked men in Psalm 12:2; which are deceitful, sinful, and impure.*

Gill continues: *The Scriptures are the words of God; and they are pure and holy, free from all human mixtures, and from all fraud and deceit; they are the Scriptures of truth. The promises are the words of God, and they are firm and stable, and always to be depended on, and are ever fulfilled, being yea and amen in Christ Jesus. The Gospel, and the doctrines of it, are the words of God; that is the sincere milk of the word, pure and incorrupt; as it is in itself, and as it is dispensed by the faithful ministers of it; and they are all according to godliness, and tend to encourage and promote purity and holiness of heart and life; See Prov. 30:5 (*Every word of God proves true; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.*—ESV; capitalized).*³²²

C. Short: *The Divine promise is pure from the alloy that corrupts the words of men. (Psalm 12:6.) It has no admixture of flattery and deceit as the words of men have. "God cannot lie."*³²³

Dr. Peter Pett: *In contrast to the deceit and falsehood of men the words of YHWH are true and pure, and totally to be relied on. They are like silver which has been refined, yes refined 'seven times' (totally and completely), as silver on earth needs to be. But the words of YHWH are so pure that they do not need such a refining process. They are already purer than any silver on earth, even though they are practical and effective on earth. Thus we can always rely on His word to see us through any situation. It has survived through the centuries, and will continue to do so. And it brings home truth to the heart.*³²⁴

³¹⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

³¹⁹ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

³²⁰ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12:6.

³²¹ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

³²² Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

³²³ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8 (Homilies by C. Short).

³²⁴ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Psalm 12:6.

Psalm 12:6a-b Contrasting the pure words of God with man's words (comments)

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: "*The words of the Lord are pure words*" (Psalm 12:6). *The words of men, as the Psalmist has just been showing, are mixed and impure, but God's words are free from all base elements. Ignorance, prejudice, falsehood, passion, insincerity, impurity, debase the words of men, but not God's words.*³²⁵

The Pulpit Commentary: *Inspiration is the Holy Spirit working in men and by men—not as machines, but as living, reasonable beings. We ought not to speak of "the human element" and "the Divine element" as separable or hostile. A great picture is but paint and canvas, informed, vivified by the thought and genius of the artist. You cannot say, "This part is paint, and that part is genius." So in the Bible. "Men of God spoke"—there is the human element—"as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"—there is the Divine.*³²⁶

Trapp: *The words of the Lord are pure words*] Free from all insincerity or falsehood; and not like those of Saul's flatterers, vile and vicious. All God's promises are infallible, and such as a man may write upon, as they say. They are yea and Amen, 2Cor. 1:20, that is, truth and assurance. God has previously kept promise with nights and days, that they will one succeed another, Jer. 33:20; Jer. 33:25, therefore much more will he keep promise with his people.³²⁷

Dr. Bob Utley: *Contrast the revelation of YHWH with the worthless attitude of the wicked. YHWH's message is characterized as*

1. pure words (cf. Psalm 19:8; Psalm 119:140)
2. refined silver (Psalm 18:30; Prov. 30:5)

*He is faithful to His word (cf. Psalm 12:7). The wicked reveal themselves by their words and actions (cf. Matt. 7:15-27).*³²⁸

Whedon: *The sayings of Jehovah are pure sayings. From the lying lips and perverse speeches of the wicked already noticed, by which they thought to compass their ends, the psalmist turns with adoring delight to the pure and perfect words of God, by which, and not by the falsehood and arrogance of man, the world shall be governed.*³²⁹

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

That the Scriptures which profess to be the words of the Lord have been tested, and their divinity established. Where is this pure light? This Book claims to contain the words of God; its pretensions have been tried, and it comes forth as pure silver from the crucible.

The Pure Words of Scripture (Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary)

1. It has been tried by criticism, its contents discussed and analysed, the genuineness, authenticity, canonicity, inspiration, of the various books discussed again and again. What is the result? Scores of critics—men most sincere, acute, learned, honest—have tried these pages, and approved them as the handwriting of God. And if you go to the different schools of sceptical criticism, each school will give you back some portion of the Book as authentic and Divine, and amongst them all you get back pretty nearly the whole Book.

³²⁵ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

³²⁶ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8 (The preciousness of the Word) (slightly edited).

³²⁷ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:6.

³²⁸ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Psalm 12:6.

³²⁹ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:6.

The Pure Words of Scripture (Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary)

2. It has been tried by science. Says one of our great scientists: "Science has established no results hostile to the evidences of Revelation." Neither the stars nor the stones fight against it. Buckland, Sedgwick, Hugh Miller, the greatest of modern geologists; Brewster, the most famous of modern astronomers; Faraday, the most illustrious of modern chemists; these splendid names were Christian; these master-spirits of the scientific world loved this book, found no fault with it, died resting upon it their immortal hopes. There is not much the matter with Revelation where it touches Nature, or these masters would have found it out.
3. It has been tried by experience. Do the Scriptures accomplish what they promise in respect to man's condition and necessities? Christ said to the Jews, "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not." So we may say of the Scriptures.
 - (1.) They have been tried in relation to man's social necessities. According to the sceptic, the Bible is false in fact, false in philosophy, false in morals, and it ought to make society selfish, anarchical, barbaric. But it does not. It does the very opposite. Our civilisation has its roots in the Bible; and if you take the Bible to a pagan land, it changes everything into purer and milder forms. It creates everywhere the highest intelligence, the largest liberty, the purest morality, the truest progress.
 - (2.) They have been tried in relation to man's moral and spiritual necessities. It is just what we need. It gives us that light, pardon, liberty, purity, joy, for which we sigh. The Scriptures appeal to the multitudes whom it has saved from sin and misery, and exclaims, as Christ did, "The works that I do, they bear witness of Me." The Scriptures have been tried by suffering men, guilty men, dying men, unsophisticated men, men of loftiest gifts, and they have found it just what they needed, all that they needed. "By its fruits we know it." Know it to be no poison tree to destroy; no barren tree to mock hungry men with leaves and blossoms; but a tree of life, whose fruits satisfy the longing soul, and whose very leaves are for the healing of the nations.

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

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Psalm 12:6c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
keṣeph (כֶּסֶף) [pronounced KEH-sef]	<i>silver, money</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3701 BDB #494
tsâraph (צָרַף) [pronounced tzaw- RAHF]	<i>to smelt, to refine, to assay, to test</i> [the purity and the genuineness of a metal]	Qal passive participle	Strong's #6884 BDB #864
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
ʿălîyl (לִילְע) [pronounced guhI-EEL]	<i>furnace, crucible; workshop</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5948 BDB #760
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿerets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced EH-rets]	<i>earth (all or a portion thereof), land</i>	feminine singular noun; with the definite article	Strong's #776 BDB #75

Psalm 12:6c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>Lange: <i>Since the etymology allows this translation of the obscure Hebrew word, and the additional words "in the earth" are best suited with this, because pure silver flows down out of the ore heaped up in the furnace, Delitzsch prefers this rendering...It may, however, be translated "melting vessel," that is, crucible or oven; but the earth must then mean either, in an oven belonging to the earth=enclosed with earth.</i>³³⁰</p>			

Translation: ...[like] silver being refined in an earthen furnace,...

God's words/promises/decrees are pure. Then David uses the metaphor that God's words are like refined silver.

I have inserted the comparative adverb *like*, which many other translators have done. This does appear to be an analogy, since the promises of Jehovah are called pure in the previous portion of this verse.

Psalm 12:6a-c [The words of Y^ehowah \[are\] pure words, \[like\] silver...](#)

Psalm 12:6a-c God's Word is like silver (various commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *Silver is a natural emblem of purity and preciousness. The metaphor underlies the language of Psalm 18:30, Psalm 119:140, Prov. 30:5.*³³¹

Dr. John Gill: *[God's words] are as "silver" for worth and value; yea, they are more valuable than silver or gold, Psalm 19:10. The Bible is a mine of rich treasure, and to be searched into as for it; the promises in it are exceeding precious; they are like apples of gold in pictures of silver, and yield more joy than the finding a great spoil. The doctrines of the Gospel are comparable to gold and silver and precious stones, and to be bought at any rate, but to be sold at none.*³³²

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: Psalm 66:10.³³³

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God's words here are said to be as pure as silver which has been refined in a furnace (or, crucible). I don't know why the crucible I specifically to said to be *on the ground*. Many take this to be an *earthen furnace*, although, quite frankly, I don't know what that means either. A number of people had opinions about this:

This may not be that important, but let me present what others have said about this furnace to the ground:

³³⁰ The Rev. Dr. John P. Lange, *Lange's Commentary*; 1857–1864; in the Public Domain; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8 (Exegetical and Critical).

³³¹ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12:6.

³³² Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

³³³ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Psalm 12:6.

What is this Furnace to the Ground?	
Commentator	Opinion
Barnes	<i>The word here rendered “furnace” properly means a workshop. Perhaps it corresponds nearly with our word “laboratory,” as the term is now used by chemists. It evidently refers to some place where the metal was tried and purified. The words rendered “of earth” literally mean “on the earth,” or “in the earth?” The language does not mean that the “furnace” was “made” of earth, as would seem to be implied in our version, but that the “furnace” or laboratory was erected on the earth, or in the earth. It may refer to something like a crucible placed on the ground, around which a fire of intense heat could be made. It is probable that some such structure would be made near the mines where ore was obtained, and that the ore would be thus purified from dross before it was removed.³³⁴</i>
The Cambridge Bible	<i>[in a furnace of earth] The precise meaning is doubtful. Either (1) in a furnace on the earth (R. V.), i.e. a furnace built on the ground, the point of which is not obvious: or (2) silver refined in a furnace (flowing down) to the earth may be meant to picture the bright stream of pure metal flowing from the furnace, shewing that the process of refining has done its work.³³⁵</i>
Adam Clarke	<i>Clarke seems to be pretty confident of the equipment to which David refers: [This is] a reference to the purification of silver by the cupel. This is a sort of instrument used in the purification of silver. It may be formed out of a strong iron ring or hoop, adjusted in width and depth to the quantum of silver to be purified, and rammed full of well pulverized calcined bone. The metal to be purified must be mingled with lead, and laid on the cupel, and exposed to a strong heat in an air furnace. The impurities of the metal will be partly absorbed, and partly thrown off in fume. The metal will continue in a state of agitation till all the impurities are thrown off; it will then become perfectly still, no more motion appearing, which is the token that the process is completed, or, according to the words of the text, is seven times, that is, perfectly purified.³³⁶</i>
Expositor’s Bible Commentary	<i>[T]he best course is to adopt a supplement and read “tried in a furnace [and running down] to the earth.” The sparkling stream of molten silver as, free from dross, it runs from the melting pot to the mould on the ground, is a beautiful figure of the word of God, clear of all the impurities of men’s words, which the psalm has been bewailing and raining down on the world. God’s words are a silver shower, precious and bright.</i>
Keil and Delitzsch	<i>As Olshausen observes on this subject, “Silver that is purified in the furnace and flows down to the ground can be seen in every smelting hut; the pure liquid silver flows down out of the smelting furnace, in which the ore is piled up.” For it cannot be ל of reference: “purified with respect to the earth,” since ארץ does not denote the earth as a material and cannot therefore mean an earthy element.³³⁷ Apparently the idea is, the silver flows to the ground?</i>

³³⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

³³⁵ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12:6.

³³⁶ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

³³⁷ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 12:5–6.

What is this Furnace to the Ground?	
Commentator	Opinion
Dr. Bob Utley	<p>NASB “a furnace on the earth” NKJV “a furnace of earth” NRSV “a furnace on the ground” NJB “which comes from the earth” JPSOA “an earthen crucible” REB “tested for soil”</p> <p>The word translated “furnace” (BDB 760, KB 833) is found only here in the OT. Many scholars believe it is a technical term from metallurgy denoting an earthen mold in the ground made from dirt or clay. The MT has “to the ground” or “on the ground,” which seems to refer to an earthen mold into which the refined silver is poured.³³⁸</p>
Whedon	<p>Furnace of earth—The word לילע (aleel,) furnace, which occurs nowhere else in Scripture, has been translated workshop, from the root idea, to work, perform, accomplish: and of earth has been understood as denoting, as to earth, thus making the passage read, Silver tried in a workshop, (as to earth,) that is, purged from its earthy particles, its dross, scoria. Others more naturally understand it of a furnace, crucible, or melting pot made of earth, which gives a better construction, and one more in harmony with the figure. It is no objection to this latter view, that it takes “earth” in the unusual sense of element, or material.³³⁹</p>

Obviously, not many commentators chose to comment on this.

I think it is reasonable to assume that this is a furnace designed for the purification of metals; and that trying to squeeze anything more than that is not really edifying (although the Expositor’s Bible Commentary seemed to have an interesting take on this).

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More importantly, what sort of significance is a furnace of the earth or in reference to the earth? I believe the idea which David is getting across to us is, God’s words are designed for us here on earth; they have been purified in the furnace of the earth—they have been shown to be effective, meaningful, beneficial and pure, when believed on in this earth.

There is another way to translate this phrase, which will be found when we see Bullinger’s organization of this verse.

What follows are 3 doctrines related directly to Bullinger’s work.

My explanation above was the best I could come up with; I liked it more than what I had read, but did not feel as though I tied it all together. Then I read Bullinger’s explanation. **Do not skip over Bullinger’s explanation;** this pulls everything together, and this verse makes sense, based upon his approach.

Bullinger Applies Ellipsis to Furnace to the Earth

The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

³³⁸ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Psalm 12:6.

³³⁹ Whedon’s Commentary on the Old and New Testaments; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:6.

Bullinger Applies Ellipsis to Furnace to the Earth

Here there is an important Ellipsis. It has been a great difficulty with many to think that the LORD's words should require purifying, especially after the declaration in the first part of the verse, that they are "pure." What increases the difficulty is the fact that the word for earth is 'erets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced *EH-rets*], *the earth*: i.e., *the dry land* or *the world as created*, as in Gen. 1:1 (*In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth*). It is generally taken as though it were used of a crucible made of earth or clay, but in this case, it would be 'ădâmâh (אֲדָמָה) [pronounced *uh-daw-MAWH*], which means *ground, soil, clay*; and not *erets*, which is *the whole earth*. Moreover, the lamed preposition (ל) means *to* or *pertaining to*. It is the sign of the dative case [*to something, for something, on behalf of something*] and not of the genitive case [*of something*]. The Revisers note this and render it: "*As silver tried in a furnace on the earth,*" as though it was important for us to note that it is not *in* or *under* the earth! But this does not touch the real difficulty. This is removed only by correctly supply the *Ellipsis*, and repeating the noun "words" from the beginning of the verse.

Then, all is clear, and we not only may, but must then take the rest of the words in the vital sense. Thus: "*The words of the LORD are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace; [words] of the earth* (or, *pertaining to the earth*), *purified seven times.*"

That is to say, the words in which Jehovah has been pleased to make His revelation, are not the words of angels (1Cor. 13:1), nor the "*unspeakable words of Paradise*" (2Cor. 12:4), but they were words pertaining to man in this world—human words—but refined and purified as silver. Hence, in taking human language, there are many words which the Holy Spirit has not chosen, and which cannot be found in the Scriptures:

Then Bullinger cites some examples of this, something which had occurred to me while exegeting this psalm, but something which eluded me specifically at this verse. That is, as I examined this verse, this phenomena came into my mind, but I was unable to actually apply it. The idea is, there are words of the earth which God the Holy Spirit takes and uses in a different, *spiritual* sense; He refines these words seven times (indicating Godly perfection)—these words of the earth—and then uses them in a slightly different way.

That being said, let us return to Bullinger's text:

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Some are exalted to an altogether *higher* meaning, such as:

Earthly Words Appropriated by God the Holy Spirit

ἀρετή (aretê), as man used it, meant merely *excellence* of any kind, *manhood, nobility, valor, prowess*. But, in the Scriptures, it is used in the higher sense of *glory* (Habak. 3:3), *praise* (Isa. 42:8, 12 43:21 63:7). And so in the New Testament (Philip. 4:8 1Peter 2:9 2Peter 1:3, 5).

ἦθος (êthos) was only the *haunt* of an animal, but it became *custom, morals, character*.

Some are used in a totally different sense from that in which they had ever been used before.

χορηγέω (chorêgeô) was simply *to furnish* or *lead a chorus*, but it was changed *to furnish, to supply*. 1Peter 4:11: **My God will supply all your needs.**

εὐαγγέλιον (euangelion) was merely *the dispatch* continuing the news, but it was used in the new sense of *the gospel* of God.

ἐκκλησία (ekklêsia) was used by the Greeks of any *assembly*, but especially of citizens, or as we should say of a selection from the, "burgesses." The words means *an assembly of those called out, an elect assembly*.

Hence, it is used in the Septuagint of Israel as called out from and as being an election from the nations.

Then, it was used of the congregation worshiping at the Tabernacle as distinguished from the rest of the people.

In this sense, it is used in the Old Testament, the gospels, and partly in the Acts. But in the Pauline Epistles, the Holy Spirit uses this word and exalts it to a far higher meaning: *viz.*, of the special election from both Jews and Gentiles, forming them as members of Christ's Mystical Body into a new *ecclesia* or *assembly*. This is a sense in which it had never been before used. In other words, this refers to the *church*, which is *His body*.

σωτηρία (*sôtêria*) was merely *preservation* or *deliverance* from danger, but in the Scriptures, it is *the salvation of God*.

παράκλητος (*paraclêtos*) was merely the *leal assistant* or *helper*. In the New Testament, there is one *Paraclêtos* within us that we may not sin (John 14:16, 26 15:26 16:7); and another *Paraclêtos* with the Father if we do sin (1John 2:1).

σκάνδαλον (*skandalon*) was used only of the *trigger* of a trap to catch animals; but in the New Testament, it is used in a new and moral sense, or that which causes any one to be caught or made to trip.

Other words were coined by the Holy Spirit Himself, and cannot be found in any human writings:

σκανδαλίζω (*skandalizô*) is a new word altogether. It is never used in classical Greek, it means *to cause to stumble or fall, to give cause of offense*.

ἐπιούσιος (*epiousios*) is a word used only by our Lord (Matt. 6:11 Luke 11:3) in the Lord's Prayer, where it is rendered *daily*.

Hence the difficulty in interpreting this word, as there is no usage to help us. It is a question, therefore, of etymology. It is the preposition ἐπί (*epi*), *upon*, prefixed to the participle of a verb, but which verb? It cannot be the participle of the verb εἶμι (*eimi*), *to be*, for its participle is spelled very differently.³⁴⁰ It must therefore be the participle of εἶμι (*eimi*), *to go, to come*, for its participle is οὔσα (*ousa*), and the combination of οὔσα and ἐπί would be ἐπιούσα, as used by our Lord. The word means, therefore, *coming upon* or *going upon*, and would refer either to bread for our *going* or *coming* or to the bread *coming* or *descending upon* us from heaven, as the manna descended and came down upon Israel (John 6:32–33).

Hence, it combines the two ideas of *heavenly* and *daily*, inasmuch as the manna not only came down from heaven, but did so every day, and on the strength of this, they journeyed. It is a word, therefore, of great fullness of meaning.

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Now, quite frankly, I think that this is a secondary meaning of this verse, and not the primary one; however, the key here is the ellipsis, and I will, at the end of this verse, go back and reapply Bullinger's approach, and it will all come together and make sense.

Bullinger Applies Ellipsis to *Furnace to the Earth*

As I began to read Bullinger's explanation, I was very impressed, and the words of this psalm all made sense. These are things which I had struggled with in this psalm, and felt as though I really did not grasp what was being said here; but Bullinger pulls it all together into a nice, but not so neat, package.

Bullinger also organizes this psalm, which I will reproduce at the end of the entire exegesis.

Figures of Speech Used in the Bible; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; pp 71–73. I did a little bit of editing.

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³⁴⁰ Bullinger gives the spelling, but the gist is, εἶμι is an irregular verb, so its participle is very different from what we have here.

Psalm 12:6d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
zâraq (זָרַק) [pronounced zav-KAHK]	to be purified, to be refined [used of metal and of wine]	Pual participle	Strong's #2212 BDB #279
shib ^{ec} âthayim (שִׁבְעַתַּיִם) [pronounced shib-ġaw-THAH-yihm]	seven-fold, seven times	feminine dual noun	Strong's #7659 BDB #988

Translation: ...having been purified seven times.

Apparently, each time silver is melted more and more impurities can be extracted from it. Once silver has been melted down 7 times (the perfect divine number), it is considered pure silver (or 99% pure).

God's promises are like silver which has been purified seven times. The way a promise would be purified is, it has been believed and the promise has been fulfilled. The promise is therefore trustworthy, and one can take God at His Word. Again, the contrast is with word of men, which are lies, which are flattery, which are spoken in order to exploit or to manipulate. Their words are mixed with bad intentions toward you.

Psalm 12:6d ...having been purified seven times.

Psalm 12:6d God's pure word is like silver purified 7 times (various commentators)

Barnes on God's promises being like silver that has ben purified seven times: *By passing it seven times - that is, very often - through the fire. The word "seven" in the Scriptures denotes a complete or perfect number, and is often used to denote frequency. The idea here would seem to be that the process was repeated until the silver became entirely pure. The sense is, that the words of the Lord are "perfectly pure." There is no admixture of falsehood in his statements; there is no deception in his promises; there is no flattery in what he says.*

Barnes continues: *This was the ground of confidence on the part of the psalmist - that while men (even those who professed to be good men) so failed that no reliance could be placed on their statements, the most perfect trust could be reposed on all the statements of God.*³⁴¹

E. W. Bullinger: *Seven . Denotes spiritual perfection . It is the number or hall-mark of the Holy Spirit's work. He is the Author of God's Word, and seven is stamped on it as the water-mark is seen in the manufacture of paper. He is the Author and Giver of life ; and seven is the number which regulates every period of Incubation and Gestation, in insects, birds, animals, and man.*³⁴²

The Cambridge Bible: *purified seven times] Again and again till no trace of dross is left. Seven is the number of completeness and perfection. Cp. Psalm 79:12; Prov. 6:31; Isa. 30:16.*³⁴³

Dr. John Gill: *[God's words] are as silver "tried", which is pure, and free from dross. The words of men, of false teachers, are as dross and reprobate silver; but the words of the Lord are tried, and are pure, and free from all the dross of error and falsehood, Psalm 18:30 (This God—His way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; He is a shield for all those who take refuge in Him.—ESV; capitalized).*

³⁴¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

³⁴² E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; from Bullinger's Appendices; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, App-10.

³⁴³ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12:6.

Psalm 12:6d God's pure word is like silver purified 7 times (various commentators)

Gill continues: *And they are as silver tried "in a furnace of earth", which some (Jarchi, Kimchi, & Ben Melech) render "by the Lord of the earth"; but the word rather signifies a furnace, or a refinery, in which metal is melted and purified.*

Gill concludes: *[This concept] may be applied to the Lord Jesus Christ in human nature, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and who came full fraught with the doctrines of the Gospel; and in whom they have been "tried", by his sufferings and death, and are found to be pure, solid, and substantial: or to the ministers of the Gospel, who have this treasure in earthen vessels, whose works and words and ministry are tried by many fiery trials, and abide: or to all the people of God in general, who dwell in earthly tabernacles; and who, in the midst of various afflictions, have a comfortable and confirming evidence of the purity and truth of the words of God, of the promises of his covenant, and the doctrines of the Gospel.*³⁴⁴

Gill: *purified seven times; that is, many times, Prov. 24:15–16 (Lie not in wait as a wicked man against the dwelling of the righteous; do no violence to his home; for the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity.—ESV); and so completely and perfectly pure, and clear of all dross whatsoever, as silver so many times tried must needs be: and so the words of God are not only pure, but very pure, exceeding pure, Psalm 119:140 (Your promise is well tried, and Your servant loves it—ESV; capitalized).*³⁴⁵

Horn: *Often have they been put to the test, in the trials of the faithful, like silver committed to the furnace in an earthen crucible; but, like silver in its most refined and exalted purity, found to contain no dross. The words of Jehovah are holy in his precepts, just in his laws, gracious in his promises, significant in his institutions, true in his narrations, and infallible in his predictions. What are thousands of gold and silver, compared to the treasures of the sacred page?*³⁴⁶

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *seven times — thoroughly (Dan. 3:19—Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated.—ESV).*³⁴⁷

The NET Bible® also comments: *"[like] silver purified in a furnace of [i.e., "on"] the ground, refined seven times." The singular participle "refined" modifies "silver." The number seven is used rhetorically to express the thorough nature of the action. For other rhetorical/figurative uses of "seven times," see Gen. 4:15, 24 Psalm 79:12 Prov. 6:31 Isa. 30:26.*³⁴⁸

The Pulpit Commentary: *[God's pure words are] its tried and proved truth. The similitude is drawn from precious metal, whose worth and purity have been proved in the furnace, which separated the dross from the pure ore. The idea is not that we are to distinguish, in Scripture, dross from gold and silver, but that God has done so. He gives us not rough ore, but pure metal.*³⁴⁹

Spurgeon: *[T]he words of the Lord are pure as well-refined silver. In the original there is an allusion to the most severely-purifying process known to the ancients, through which silver was passed when the greatest possible purity was desired; the dross was all consumed, and only the bright and precious metal remained; so clear and free from all alloy of error or unfaithfulness is the book of the words of the Lord.*

³⁴⁴ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

³⁴⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

³⁴⁶ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

³⁴⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Psalm 12:6.

³⁴⁸ *The Net Bible®*; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 12:6.

³⁴⁹ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8 (The preciousness of the Word).

Psalm 12:6d God's pure word is like silver purified 7 times (various commentators)

Spurgeon continues: *The Bible has passed through the furnace of persecution, literary criticism, philosophic doubt, and scientific discovery, and has lost nothing but those human interpretations which clung to it as alloy to precious ore. The experience of saints has tried it in every conceivable manner, but not a single doctrine or promise has been consumed in the most excessive heat. What God's words are, the words of his children should be. If we would be Godlike in conversation, we must watch our language, and maintain the strictest purity of integrity and holiness in all our communications.*³⁵⁰

Trapp: *Purified seven times] That is, sufficiently.*³⁵¹

Dr. Bob Utley: "seven times" Seven is the symbolic number of perfection which originated from the seven days of creation in Genesis 1-2.³⁵²

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Psalm 12:6 The words of Y^ehowah [are] pure words, [like] silver being refined in an earthen furnace, having been purified seven times.

Psalm 12:6 The words of Y^ehowah [are] pure words, [like] silver being refined in an earthen furnace, having been purified seven times.

Psalm 12:6 God's words are pure like silver refined 7x (various commentators)

Hawker contrasts the words of the ungodly with things believers should be saying: *How beautifully is this verse introduced, by way of contrast to what was said before concerning the words of the ungodly. Do sinners talk of vanity? let saints then speak of Jesus and his gospel. Do they talk impure words? then let the faithful use the pure words of God, which, like silver; the more used, the more melted in the fire, the more precious will they be. It is true indeed, despisers will esteem both God and his word as trifling; but oh! what unknown treasure doth the word, the promises, the covenant relation of the divine things of Jesus, contain! They are more to be desired than gold, yea than fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb.*³⁵³

Meyer: *As silver enriches its owner, so does the Word of God enrich its lovers. Nothing so strengthens the intellect, clears the judgment, enlarges the views, purifies the taste, quickens the imagination, and educates the whole man.*³⁵⁴

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *[The] Sacred Scriptures [are as] Precious as purified silver. Precious in life, in death. We value what is tried. In sickness, a tried medicine; in trouble, a tried friend; in had weather, a tried ship, a tried captain, a tried anchor...The Bible never failed our glorious religious ancestry, and it will never fail us.*³⁵⁵

The Pulpit Commentary on the testing of God's Word: *[W]e may apply the image [of silver purified 7x] to the tests to which the Bible has been and daily is submitted.*

³⁵⁰ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

³⁵¹ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:6.

³⁵² Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Psalm 12:6.

³⁵³ Robert Hawker *The Poor Man's Commentary*; ©1805; from e-sword, Psalm 12:6.

³⁵⁴ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

³⁵⁵ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

Psalm 12:6 God's words are pure like silver refined 7x (various commentators)

1. *The experience of those who have trusted it and gone by it. Those who have done this longest, most practically, with fullest faith, are the very persons most convinced of the truth and worth of the Bible.*

2. *Hostile criticism. For the last hundred years this has been especially fierce, learned, elaborate, determined, skilful. Had the Word not been pure gold, it must have perished in this fierce furnace. The result has been to shed a flood of light on the letter of Scripture, and to bring to light a mass of new and powerful evidence, bearing witness to its truth and genuineness. It stands both tests (1Peter 1:23-25).*

3. *[The] preciousness [of God's Word]: It is worth all the care and trouble God has bestowed, by his providence and inspiration, on its composition and preservation; all the help and illumination which the Holy Spirit continually grants to those who read it with faith and earnest prayer; all the study given to it by friends and foes (Psalm 119:72; Psalm 19:1-14:20).*³⁵⁶

Spurgeon: *The Bible has passed through the furnace of persecution, literary criticism, philosophic doubt, and scientific discovery, and has lost nothing but those human interpretations which clung to it as alloy to precious ore. The experience of saints has tried it in every conceivable manner, but not a single doctrine or promise has been consumed in the most excessive heat.*³⁵⁷

Charles Haddon Spurgeon: *There is no mistake about the words of this blessed Book. The very words themselves are as accurate, as infallible, as silver is pure when it has been seven times refined by the most skillful artist. There is no improving upon God's words. We dare not leave one of them out. We would not presume to put one of our own side by side with them.*³⁵⁸

Time Magazine, cited in Boice: *After more than two centuries of facing the heaviest guns that could be brought to bear, the Bible has survived — and is perhaps the better for the siege. Even on the critics' own terms — historical fact — the Scriptures seem more acceptable now than when the rationalists began the attack.*³⁵⁹

We should not make the mistake of thinking that something had to happen to God's Word throughout the centuries in order to purify them. God's words are pure from their utterance. The analogy here is to purity, not to the mechanics of purity.

On the other hand, I have, on occasion, gone back to revise what I have written 7 times. My attempt is to explain, clarify and amplify the words from God; but my words are not inspired.

The forerunner commentary suggests these passages: Proverbs 2:1-6 30:1-6 Matthew 23:23 Luke 11:42 1Peter 2:1-2.³⁶⁰

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Now let's look at the verse as a whole, and supply the missing words as Bullinger would for this ellipsis. One might understand this verse in this way:

The promises of Y^ehowah [are] pure promises,
[like] silver being refined in a furnace;
[promises] pertaining to the earth,
having been purified seven times.

³⁵⁶ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Psalm 12:1-8 (The preciousness of the Word) (slightly edited).

³⁵⁷ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1-8.

³⁵⁸ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Expositions Volumes 1-3A*; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1-8.

³⁵⁹ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1-8.

³⁶⁰ From [Bible Tools](#); Psalm 12:6; accessed April 24, 2020.

The Hebrew noun can mean *words* but it can also refer to *promises, commandments*. God's promises and pure and His commandments are pure, even those promises which pertain to the earth. They are like silver which has been refined in a furnace; like silver which has been refined seven times.

Now, let's apply this information to this particular verse (notice the change in the translation):

Bullinger Organizes Psalm 12:6	
Psalm 12:7	Organization
The words of Y ^e howah [are] pure words,	A The words of Jehovah are pure
[like] silver being refined in a furnace;	B They are like silver refined in a furnace
[words] pertaining to the earth,	A These are even words used by God which are common to man (to the earth)
having been purified seven times.	B Like silver which has been purified seven times. Actually, the two concepts are brought together here; silver is purified perfectly and words used by man are purified by God in Scripture.

When the verse is pulled apart like this, it is easier to see what should be supplied for the ellipsis. This provides a reasonable argument for the alternative translation.

I have had occasion to have two legitimate ways to translate a verse; and sometimes, the result appears to be the man-ward side of the verse with one translation; and the God-ward side revealed in the alternative translation.

Taken from *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 74 (severely edited).

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Dr. Peter Pett: *There may also be the thought here that the words of YHWH themselves have such a purifying effect, making those who receive them pure.*³⁶¹

Psalm 12:6 The words of Y^ehowah [are] pure words, [like] silver being refined in an earthen furnace, having been purified seven times.

The Seven-fold Purification of God's Word (James Burton Coffman)

Satan himself tried God's Word in Eden, saying "Thou shalt not surely die," but the sprawling cemeteries of the whole world, spread like patches of leprosy in every nation have purified God's word. Yes indeed, it was absolutely true.

It has been alleged by some that science has discredited the Bible, but Sir Isaac Newton, the founder of modern science was a devout believer in the Bible; and in my Commentary in the New Testament Series, Vol. 4 there is an anthology of many of the greatest scientists who ever lived, including our own generation, all of them believers in the holy Bible. In fact science has never uncovered a single truth that contradicts anything in the Bible. Furthermore, it is an amazing fact that in many of the most marvelous discoveries of the scientific community, they have merely caught up with what was stated in the Bible nearly two thousand years ago.

³⁶¹ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Psalm 12:6.

The Seven-fold Purification of God's Word (James Burton Coffman)

The probability that our earth will eventually "burn up" is one such discovery.

Then God's Word was tested again when the radical critics of the 19th century attempted to destroy its credibility; but today not a line has been lost from the sacred Book. The critics in the greater part have been swallowed up in the grave, and devout people still believe every word of the Bible. As Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my word shall not pass away"!

There is an honest and helpful kind of criticism that is invaluable in trying to discover the meaning of damaged or corrupted texts; and this is appreciated by all thoughtful persons. However, the vicious, unbelieving critic whose only objective is to discredit the Bible is a vanishing species. True, many of such men were truly intellectuals, having brilliant minds and unusually remarkable skills; but the rules under which radical criticism consented to conduct their studies have been absolutely discredited, rejected, outmoded and forsaken by most Christian scholars of our generation. That kind of criticism is now a dead duck.

From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/psalms-12.html> accessed April 24, 2020.

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Psalm 12:6 Jehovah's promises are pure,
like silver which has been refined;
words of the earth,
having been purified seven times.

*Expositor's Bible Commentary: With dramatic swiftness the scene changes in the next pair of verses (Psalm 12:5-6). That deep voice, which silences all the loud bluster, as the lion's roar hushes the midnight cries of lesser creatures, speaks in the waiting soul of the psalmist...Whatever delay may intervene before the actual Divine act, there is none before the assurance of it calms the soul. Many wintry days may have to be faced, but a breath of spring has been in the air, and hope revives.*³⁶²

By the way, God's words are more valuable than gold or silver. Psalm 18:7–10: The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

The wisdom gained by God's words is more valuable than gold or silver. Prov. 8:10–11: Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.

Upon reflection, I probably should have placed vv. 7 and 8 together.

*Morgan G. Campbell: the psalm ends with a description of the same condition which it at first describes. It is the cry of a godly soul for help amid prevailing ungodliness and it is answered.*³⁶³

*Hawker writes: These verses seem to have no immediate connection with what went before.*³⁶⁴

³⁶² *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

³⁶³ Morgan G Campbell, *Exposition on Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

³⁶⁴ Robert Hawker *The Poor Man's Commentary*; ©1805; from e-sword, Psalm 12:7–8.

Hawker makes little sense with this comment. We have a *them* in the first clause. Now, rather than to just make up in your mind who *them* is, you examine its number and gender and then look back to the previous verses to determine the antecedent.

**You O Y^ehowah keep them,
You guard us from the generation this to
forever.**

Psalm
12:7

**You, O Y^ehowah, will guard them [that is, *the poor and the needy*];
You will watch over us, on account of this
people [or, *You will protect us from this (evil) generation*], forever,...**

**You, O Jehovah, will guard the grace-oriented and the destitute,
and You will watch over us, protecting us from this evil generation forever more...**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	You O Y ^e howah keep them, You guard us from the generation this to forever.
The Psalms targum	You, O Lord, will keep the righteous; you will protect them [Tg תְּגַרְמוּ suggests Heb תִּצְרַם] from this evil generation forever.
Aramaic Targum	And you, Lord Jehovah, will keep <u>them</u> ; <u>redeem me and</u> save me, from this generation to eternity.
Revised Douay-Rheims Peshitta	Thou, O Lord, wilt preserve us: and keep us from this generation for ever. You will keep <u>them</u> , O LORD; You will <u>preserve me and</u> save me from this generation forever.
Septuagint	You, O Lord, will keep us, and You will preserve us, from this generation, and forever.

Significant differences: Again, we have the LXX and the Vulgate in agreement; this time it is about the first suffix. The Greek and Latin have God *keeping us*; the Hebrew and Syriac have God *keeping them*.

The Syriac appears to have another phrase here (*preserve me and*). The Hebrew, Latin and Greek all have *guard us*; the Syriac has *save me*. The targum has *the righteous* and then, *them*. These are significant differences; what or who is being kept; what or who is being guarded; and from what?

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Easy English	Yes Lord, you will take care of the poor people. You will always keep each one of them safe from all those evil people.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	Lord, take care of helpless people. Protect them now and forever!
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	LORD, take care of the helpless. Protect them forever from the wicked people in this world.
God's Word™	O LORD, you will protect them. You will keep each one safe from those people forever.
Good News Bible (TEV)	The wicked are everywhere, and everyone praises what is evil. Keep us always safe, O LORD, and preserve us from such people.
The Message	GOD, keep us safe from their lies, From the wicked who stalk us with lies, From the wicked who collect honors For their wonderful lies. V. 8 is included for context.

NIRV	LORD, you will keep needy people safe. You will always keep sinners from hurting us.
New Simplified Bible	O Jehovah, you will protect them. You will keep each one safe from those people forever.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

Contemporary English V. The Living Bible	You will protect us and always keep us safe from those people. O Lord, we know that you will forever preserve your own from the reach of evil men, although they prowl on every side and vileness is praised throughout the land. V. 8 is included for context.
New Living Testament	Therefore, LORD, we know you will protect the oppressed, preserving them forever from this lying generation,...
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	Yahweh, we know that you will protect us who honor you from those wicked people,...

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	So, please watch over and keep us From [the bad of] this generation and age.
Beck's American Translation	LORD, You watch over us, You keep us safe forever from this world,...
New Advent (Knox) Bible Translation for Translators	Yes, Lord, thou wilt watch over us, and keep us ever safe from these evil days. Wicked people strut around <i>proudly</i> , and people praise them for doing vile/wicked deeds, but Yahweh, <i>we know that</i> you will protect/rescue us from those wicked people.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Revised Ferrar-Fenton Bible	You, LORD , are the Guardian of men, Preserve them from now, to for ever.
HCSB International Standard V	You, LORD, will guard us; You will protect us from this generation forever. You, LORD, will keep them [So MT DSS 5/6HevPs 11QPsc; LXX reads us] safe, you will guard them [So MT DSS 5/6HevPs 11QPsc; LXX reads us] from this generation forever.
Lexham English Bible	You, O Yahweh, will protect them. You will preserve him from this generation always.
Unlocked Literal Bible	You are Yahweh! You keep them. You preserve the godly people from this wicked generation and forever.
Urim-Thummim Version	You will observe them, O YHWH, you will preserve them from this generation for the ages.
Wikipedia Bible Project	You Yahweh will keep them, you will form us from this generation forever.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

The Heritage Bible	You shall hedge them about, Oh Jehovah, you shall guard them from this generation forever;...
New American Bible (2011)	You, O LORD, protect us always; preserve us from this generation.
New English Bible—1970	Do thou, LORD, protect us and guard us from a profligate and evil generation a profligate and evil generation: prob. rdg, Heb the generation which is for ever.
New Jerusalem Bible	You, Yahweh, will watch over them,

you will protect them from that brood for ever.
 New RSV You O LORD, will protect us;
 you will guard us from this generation forever.
 Revised English Bible—1989 LORD, you are our protector and will for ever guard us from such people.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible You, Adonai, protect us;
 guard us forever from this generation —
 the wicked strut about everywhere
 when vileness is held in general esteem. V. 8 is included for context.
The Scriptures 1998 You guard them, O יהוה, You preserve them from this generation forever.
 Tree of Life Version You will keep us safe, Adonai. You will protect us from this generation forever.

Weird English, 𐤀𐤃𐤅 English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible YOU, JESUS, SHALL KEEP US, AND SHALL PRESERVE US, FROM THIS
 GENERATION, AND FOR EVER.
 Awful Scroll Bible You was to keep them Jehovah, and was to watch over them in this generation
 continually,...
 Concordant Literal Version You, O Yahweh, You shall guard them; You shall preserve us from this generation
 for the eon.
 exeGeses companion Bible Guard them, O Yah Veh,
 guard us from this generation eternally.
 Orthodox Jewish Bible Thou shalt be shomer over them, Hashem, Thou shalt preserve him from this
 generation forever.
 Rotherham's *Emphasized B.* Thou, O Yahweh, wilt keep them,—Thou wilt guard him, from this generation unto
 times age-abiding.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Amplified Bible You will keep them and preserve them, O Lord; You will guard *and* keep us from
 this [evil] generation for ever.
 The Expanded Bible LORD, you will ·keep us safe [^L guard/protect them];
 you will always ·protect [guard] us from such ·people [a generation].
 Kretzmann's Commentary Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, namely, the believers, the faithful; Thou shalt
 preserve them from this generation, from those pervaded with the wicked spirit of
 the age, forever.
 The Pulpit Commentary Thou shalt keep them, O Lord. God having promised to set the righteous, who are
 oppressed, in a place of safety (Psalm 12:5), the psalmist is sure that he will keep
 them and preserve them from the wicked "generation," which has possession of the
 earth, and bears rule in it, always. It is, no doubt, for the greater consolation and
 encouragement of these unfortunates that he dwells on the subject, and adds his
 own assurances to the Divine promise which he has recorded. Man's faith is so
 weak that, unless promises and assurances are reiterated, they make little
 impression. Thou shalt preserve them (Hebrew, him) from this generation for ever.
 The "generation" is that of the worldly men in power at the time, of whom we have
 heard in Psalm 3:1, Psalm 3:2, Psalm 3:6, Psalm 3:7; Psalm 4:2; Psalm 5:4-6,
 Psalm 5:9, Psalm 5:10; Psalm 6:8; Psalm 7:1, Psalm 7:2, Psalm 7:9, Psalm 7:13-
 16; Psalm 10:2-11, Psalm 10:15; Psalm 11:2, Psalm 11:3, Psalm 11:6. "For ever"
 means "so long as they live." The substitution of "him" for "them" in this clause is an
 instance of that generalization by which a whole class is summed up in a single
 individual—"all men" in "man," "all good men" in "the righteous" (צַדִּיק), and the like.

Psalm 12:7a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâmar (שָׁמַר) [pronounced shaw-MAR]	to keep, to guard, to watch, to preserve	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect; with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #8104 BDB #1036

David Guzik: *There are some manuscripts and Bible translations that render this You shall keep us, O Lord, You shall preserve us. Yet, according to VanGemeren, there is legitimate manuscript support for the rendering You shall keep them . . . You shall preserve them. We can take it as true that God will keep and preserve both His Word and His people.*³⁶⁵

The LXX and the Vulgate have the 1st person plural suffix (*us*) here instead.

Translation: You, O Y^ehowah, will guard them [that is, *the poor and the needy*];...

There are some difficulties with the rendering here; the LXX has the suffix as a 1st person plural suffix. This would be expected, however, when a translator is trying to make the text easier to understand.

Most believe that the psalmist is simply referring back to the poor and the needy of v. 5. However, this could also refer back to God's pure words in v. 6. Most of the time, an unspecified pronoun goes back to the nearest specific noun which agrees in number and gender. However, the word for *words* is the feminine gender; so logically, this takes us back to God preserving or guarding the poor and the needy, those who require His protection.

In any case, God preserves His Word and he preserves those who are His.

The importance of God *preserving His Word* is this: we have to have something that we can depend upon. If His words are timeless, if what David wrote 3000 years ago are preserved exactly for us as he wrote them, then we have something that we might depend upon.

Even though there is some difficulty here, the principle is the same throughout these many centuries.

Psalm 12:7a You, O Y^ehowah, will guard them [that is, *the poor and the needy*];...

Psalm 12:7a You, Y^ehowah, will keep them (Your words) (various commentators)

Benson: *You will keep them* — *your words or promises last mentioned. Hebrew, תשמרת, tishmerem, you will observe them; and what you have promised will surely be performed, since with you is no variableness nor shadow of turning.*³⁶⁶

Boice tells us that God will preserve His Word: *The French atheist Voltaire made these claims openly. He once said, 'In twenty years Christianity will be no more. My single hand shall destroy the edifice it took twelve apostles to rear.' He wrote that in fifty years no one would remember Christianity. But in the year he wrote that, the British Museum paid the Russian government five hundred thousand dollars for a Bible manuscript while one of Voltaire's books was selling in the London book stalls for just eight cents.*³⁶⁷

³⁶⁵ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

³⁶⁶ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:7.

³⁶⁷ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

Psalm 12:7a You, Y^ehowah, will keep them (Your words) (various commentators)

Morgan: *The psalmist breaks out into praise of the purity of His words, and declares that Jehovah will 'keep them,' and 'preserve them.'* The 'them' refers to the words. There is no promise made of widespread revival or renewal. It is the salvation of a remnant and the preservation of His own words which Jehovah promises.³⁶⁸

Trapp: *You will keep them]* That is,...the forementioned words or promises, says Aben Ezra.³⁶⁹

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Psalm 12:7a You, O Y^ehowah, will guard them [that is, *the poor and the needy*];...

Psalm 12:7a You, Y^ehowah, will keep them (the poor and needy) (commentators)

Barnes: *You will keep them* That is, the persons referred to in Psalm 12:5 - the poor and the needy who were suffering from the wrongs inflicted on them. The idea is, that God would guard and defend them. They were safe in his hands. Compare Psalm 37:3-7.³⁷⁰

Psa 37:4–7 *Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way unto the LORD; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday. Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; fret not yourself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass.* (Niobi Study Bible)

Benson gives both interpretations: *You will preserve them* — Hebrew, ינרצת, *titzrennu you will keep him, that is, your poor and lowly servant, (spoken of Psalm 12:5).*³⁷¹ I have the masculine plural suffix; and the very literal translations have the same.

The Cambridge Bible: *"them" refers to the poor and needy of Psalm 12:5.*³⁷²

Dr. John Gill: *You will keep them, O Lord,*.... Not the words before mentioned, as Aben Ezra explains it, for the affix is masculine and not feminine; not but God has wonderfully kept and preserved the sacred writings; and he keeps every word of promise which he has made; and the doctrines of the Gospel will always continue from one generation to another; but the sense is, that God will keep the poor and needy, and such as he sets in safety.

Gill makes the best case here for *them* referring back to the *poor and needy*.

Gill continues: *they are not their own keepers, but God is the keeper of them; he keeps them by his power, and in his Son, in whose hands they are, and who is able to keep them from falling; they are kept by him from a total and final falling away; from the dominion and damning power of sin, and from being devoured by Satan, and from the evil of the world.*³⁷³

³⁶⁸ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

³⁶⁹ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:7.

³⁷⁰ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:7.

³⁷¹ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:7.

³⁷² *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12:7.

³⁷³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:7.

Psalm 12:7a You, Y^ehowah, will keep them (the poor and needy) (commentators)

Matthew Poole: *You will keep them; either,*

1. *The poor and needy, Psalm 12:5, from the crafts and malice of this crooked and perverse generation of men, and for ever. Or,*
2. *your words or promises last mentioned, Psalm 12:6. These you will observe and keep (as these two verbs commonly signify) both now.*³⁷⁴

Whedon: *You will keep them*—That is, *Your people, Your suffering people, though surrounded on all sides by wicked persecutors.*³⁷⁵

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Psalm 12:7a You, O Y^ehowah, will guard them [that is, *the poor and the needy*];...

Psalm 12:7a You, Y^ehowah, will keep us (various commentators)

E. W. Bullinger: *“them”*: i.e. *the godly. Plural reference to “the faithful” of Psalm 12:1.*³⁷⁶

Clarke: *You will keep them - you will preserve them - Instead of the pronoun them in these clauses, several MSS., with the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Arabic, have us. The sense is equally good in both readings. God did bring forth the Israelites from Babylon, according to his word; He separated them from that generation. and reinstated them in their own land, according to His word; and most certainly He has preserved them from generation to generation to the present day, in a most remarkable manner.*³⁷⁷

The Geneva Bible: *That is, “yours” though was only one man.*³⁷⁸

All 3 things are true principles; but we certainly would prefer to land on the one correct for this passage.

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Psalm 12:7b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nâtsar (נָצַר) [pronounced naw-TSAR]	<i>to keep, to guard, to watch over, to protect</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect; with the 1 st person plural suffix	Strong's #5341 BDB #665

The Aramaic has *me* instead (in both the translation and the targum); and the psalm targum has *them*.

E. W. Bullinger: *“them” = him: refers to the man of grace (Psalm 12:1).*³⁷⁹

³⁷⁴ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:7.

³⁷⁵ Whedon's *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from e-Sword; Psalm 12:7.

³⁷⁶ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:7.

³⁷⁷ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:7.

³⁷⁸ Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Psalm 12:7.

³⁷⁹ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:7.

Psalm 12:7b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Keil and Delitzsch: [T]he suffix ennu in Psalm 12:7 (him, not: us, which would be pointed וְנִרְצַת; and more especially since it is not preceded by וּנְרַחֵם) refers back to the man who yearns for deliverance mentioned in the divine utterance, Psalm 12:5. ³⁸⁰			
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>mihn</i>]	from, off, out from, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
dôwr (דֹּוֹר) [pronounced <i>dohr</i>]	generation; race; people; age, period, time period [of a generation], a time slice	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #1755 BDB #189
zûw (זוּ) [pronounced <i>zoo</i>]	this; which, that, where	both a demonstrative and relative pronoun; undeclinable	Strong's #2098 BDB #262
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿôwlâm (עֹלָם) [pronounced <i>ʿo-LAWM</i>]	long duration, forever, perpetuity, antiquity, futurity	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5769 BDB #761

ʿôwlâm together with the lâmed preposition mean *forever*.

Dr. Bob Utley: “forever” This may be a title for YHWH, “the Eternal One” (AB, p. 75). If so, it parallels YHWH in the previous line of poetry.³⁸¹ An interesting theory, but I do not believe that it has merit. The extent of God’s protection I believe is the better understanding here.

Translation: ...You will watch over us, on account of this people [or, You will protect us from this (evil) generation], forever,...

Although I have given two understandings of this phrase, they are not dramatically different. God watches over us because of this degenerate generation (the one to which David refers); or God protects us from this evil generation—again, referencing the lying, flattering, arrogant people who surround David.

God preserves those who are His forever. *This generation* refers to those to whom David first refers—those who lie and who flatter, but with ulterior motives; those who say whatever they want, without thought to their words. We are protected and guarded by God when in a world like this.

Psalm 12:7b ...You will watch over us, on account of this people [or, You will protect us from this (evil) generation], forever,...

³⁸⁰ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 12:7–8.

³⁸¹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Psalm 12:7.

Psalm 12:7b You, God, will keep us from this evil generation (commentators)

Albert Barnes: *From this generation* - This generation, or this race of detractors, flatterers, and oppressors. The idea is, that that entire generation was eminently wicked, and that none but God could deliver the poor and the needy from their designs.³⁸²

Benson: *You will preserve them* — ...from the craft and malice of this crooked and perverse generation of men, so that he will neither be circumvented by treachery, nor crushed by power; and you will keep him undefiled amid a corrupt age; and all that trust in and cleave to you from generation to generation.³⁸³

The Cambridge Bible: *this generation*] As the men of one age are commonly distinguished by special characteristics, generation acquires an ethical significance, and denotes kind, class, in good or bad sense. Comp. Psalm 14:5; Prov. 30:11-14; Matt. 17:17.³⁸⁴

C. Clemence: *The Divine preserving guard will keep the righteous from being sucked into the vortex of corruption.*³⁸⁵ How similar this is to Rick Hughes cosmic vortex.

Dr. John Gill: *You will preserve them from this generation for ever*; or "*you will preserve him*"; that is, everyone of the poor and needy, from the wicked generation of men in which they live, from being corrupted or intimidated by them; and who are described in the beginning of the psalm.³⁸⁶

Keil and Delitzsch: *Psalm 12:7 is a more minute description of this depraved generation. תִּרְיָ is the generation whole and entire bearing one general character and doing homage to the one spirit of the age (cf. e.g., Prov. 30:11-14, where the characteristics of a corrupt age are portrayed).*³⁸⁷

Sometimes, commentators get this completely wrong: *from this generation for ever, i.e. You will not only keep Your promise to me in preserving me, and advancing me to the throne, but also to my posterity from generation to generation.*³⁸⁸

I don't know that David had a posterity promise at this point in his life. I think that it makes more sense for David to thank God for guarding the poor and the needy and himself from this evil generation.

Spurgeon: *To fall into the hands of an evil generation, so as to be baited by their cruelty, or polluted by their influence, is an evil to be dreaded beyond measure; but it is an evil foreseen and provided for in the text. In life many a saint has lived a hundred years before his age, as though he had darted his soul into the brighter future, and escaped the mists of the beclouded present: he has gone to his grave unreverenced and misunderstood, and lo! as generations come and go, upon a sudden the hero is unearthed, and lives in the admiration and love of the excellent of the earth; preserved for ever from the generation which stigmatised him as a sower of sedition, or burned him as a heretic. It should be our daily prayer that we may rise above our age as the mountain-tops above the clouds, and may stand out as heaven-pointing pinnacle high above the mists of ignorance and sin which roll around us.*³⁸⁹

Trapp: *You will preserve them*] Heb. *him*, that is, every one of them, viz. the poor and needy, among whom David reckons himself, which shows his humility.

³⁸² Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:7.

³⁸³ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:7.

³⁸⁴ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12:7.

³⁸⁵ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Psalm 12:1-8 (Homilies by C. Clemence).

³⁸⁶ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:7.

³⁸⁷ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 12:7-8.

³⁸⁸ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:7.

³⁸⁹ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12:6-7.

Psalm 12:7b You, God, will keep us from this evil generation (commentators)

Trapp continues: *From this generation*] So they are called for their multitude, in opposition to those few faithful ones, Psalm 12:1. An evil and adulterous generation they were, a bastardly brood, as Matt. 12:39.³⁹⁰

Dr. Bob Utley: “from this generation” This phrase in Psalms 12 refers to those who

1. speak falsehood, Psalm 12:2
2. have flattering lips, Psalm 12:2
3. have a double heart, Psalm 12:2
4. speak great things about themselves, Psalm 12:3-4
5. devastate the needy, Psalm 12:5
6. are the wicked who strut about, Psalm 12:8.³⁹¹

Whedon: *You will preserve them*—Hebrew, *You will preserve him*, the persecuted saint, the singular being used as a personification.

Whedon continues: *From this generation*—From the men of this age, and from the same men of every age. The character of the age is given in Psalm 12:1-2. Compare Acts 2:40; Matt. 11:16; Matt. 11:22. The hostile attitude of the world towards the Church distinguishes all generations.³⁹²

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge on God preserving His Own: Psalm 16:1, Psalm 37:28, Psalm 37:40, Psalm 121:8, Psalm 145:20 Deut. 33:3 1Sam. 2:9 Isa. 27:3 1Peter 1:5 Jude 1:1.

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge on *this generation*: Psalm 10:18 Matt. 3:7.³⁹³

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It would not hurt to see a few other verses where we are promised that God takes care of His own:

God Preserves His Own	
Citation	Text
1Sam. 2:9	He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail.
Psalm 16:1	David prays Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
Psalm 37:28	For the LORD loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.
Psalm 37:40	The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.
Psalm 121:8	The LORD will protect you in all you do, now and forevermore.
Psalm 145:20	The LORD protects those who love him, but he destroys all the wicked.

³⁹⁰ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:7.

³⁹¹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Psalm 12:7.

³⁹² *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:7.

³⁹³ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Psalm 12:7.

God Preserves His Own

Citation	Text
1Peter 1:3–5	Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In all that you do, in all that you face, God knew about these things in eternity past and made provision for them.

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As Psalm 37:4–8 suggests: Take delight in the LORD, and He will give you your heart's desires. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him, and He will act, making your righteousness shine like the dawn, your justice like the noonday. Be silent before the LORD and wait expectantly for Him; do not be agitated by one who prospers in his way, by the man who carries out evil plans. Refrain from anger and give up your rage; do not be agitated—it can only bring harm.

Psalm 12:7b ...You will watch over us, on account of this people [or, *You will protect us from this (evil) generation*], forever,...

Psalm 12:7b You, God, will keep us forever (various commentators)

Barnes: *Forever - That is, "constantly," or as long as they would need the divine protection. God would not interpose and save them from the "present" trouble, and then leave them to the designs of their enemies, but he would "always" interpose as often as there was any need of his help. That is, they were now, and would be at all times, entirely safe. They had nothing to fear, for God was their refuge and their help.*³⁹⁴

Whedon: *For ever—To eternity. The deliverance of the righteous shall not be temporal only, but perpetual, for ever. Less than this neither the language nor subject will admit.*³⁹⁵

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³⁹⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:7.

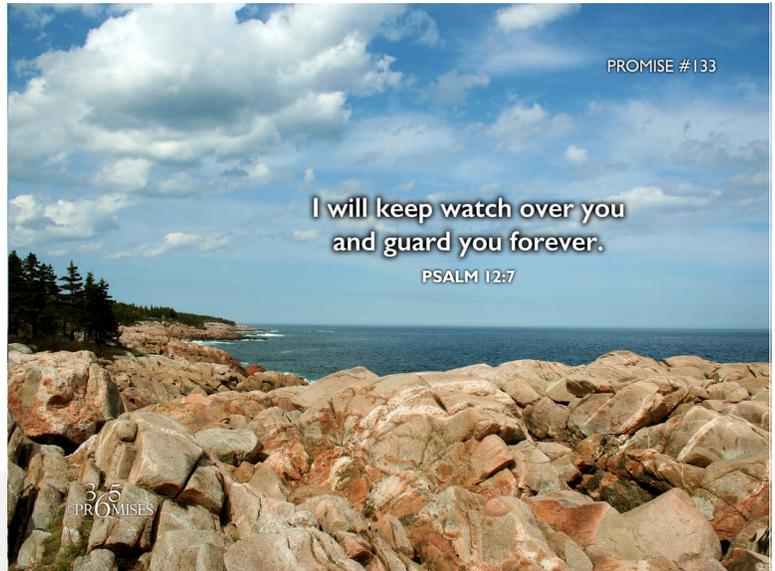
³⁹⁵ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:7.

Psalm 12:7 Made into a promise (a graphic); from; **365 Promises**; accessed April 18, 2020.

This was not an actual translation that I could find; but this was taken from v. 7, and rewritten as a promise.

Recall that there are some difficulties with this verse. The person is not completely clear.

However, based upon the Scriptures listed above, this is certainly true, but with some caveats. If you are a believer out of fellowship for a very long time, you might die the sin unto death. There are also times, even for faithful believers, when life is removed to glorify God. We have what is generally true (the converted promise in the graphic), and we have the exceptions (Peter and the other Apostles dying while spreading the Word of God throughout the Roman empire and the world).



Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

God does guard His words forever, but he also watches over us and His people forever.

Psalm 12:7 **You, O Y^ehowah, will guard them** [that is, *the poor and the needy*]; **You will watch over us, on account of this people** [or, *You will protect us from this (evil) generation*], **forever...**

Dr. Peter Pett: *So through His word YHWH will keep His people and will continue to preserve them through the generations for ever. His words are the perfect antidote to unbelief, sin and deceit.*³⁹⁶

Although it is quite difficult to pinpoint exactly when David wrote this psalm, I would think that he did this during the era when Saul was king and he was a young general. He was very successful and people sang his praises, but Saul began to turn against him. Now, even though we have no history where Charley Brown, aide to Saul, whispers in his ear, "This David guy is out to get your job; and you are a great king, O Saul." It is very possible that this is the circumstance during which David wrote this psalm. Near to kings and presidents, there are always sycophants, telling their leaders what they want to hear. After all, if 3 or 4 people tell you just how great you are, you certainly agree with them, do you not? (I know that I do.)

There would have been those during the reign of Saul who looked at Saul—who was king—and David—who was a subservient general—and they chose Saul to support and flatter. They believed that to be greater insurance of job stability and reward. They would be exercising self-interest, saying what they believed necessary in order to preserve their position of limited power and influence.

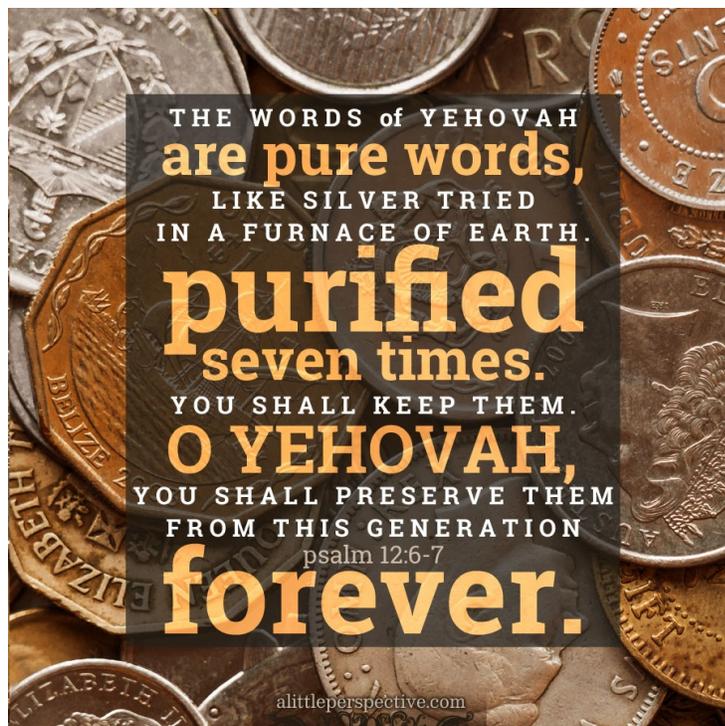
³⁹⁶ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Psalm 12:7–8.

This is only a theory, and, as said before, the actual timing of this psalm is not as important as the doctrine found in the psalm itself. The key elements where man is described and where God’s Word is exalted—these things are true at all times.

Psalm 12:7 You, O Jehovah, will guard the grace-oriented and the destitute, and You will watch over us, protecting us from this evil generation forever more...

NIV Study Bible: *David is confident, even though at the present time the wicked think they have the upper hand.*³⁹⁷

Psalm 12:6–7 (a graphic); from **A Little Perspective**; accessed April 18, 2020.



Chapter Outline
Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

In retrospect, I should have placed vv. 7 & 8 together.

<p>Round about, malevolent ones walk as lifted up [is] vileness [or, terror] to sons of Adam.</p>	<p>Psalm 12:8</p>	<p>...[even though] the malevolent prowl all around and [lit., when] vileness [or, terror] is exalted by [lit., to, for] the sons of man.</p>
<p>...even though the sons of men exalt that which is vile, and the malevolent are everywhere.</p>		

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	Round about, malevolent ones walk; as lifted up [is] vileness [or, terror] to sons of Adam.
The Psalms targum Aramaic Targum	All around the wicked walk, <u>like a leech that sucks the blood of the sons of men.</u> The wicked go around and walk according to the contemptible pride of the sons of <u>Edom.</u>
Lamsa’s Peshitta (Syriac)	For the wicked walk everywhere with contemptible pride like the children of <u>Edom.</u>
Latin Vulgate	The wicked walk round about: according to your highness, you have multiplied the children of men.
Peshitta Septuagint	The wicked walk everywhere with contemptible pride like the children of Edom. The ungodly walk around: according to Your greatness You have greatly exalted the sons of men.

³⁹⁷ The NIV Study Bible; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 790 (footnote).

Significant differences: There is considerable variation in this final verse. The Latin and Greek both add an additional phrase, which appears to be connected to what follows rather than to the first phrase. The Latin appears to have a different verb, where the sons of men are multiplied. The sense of the Hebrew seems to be reasonable, as long as this is taken along with the previous verse.

The Syriac has *the sons of Edom* rather than *the sons of Adam*. These words probably differ by vowel points only.

The psalm targum is almost completely different.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	The sinners are walking on every side, and evil is honoured among the children of men.
Easy English	But if people praise evil things, then wicked people will boast more and more.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	Those bad people act important, but really, they are like costume jewelry. It looks expensive, but it is really very cheap.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006 <i>God's Word</i> TM	The wicked are all around us, and everyone thinks evil is something to be praised! Wicked people parade around when immorality increases among Adam's descendants.
Good News Bible (TEV)	The wicked are everywhere, and everyone praises what is evil. Keep us always safe, O Lord, and preserve us from such people.
<i>The Message</i> NIRV	From the wicked who collect honors For their wonderful lies. Proud and sinful people walk around openly when the evil they do is praised by the human race.
New Simplified Bible	The wicked walk about when immorality increases among the sons of men.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press paraphrase	O Lord, we know that You will forever preserve Your own from the reach of evil men, Although they prowl on every side and vileness is praised throughout the land. V. 7 is included for context.
Contemporary English V.	But all who are wicked will keep on strutting, while everyone praises their shameless deeds.
New Berkeley Version	...where godless men strut around, as baseness is given a high rating among the descendants of man.
New Life Version	The sinful walk on every side when bad actions are held in honor among the sons of men.
New Living Testament	...even though the wicked strut about, and evil is praised throughout the land.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	Yahweh, we know that you will protect us who honor you from those wicked people, those who strut around proudly, while people praise them for doing evil deeds. V. 7 is included for context.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	For the Godless now have us surrounded, And around us, they walk everywhere.
Beck's American Translation	...where the wicked prowl around

Common English Bible	praising what is vile among people. You, Lord, will keep us, [LXX; MT <i>keep them</i>] protecting us from this generation forever. The wicked roam all over the place, while depravity is praised by human beings. V. 7 is included for context.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	See how the wicked come and go all around us, how they rise to greatness, this base breed of men!
Translation for Translators	Wicked people strut around <i>proudly</i> , and people praise them for doing vile/wicked deeds, but Yahweh, <i>we know that</i> you will protect/rescue us from those wicked people.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Revised Ferrar-Fenton Bible	ENVOY. When the wicked are left to go free, They terrify men, like high walls.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	Keep them therefore (O' Lord) and preserve us from this generation for ever. And why? when vanity and idleness gets the our hand among the children of men, all are full of the ungodly. V. 7 is included for context.
HCSB	The wicked wander everywhere, and what is worthless is exalted by the human race.
International Standard V	The wicked, however, [The Heb. lacks however] keep walking around , exalting the vileness of human beings. [Lit. of children of men]
NIV, ©2011	You, Lord, will keep the needy safe and will protect us forever from the wicked, who freely strut about when what is vile is honored by the human race. V. 7 is included for context.
Peter Pett's translation	The wicked walk on every side, When vileness is exalted among the sons of men.
Unlocked Literal Bible	The wicked walk on every side when evil is exalted among the children of mankind.
Urim-Thummim Version	The wicked walk all around when worthless men are exalted.
Wikipedia Bible Project	Around, the wicked walketh, the height of disvalue to man.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	Hold us, O Lord, in your keeping; protect us always from this generation, for the wicked prowl on all sides, and the basest are exalted. V. 7 is included for context.
The Heritage Bible	The wicked walk on every side, like the rising of a tempest on the children of men.
New American Bible (2011)	On every side the wicked roam; the shameless are extolled by the children of men.
New American Bible	On every side the wicked strut; the shameless are extolled by all.
New English Bible—1970	The wicked flaunt themselves on every side, while profligacy stands high among mankind.
New Jerusalem Bible	The wicked will scatter in every direction, as the height of depravity among the children of Adam.
Revised English Bible	The wicked parade about, and what is of little worth wins general esteem.
Revised English Bible—1989	The wicked parade about, and what is of little worth wins general esteem.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Hebraic Roots Bible	The wicked walk around on every side, when evil is exalted by the sons of men.
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Israeli Authorized Version JPS (Tanakh)	The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted. On every side the wicked roam when baseness is exalted among men. [The meaning of this last Hebrew phrase is uncertain].
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	The wrong walk around on every side, When worthlessness is exalted among the sons of men.
Tree of Life Version	The wicked strut all around, while vileness is exalted by mankind.

Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible	THE UNGODLY WALK AROUND: ACCORDING TO YOUR GREATNESS YOU HAVE GREATLY EXALTED THE SONS OF MEN.
Awful Scroll Bible	You was to keep them Jehovah, and was to watch over them in this generation continually, but they doomed were to walk moving around, in worthlessness are the sons of mankind to lift themselves up. V. 7 is included for context.
Concordant Literal Version	The wicked walk round about, As the squanderings of the sons of humanity are exalted. Permanent"
exeGesés companion Bible	The wicked walk all around, when the violent sons of humanity are exalted.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	The resha'im strut on every side, when the vilest among the Bnei Adam are exalted.
Rotherham's <i>Emphasized B.</i>	On every side, the lawless, march about,—when worthlessness is exalted by the sons of men.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	The wicked strut about [in pompous self-importance] on every side, As vileness is exalted and baseness is prized among the sons of men.
The Expanded Bible	But the wicked ·are [walk] all around us; ·everyone loves what is wrong [what is vile is lifted up among the sons of man/humanity].
Kretzmann's Commentary	The wicked walk on every side, their entire bearing showing the pride of their hearts, when the vilest men are exalted, in accordance with the increase of vileness among the sons of men, that is, the more the Christians neglect to act as the salt of the earth, as the leaven in the perverse generation of these latter days, and the more their own behavior is subject to just criticism as not in accordance with the Word of God, the more will the enemies of the Lord take occasion to lift up their heads in proud blasphemy and increase their hatred of the Lord's work.
The Pulpit Commentary	The wicked walk on every side. This can scarcely have been intended as an independent clause, though grammatically it stands alone. It is best to supply "while" or "though" before "the wicked," as Dr. Kay does, and to translate, Though (or, while) wicked men march to and fro on all sides; i.e. while they have their way, and control all other men's incomings and out-goings, being free themselves. When the vilest men are exalted; rather, and though villainy (רָחֵק) exalteth itself among the sons of men.
Syndein/Thieme	Those under the influence of evil strut around on every side . . . when worthlessness is exalted among the sons of man.
The Voice	All around, those who are wicked parade—proud and arrogant—and people applaud their emptiness.

Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

College Press Bible Study	On every side lawless ones march about,
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when worthlessness is exalted among the sons of men.^[109]

[109] Though round about the wicked walk
When thou risest up thou dost lightly
esteem the sons of mankind.

The Complete Tanach

Wicked men walk on all sides when the [one who appears] basest to the sons of men is elevated.

Wicked men walk on all sides: to hide traps to cause me to stumble.

when the basest to the sons of men is elevated: Heb. מֵדָא יִנְבֵּל תּוֹלֵז מֵרַכ [They walk on all sides] because of their envy, for they are jealous of my greatness, that I was taken from behind the sheep to be a king. This is the interpretation of תּוֹלֵז מֵרַכ מֵדָא : יִנְבֵּל : when a man considered by the sons of men to be base is elevated. This is on the order of the passage elsewhere (below 118: 22): “The stone that the builders rejected became a cornerstone.” The Midrash Aggadah interprets it concerning Israel in the future, when they will be elevated. [Unknown Midrashic source] Menachem interprets מֵדָא יִנְבֵּל תּוֹלֵז מֵרַכ (קק. 78, 164): like a gluttonous wild ox to devour the sons of men. Accordingly, מֵרַכ is rendered: like a מֵרַכ or מֵרַכ, and תּוֹלֵז is like (Deut. 21:20) אֹבֵסוּ לִלְוֹז, “a glutton and a drunkard.” The following is its interpretation: The wicked walk on all sides around the poor man; the wicked walk to swallow him for naught, as a wild ox to swallow the sons of men.

NET Bible®

...for the wicked seem to be everywhere,²³

when people promote evil.²⁴

²³ Heb “the wicked walk all around.” One could translate v. 8a as an independent clause, in which case it would be a concluding observation in proverbial style. The present translation assumes that v. 8a is a subordinate explanatory clause, or perhaps a subordinate temporal clause (“while the wicked walk all around”). The adverb בְּיָבֵס (saviv, “around”), in combination with the Hitpael form of the verb “walk” (which indicates repeated action), pictures the wicked as ubiquitous. They have seemingly overrun society.

²⁴ Heb “when evil is lifted up by the sons of man.” The abstract noun תּוֹלֵז (zulut, “evil”) occurs only here. On the basis of evidence from the cognate languages (see HALOT 272 s.v.), one might propose the meaning “base character,” or “morally foolish behavior.”

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Albert Barnes	The wicked walk on every side; (it is) as the lifting up, or the exaltation of vileness among the sons of men.
C. Thompson (updated) OT	The wicked are walking about: You, in Your sublimity, have carefully observed the sons of men.
English Standard Version Modern Literal Version	On every side the wicked prowl, as vileness is exalted among the children of man. The wicked walk on every side, when the worthless of mankind are exalted.
New American Standard B.	The wicked strut about on every side When vileness [Or <i>worthlessness</i>] is exalted among the sons of men.
Niobi Study Bible WEB	The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted. The wicked walk on every side, When what is vile is exalted among the sons of men.
Young's Literal Translation	Around the wicked walk continually, According as vileness is exalted by sons of men!

What is the gist of this verse? In this world, there are wicked men who are everywhere, and they promote evil.

Psalm 12:8a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>כָּבֹּיֵב (בִּיבֵס) [pronounced saw^b- VEE^BV]</p>	<p><i>around, surrounding, circuit, round about, encircle; all around; on every side</i></p>	<p>adverb/preposition</p>	<p>Strong's #5439 BDB #686</p>
<p>BDB lists this as a substantive, but it tells us <i>where</i> the wicked walk (this word is used as an adverb and as a substantive).</p>			
<p>רָשָׁעִים (מִיעֲשָׂר) [pronounced r^e-shaw- GEEM]</p>	<p><i>malevolent ones, lawless ones, criminals, the corrupt; wicked, wicked ones</i></p>	<p>masculine plural adjective (here, it acts like a noun)</p>	<p>Strong's #7563 BDB #957</p>
<p>E. W. Bullinger: <i>wicked</i> = <i>lawless</i>. <i>Hebrew. rasha'</i>.³⁹⁸</p>			
<p>הֹלֵךְ (הֹלֵךְ) [pronounced haw-LAHK^e]</p>	<p><i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk [up and down, about]; to prowl; to go for oneself, to go about, to live [walk] [in truth]; to flow</i></p>	<p>3rd person masculine plural, Hithpael imperfect; pausal form</p>	<p>Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229</p>

Translation: ...[even though] the malevolent prowl all around;...

The words here are fairly simple, as is the construction. We have lawless men, corrupt men, wicked men, wandering everywhere.

This seems like a rather grim and depressing way to end a psalm. However, one must combine this with the previous verse, where God protects and preserves those who are His, which occurs despite the fact that this evil is all around.

Psalm 12:8a ...[even though] the malevolent prowl all around;...

Psalm 12:8a The wicked prowl around everywhere (various commentators)

Barnes: *The wicked walk on every side* - Everywhere. They have full license, or seem to be wholly unrestrained.³⁹⁹

Benson: *The wicked walk on every side* — They fill all places, and go about boldly and securely, seeking to deceive, corrupt, and destroy others, being neither afraid nor ashamed to discover themselves.⁴⁰⁰

Clarke: *The wicked walk on every side* - The land is full of them. When the vilest men are exalted; rather, As villany gains ground among the sons of Adam.⁴⁰¹

The Geneva Bible: [T]hey suppress the godly and maintain the wicked.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁸ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

³⁹⁹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

⁴⁰⁰ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

⁴⁰¹ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

⁴⁰² Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Psalm 12:8.

Psalm 12:8a The wicked prowl around everywhere (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *The wicked walk on every side,.... Of the poor and needy, of the righteous ones, to watch them, lay snares for them, and hurt them; therefore, Lord, keep and preserve them: the wicked are everywhere in great numbers, the whole world lies in wickedness; and the men of it are like their father the devil, they go about to do all the mischief they can to the saints; wherefore they stand in need continually of divine preservation.*⁴⁰³

David Guzik: *The wicked prowl on every side: David knew that the existence and exaltation of God's pure word would not eliminate the wicked. They would still exist and prowl on every side as they could, but never with the assurance of final victory.*⁴⁰⁴

Keil and Delitzsch: *We find similar complaints of the universal prevalence of wickedness in Micah 7:2; Isa. 57:1; Jer. 7:28, and elsewhere.*⁴⁰⁵

Matthew Poole: *The wicked walk on every side; which phrase may note,*

1. *Their great numbers; they fill all places.*
2. *Their freedom and safety; they are not restrained nor punished, but go about boldly and securely whither they please.*
3. *Their proficiency and success, which is sometimes signified by this verb, as Gen. 26:13 1Sam. 2:21 Isa. 40:31. They grow worse and worse, and prosper in and by their wickedness.*
4. *Their incessant and unwearied industry in doing mischief to good men. Compare 1Peter 5:8. And this is very fitly here added, as another argument to prevail with God to arise to help his poor people who are oppressed by wicked men.*⁴⁰⁶

Spurgeon: *Here we return to the fount of bitterness, which first made the Psalmist run to the wells of salvation, namely, the prevalence of wickedness.*⁴⁰⁷

Trapp: *The wicked walk on every side]...the circular motion is most subtle, the devil walks the rounds to do mischief; but better render it circumquaque, on every side, to show their numbers and their insolence. All places are full of them, such dust heaps are found in every corner; when as the godly are as the salt of the earth, sprinkled here and there, as salt uses to be, to keep the rest from putrefying.*⁴⁰⁸

Whedon: *The wicked walk on every side—They walk round and round. The phrase not only intimates numerically their multitude, (Isa. 49:18; Isa. 60:4,) but also, that they wear an air of wantonness and arrogance, as conscious of holding the sway of public affairs.*⁴⁰⁹

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: Prov. 29:12 Hosea 5:11 Micah 6:16.⁴¹⁰

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⁴⁰³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

⁴⁰⁴ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

⁴⁰⁵ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 12:1–2.

⁴⁰⁶ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

⁴⁰⁷ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

⁴⁰⁸ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:8.

⁴⁰⁹ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Psalm 12:8.

⁴¹⁰ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Psalm 12:8.

Psalm 12:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kaph or k ^e (כ) [pronounced k ^e]	<i>like, as, according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453
rûwm (רור) [pronounced room]	<i>to lift up, to rise, to arise, to raise up, to grow; to be exalted, to become high, to become powerful; to be high an lofty; to be remote, to be in the far distance</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7311 BDB #926

The kaph preposition, or k^e (כ) [pronounced k^e], which means *like, as, according to*, when this is combined with an infinitive, it can also take on the meaning *as, often, when, as soon as*. It carries with it a temporal connotation.

zûllûwth (תולז) [pronounced zool-LOOTH]	<i>vileness, worthlessness; terror, trembling; a tempest</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #2149 BDB #273
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BDB offers the first two definitions (which seems to be followed by all of the translations which I have) and Gesenius offers the latter three. This word occurs in this psalm only.

Keil and Delitzsch: *Vileness is called תולז from ללז (cogn. ללד) to be supple and lax, narrow, low, weak and worthless. The form is passive just as is the Talm. תולז (from ליז = לילז), and it is the epithet applied to that which is depreciated, despised, and to be despised; here it is the opposite of the disposition and conduct of the noble man, בידן.*

They continue: *מַרְכֵּךְ is equivalent to מַרְבֵּךְ, only it is intentionally used instead of the latter, to express a coincidence that is based upon an intimate relation of cause and effect, and is not merely accidental. The wicked are puffed up on all sides, and encompass the better disposed on every side as their enemies. Such is the state of things, and it cannot be otherwise at a time when men allow meanness to gain the ascendancy among and over them, as is the case at the present moment.*⁴¹¹

The NET Bible: *The abstract noun תולז (zulut, "evil") occurs only here. On the basis of evidence from the cognate languages (see HALOT 272 s.v.), one might propose the meaning "base character," or "morally foolish behavior."*⁴¹²

Dr. Bob Utey: NASB, NKJV, NRSV "vileness"
 NJB "depravity"
 JPSOA "baseness"
 REB "of little worth".

Utey continues: *This noun (BDB 273) is found only here in the OT. The verb form (NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 1109) means*

1. in Qal, "be frivolous" or "be despised"
2. in Hiphil, "to treat lightly".⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 12:7–8.

⁴¹² From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?psa12.htm> accessed April 12, 2020.

⁴¹³ Dr. Bob Utey, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Psalm 12:8.

Psalm 12:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
bânîym (בְּנֵי) [pronounced <i>baw-NEEM</i>]	<i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men; young men, youths</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
'âdâm (אָדָם) [pronounced <i>aw-DAWM</i>]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind, Adam</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #120 BDB #9

Translation: ...and [lit., when] vileness [or, terror] is exalted by [lit., to, for] the sons of man.

Although *sons of man* is not the subject here, I believe that it acts like the subject. The Qal infinitive construct plus the kaph preposition give us a temporal understanding of when this takes place—when do evil men prowl all around. This occurs when vileness is lifted up or exalted by men.

Psalm 12:8b ...and [lit., when] vileness [or, terror] is exalted by [lit., to, for] the sons of man.

Psalm 12:8b Vileness is exalted by the sons of man (various commentators)

Barnes: *When the vilest men are exalted* - Margin, "The vilest of the sons of men are exalted."

Barnes continues: *This expression has been very variously translated. Dr. Horsley renders it, "When the scorn of the sons of men is exalted." De Wette, "They exalt themselves; terror to the sons of men." Luther, "Where such wicked people rule among the sons of men." Hengstenberg, "Like exaltation is disgrace to the sons of men."*

Barnes continues: *Prof. Alexander seems inclined to favor this last view. According to this interpretation, the meaning is, that "although the wicked are now in the ascendant, and the righteous are treated with contempt, this disgrace is really an exaltation, because only ... in man's judgment, not in God's, who will abundantly indemnify his people for the dishonor put upon them."*

Barnes concludes: *The word rendered in our version "the vilest" - תולר zûllûth - means, according to Gesenius, "trembling, terror." It occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. The verb from which it is derived - רלל zâlal - means to shake, to tremble; then (as one shakes out, or casts away worthless things) to be vile, abject, despised, worthless.⁴¹⁴*

Benson: *when the vilest of men are exalted* — *To places of trust and power, who, instead of putting the laws in execution against vice and injustice, and punishing the wicked according to their deserts, patronize and protect them, or give them countenance and support by their own example.⁴¹⁵*

Clarke: *The vilest men are exalted* - *Were we to take this in its obvious sense, it would signify that at that time wickedness was the way to preferment, and that good men were the objects of persecution.⁴¹⁶*

⁴¹⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

⁴¹⁵ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

⁴¹⁶ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

Psalm 12:8b Vileness is exalted by the sons of man (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *when the vilest men are exalted*: either to great dignities and high offices, to be magistrates and rulers...are highly esteemed and caressed; which shows the sad degeneracy and badness of the times, and the unsafe and dangerous condition the people of God are in, unless kept by him; see Mal. 3:15 (*And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.*—ESV).

Gill continues: *Or else these words may be considered as expressive of the judgment of God upon wicked men, and so confirm what the psalmist had said of God's regard to and preservation of his own people; and the sense be, that the wicked shall walk up and down, here and there, as outcasts and vagabonds, in a most desolate, destitute, and miserable condition; and as the latter clause may be rendered, "according to their exaltation shall be the vileness", depression, or humiliation "of the children of men".*

Gill concludes: *They shall be brought as low as they have been made high; by how much the more highly they have been exalted, by so much the more deeply they shall be humbled: or else the meaning is, they shall walk about here and there fretting and vexing, when they shall see such who in their opinion are the meanest and basest of men, of low degree, and of a mean extract, exalted to the highest posts of honour and dignity; as David, who was taken from the sheepfold, and placed on the throne of Israel; so Jarchi, who observes that the Haggadah explains it of the Israelites, who will be exalted in time to come.*⁴¹⁷

David Guzik: *When vileness is exalted among the sons of men*: We might feel that this Psalm ends on a sad, depressing note. Yet David was utterly realistic in his outlook. He knew that even with the precious and pure word of God available to men, many of the sons of men would still prefer that vileness is exalted.⁴¹⁸

MacLaren: *If 'vileness is set on high among the sons of men,' it is because the sons of men prefer it to the stern purity of goodness. A corrupt people will crown corrupt men and put them aloft.*⁴¹⁹

Matthew Poole: *The vilest men*, Heb. vilenesses, i.e. all manner of wickedness, lying and slandering, profaneness; oppression, cruelty, and the like; or, vile persons, the abstract being put for the concrete, which is frequent, as pride, Psalm 36:11, for a proud man, and many such like; both comes to one, vile persons and vile practices were both advanced and encouraged through Saul's misgovernment, whereby all the foundations were destroyed, as he complained, Psalm 11:3 (*Let not the foot of arrogance come upon me, nor the hand of the wicked drive me away*—ESV).

Poole continues: *The Hebrew word zolel (whence this zuloth comes) signifies first a glutton or drunkard, as Deut. 21:20 Prov. 23:21, and thence any vile person, as Jer. 15:19 Lam. 1:11.*

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *And out of this scepticism, pride, and sensuality, come crimes of darkest complexion and largest proportion, peculiar to advanced civilisations. According to the height of the mountain is the depth of the valley; according to the intensity of the light is the depth of the shade; and according to the wealth, freedom, learning, splendour of a nation, are its crimes exaggerated and its vices crimson.*⁴²⁰

Trapp: *When the vilest men are exalted*...Oft empty vessels swim aloft, rotten posts are gilt with adulterate gold, the worst weeds spring up bravest. Chaff will get to the top of the fan when good grain, as it lies at the bottom of the heap, so it falls low at the feet of the farmer. The reason why wicked men walk on every side, are so brisk, so busy, and who but they? is given in to be this, because losels and rioters were exalted. See Prov. 28:12; Prov. 28:18; Prov. 29:2.,

⁴¹⁷ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

⁴¹⁸ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

⁴¹⁹ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

⁴²⁰ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

Psalm 12:8b Vileness is exalted by the sons of man (various commentators)

Trapp continues: *When they (that is, the wicked) are exalted, it is a shame for the sons of men, that other men, who better deserve preferment, are not only slighted, but vilely handled by such worthless ambitionists; who yet the higher they climb, as apes, the more they discover their deformities.*⁴²¹

Whedon: *When the vilest men are exalted*—This gives the cause of the degeneracy of the times. Prov. 28:12. Base, low, weak, and worthless men in power will ruin any age. Let Christian voters of this country see to it. The psalmist ends where he begins, with an echo of Psalm 12:1-2, but sustained by the word of Jehovah, who (Psalm 12:5) promises deliverance.⁴²²

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: Judges 9:18–57 1Sam. 18:17–18 Esther 3:6–15 Isa. 32:4–6 Mark 14:63–65.⁴²³

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The Urim-Thummim Version provides an excellent translation: *The wicked walk all around when worthless men are exalted.*

Psalm 12:8...[even though] the malevolent prowl all around and [lit., when] vileness [or, terror] is exalted by [lit., to, for] the sons of man.

Psalm 12:8...[even though] the malevolent prowl all around and [lit., when] vileness [or, terror] is exalted by [lit., to, for] the sons of man.

Psalm 12:8 When vile is exalted, the wicked prowl about (various commentators)

Barnes offers his closing remarks: *I would offer the following as a fair translation of the passage: "The wicked walk on every side; (it is) as the lifting up, or the exaltation of vileness among the sons of men." That is, the state of things is as if the vilest were exalted, or were honored. It seems to be the very exaltation of wickedness or depravity in the world.*⁴²⁴

Benson: *The Hebrew, תולז מרכ, cherum zulloth, is literally, when vilenesses are exalted, when all manner of wickedness, lying, slandering, profaneness, oppression, cruelty, and the like, instead of being punished and suppressed, are countenanced and encouraged by magistrates and persons of power and influence. Both these interpretations come to one. For when vile persons are exalted, so also are vile practices. Both these, it appears, were advanced and encouraged under Saul's government, which caused David to complain that the foundations were destroyed, Psalm 11:3.*⁴²⁵

The Cambridge Bible: *Jehovah will preserve the righteous; although when vileness is exalted among the sons of men, when worthless or profligate men are raised to positions of authority, the wicked stalk insolently everywhere, unabashed and unrestrained. Cp. Psalm 11:1-3 (In the LORD I take refuge; how can you say to my soul, "Flee like a bird to your mountain, for behold, the wicked bend the bow; they have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart; if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"—ESV). The Psalmist returns to the thought of the prevailing corruption, from which he started.*⁴²⁶

⁴²¹ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and H. Martin; e-sword, Psalm 12:8.

⁴²² Whedon's *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from e-sword; Psalm 12:8.

⁴²³ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from e-sword, Psalm 12:8.

⁴²⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

⁴²⁵ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

⁴²⁶ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12:8.

Psalm 12:8 When vile is exalted, the wicked prowl about (various commentators)

James Burton Coffman: *The elevation of evil men to high places of authority results in the proliferation of all kinds of shameful conduct in the land; and it would appear that this verse outlines just such a situation. It corresponds very closely to verse 1 of this psalm and seems to be just another way of saying "The current situation in society remains the same."*⁴²⁷

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *The wicked roam undisturbed doing evil, when vileness and vile men are exalted.*⁴²⁸

Keil and Delitzsch: *The wicked march about on every side (הַלְחָתָהּ, used of going about unopposed with an arrogant and vaunting mien), when (while) vileness among (וְ) the children of men rises to eminence (מִן) as in Prov. 11:11, cf. לִשְׁמֵךְ Prov. 29:2), so that they come to be under its dominion.*⁴²⁹

Charles Haddon Spurgeon: *Sin in high places specially infectious. Call to the rich and prominent to remember their responsibility. Thankfulness for honourable rulers. Discrimination to be used in choice of our representatives, or civic magistrates.*⁴³⁰

Charles Haddon Spurgeon: *When sin gets into the high places of the earth, then it becomes very abundant. Every evil man takes liberty to creep out into public life when some great leader in vice occupies the throne. God save the people when such is the case!*⁴³¹

Charles Haddon Spurgeon: *Here we return to the fount of bitterness, which first made the Psalmist run to the wells of salvation, namely, the prevalence of wickedness. When those in power are vile, their underlings will be no better. As a warm sun brings out noxious flies, so does a sinner in honour foster vice everywhere. Our turf would not so swarm with abominables if those who are styled honourables did not give their countenance to the craft. Would to God that the glory and triumph of our Lord Jesus would encourage us to walk and work on every side; as like acts upon like, since an exalted sinner encourages sinners, our exalted Redeemer must surely excite, cheer, and stimulate his saints. Nerved by a sight of his reigning power we shall meet the evils of the times in the spirit of holy resolution, and shall the more hopefully pray, "Help, Lord."*⁴³²

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I love the way that the Voice expresses this verse:

All around, those who are wicked parade—*proud and arrogant*—and people applaud their emptiness.

Does this not sound like a description of any panel discussion on CNN or MSNBC? Or an hour of celebrity news on Entertainment Tonight? Or any late-night talk show with celebrity guests?

If you try to apply this simply to an individual, notice that the references here are to a group of men. Apparently such men travel in packs.

Is the Bible not the most up-to-date book in the world?

⁴²⁷ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/psalms-12.html> accessed April 24, 2020.

⁴²⁸ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Psalm 12:8.

⁴²⁹ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 12:7–8.

⁴³⁰ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12 (chapter comments).

⁴³¹ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Expositions Volumes 1-3A*; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

⁴³² Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

Dr. Peter Pett: *But meanwhile sin will continue to walk abroad, the unrighteous will appear to be on every side, and vileness will be exalted among men. They will boast about it. God is not deceived about the human race. He knows what men are. Thus must the godly look constantly to the word of God, and God will then preserve and keep them. Note that the opening 'You' is emphatic, for in the end it is only YHWH Who can keep His own and enable them to persevere.*⁴³³

Psalm 12:8 ...even though the sons of men exalt that which is vile, and the malevolent are everywhere.

Fortunately, v. 8 has been made into a tee shirt.

Psalm 12:8 as a tee shirt (a graphic); from **Amazon**; accessed April 18, 2020.

I guess this can be worn the next time you attend an anti-American protest.

Now let's put vv. 7–8 together:

Psalm 12:7–8 **You, O Y^ehowah, will guard them** [that is, *the poor and the needy*];
You will watch over us, on account of this people [or, *You will protect us from this (evil) generation*], forever,
 [even though] **the malevolent prowl all around**
 and [lit., *when*] **vileness** [or, *terror*] **is exalted by** [lit., *to, for*] **the sons of man.**

This seems to tell us—and you might not like this very much—that God may still allow your enemies to live. Recall that God did allow for the indigenous peoples of Canaan to remain there in order to keep Israel in line (Judges 3:1).

Like me, you may find this to be disappointing, but, better to know the truth than to expect something to happen that won't.

*Expositor's Bible Commentary: These are "the children of men" among whom the meek and needy are to live, not failing before them because God holds them up. This hope is for the militant Church, whose lot is to stand for God amidst wide-flowing evil, which may swell and rage against the band of faithful ones, but cannot sweep them away. Not of victory which annihilates opposition, but of charmed lives invulnerable in conflict, is the psalmist's confidence. There is no more lamenting of the extinction of good men and their goodness, neither is there triumphant anticipation of present extinction of bad men and their badness, but both are to grow together till the harvest...The despicable is honoured, and corruption is a recommendation to high position.*⁴³⁴



⁴³³ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Psalm 12:7–8.

⁴³⁴ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

Application: There are epochs in various national entities where there is great moral dissolution,⁴³⁵ and sometimes, this immorality does not simply dissipate. We have seen as of late a great rise in the United States of men who favor socialism, one of the most bizarre turn of events that I have ever seen in my life. All around us there is evidence of the failures of socialism; as well as all around us we see the great success and prosperity of freedom and free enterprise (we live in the most prosperous nation in human history). Yet, perhaps as high as a solid third of our nation somehow believes that socialism is the answer to national imperfection. It is possible that this insanity may remain with our nation for a very long time; and it is even possible that the United States might even reject her heritage of freedom and plunge further into socialism. We just don't know. So what is our solution? In the past we have had the *Great Awakening* in the United States (actually, this has occurred 3x in the United States and it was so profound as to actually have this name). If you do a search, you will find that there have been two great *spiritual* awakenings in the United States; but I believe that the Billy Graham crusades followed by the tremendous teaching of R. B. Thieme, Jr. marks a *Third Great Spiritual Awakening*. This is the solution for what David is writing about in this psalm; and this is the solution for our current drift from our freedom roots which we have greatly enjoyed in the United States.

Application: How do we as believers help our nation move in this direction? There is one way and one way only—spiritual growth in the lives of individual believers. We take in Bible doctrine, we use rebound, and we teach our own children the way of God. On the other hand, the more that people reject Jesus Christ as their Savior and the more that believers reject the daily intake of the Word of God, the further danger our nation is in.

Psalm 12:7–8 You, O Jehovah, will guard the grace-oriented and the destitute,
and You will watch over us, protecting us from this evil generation forever more
even though the sons of men exalt that which is vile,
and the malevolent are everywhere.

Psalm 12:7–8 You, O Jehovah, will guard the grace-oriented and the destitute,
and You will watch over us, protecting us from this evil generation forever more
even though the sons of men exalt that which is vile,
and the malevolent are everywhere.

Psalm 12:7–8 God will protect His Word, despite the evil ones (commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *Concluding expression of confidence in Jehovah's protection, which is sorely needed when wickedness prevails unchecked.*⁴³⁶

David Guzik: *We might say that David almost left it as a challenge. Let the sons of men exalt vileness; he would exalt the pure and precious Word of God. Eventually all would see the winner of this contest. Let these wicked men do their worst — God helping him, David would do his best and see the victory of the Lord.*⁴³⁷

Hawker: *[Though bad men triumph and the faithful are minished, Jesus is the same, yesterday, and today, and forever. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness, for by strength shall no man prevail. 1Sam. 2:9.*⁴³⁸

Lange: *The world attacks the congregation of the Lord but God defends it.—It is not promised to the pious that they shall live without opposition; but that God will preserve them from the wicked generation and save them.*⁴³⁹

⁴³⁵ I am paraphrasing *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

⁴³⁶ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Psalm 12:7–8.

⁴³⁷ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Psalm 12:1–8.

⁴³⁸ Robert Hawker *The Poor Man's Commentary*; ©1805; from e-sword, Psalm 12:7–8.

⁴³⁹ The Rev. Dr. John P. Lange, *Lange's Commentary*; 1857–1864; in the Public Domain; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8 (Homiletical and Practical).

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Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Barnes sums up the entire psalm: *A state of things exists in which, from the prevalence of iniquity, the wicked seem to go unrestrained; in which no regard is paid to truth; in which falsehood and flattery abound; and it is as if honor were done to the worst forms of sin, and the most abandoned seem to be the most exalted. This appears to be the reason in the mind of the psalmist why the divine interposition is necessary; with this idea the psalm commences, and with this it appropriately closes. There was a state of widespread depravity and successful iniquity, as if all honor were conferred on wicked and abandoned men, while the virtuous were oppressed and degraded. The psalm expresses "confidence" in God - confidence in his faithful word and promises; but the psalmist sees a state of things wherein it was eminently desirable that God should interpose, for the righteous seemed to have failed out of the earth, and the wicked seemed to be wholly in the ascendancy.*⁴⁴⁰

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A Set of Summary Doctrines and Commentary

The idea here is, there are things which we find in this chapter which are extremely important.

Why Psalm 12 is in the Word of God

1. This psalm reveals David's inner thoughts as a believer surrounded by the wicked, the flatterers and the self-promoting.
2. The final words of this psalm, as found in the Voice, are as up-to-date as any book written today.
3. I liked the connection between flattery and self-praise—which is praise directed to others and flatter directed to self.
4. The power of a person's speech is quite remarkably presented in this psalm. It is so easy for a believer today to not fully appreciate the power of his words.
- 5.

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These are things which we learn while studying this particular chapter.

What We Learn from Psalm 12

1. The topics discussed in this psalm provided an opportunity to compare the words of Benjamin Franklin, Voltaire, Blaise Pascal, and Luther (quite a diverse set of historical characters).
2. I came across a very interesting source for the organization of Psalms (which is quite important; understanding how a psalm is organized often gives important information in translating and understanding the psalm).
3. Throughout the psalm, there is the opportunity to understand the basic spiritual life.

⁴⁴⁰ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

What We Learn from Psalm 12

4. Because my second time through this psalm took place in 2020, there were a great number of applications which were pertinent to the time in which we live.
5. In viewing what I wrote in 2007 and in 2020, it is clear that political illustrations certain half a short half-life, by which I mean, a short period of time during which readers will read and understand the illustrations which I used. After a period of 13 years, I can see how the political references mean little or nothing to someone reading this today.
6. There was the opportunity in this psalm to compare Christian groups which disagree with one another; and Muslim groups which disagree with one another.
7. This psalm gave us some time to consider the *poor and needy*; and to also use those words to make a spiritual application.
8. There was great opportunity for a person to consider his own nation and his relationship to his nation. A nation rises and falls based upon the number of believers in that nation and upon the number of believers who are maturing or have matured.
- 9.

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Many chapters of the Bible look forward to Jesus Christ in some way or another. A person or situation might foreshadow the Lord or His work on the cross (or His reign over Israel in the Millennium). The chapter may contain a prophecy about the Lord or it may, in some way, lead us toward the Lord (for instance, by means of genealogy).

Jesus Christ in Psalm 12

Jesus acts in this psalm as our Intercessor and Protector. He looks out for those who have no power.

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C.A.B.: The Psalmist foretells two things: that ungodliness will overflow, even unto the end; and that the righteous will be preserved from the flood of iniquity. And thus he prepares the way for the declaration of the Lord Himself in the Gospel concerning the latter days (Matt. 24:12-13).⁴⁴¹

This is a so-so summary, and superior to most of the Shmoop summaries.

An Overall Summary of Psalm 12 (by Werner Commentary)

In view of widespread moral corruption, David appealed to YHWH to be saved. Loyal or trustworthy people were apparently so few in number that David could speak of loyal ones as no longer existing and of faithful or trustworthy persons as having disappeared among “sons of man” (earthlings). The people generally were speaking lies (vanities or worthlessness, Septuagint) to their fellows. They resorted to flattery, apparently in an effort to hide their sinister aims. The expressions of their lips were the very opposite of their inward thoughts. According to the Septuagint, “deceitful lips” were in the heart, and the Masoretic Text says that they spoke with a “double heart,” saying one thing but actually intending something very different.

David appealed to YHWH to destroy flattering lips and the bragging tongue. Those who used their tongue to

⁴⁴¹ The Rev. Dr. John P. Lange, *Lange's Commentary*; 1857–1864; in the Public Domain; from E-sword; Psalm 12:1–8 (Exegetical and Critical).

An Overall Summary of Psalm 12 (by Werner Commentary)

make great boasts doubtless bragged about how they had succeeded in taking advantage of others. They were smug about their success in using their tongue to attain unworthy ends. As far as they were concerned, they would prevail with their tongue. In full control of their lips for use in attaining their objectives, they felt that no one could be their master. This could mean that no one would have a chance against them or that they were accountable to no one.

These ruthless ones would seize the little the poor possessed, completely despoiling them. On account of such mistreatment and injustice, the needy would sigh. According to the portrayal of the psalmist, YHWH would therefore say that he would arise (as from a seated position) and grant the afflicted safety.

After the mention of safety, the Masoretic Text adds the expression “he puffs” (preceded by a preposition). There is considerable uncertainty about what this means, and this is reflected in varying interpretive renderings. The “puffing” has been understood to mean contemptuous treatment, sneering, or maligning (from which YHWH protects the needy). “I will set him in safety at whom they puff.” (Margolis) “I will protect them from those who malign them.” (NIV) Others have taken the “puffing” to signify a “panting” or “longing” for and link the expression to the poor. “I will place them in the safety for which they long.” (NRSV) “I will grant safety to whoever longs for it.” (NAB) The Tanakh rendering transforms the words into a divine affirmation to the afflicted one. “I will give help,’ He affirms to him.” According to the Septuagint, YHWH would “speak freely” or “speak openly” to those he placed in safety. This would suggest granting them an intimacy with him as his friends.

Apparently YHWH’s promise to place the afflicted in a safe position is highlighted in the assurances that follow. Unlike the words of untrustworthy men, the words of YHWH are pure, without even the slightest trace of impurity. They are like silver that has been refined, to the utmost degree (“seven times”), in a furnace or crucible on the ground.

On the basis of the divine promise, David petitions YHWH to protect the upright, guarding him and others like him from the “generation” (evidently the ungodly generation) into the indefinite future, “into the age” (Septuagint), or for all time to come.

The upright can fully rely on YHWH’s words. This would be despite the fact that the wicked or ungodly were all around and walked about freely, and, among the “sons of man” (sinful earthlings), worthlessness was exalted. Those having attained wealth and power, although by base means, were accorded honor that they did not deserve.

From <https://wernerbiblecommentary.org/?q=node/17> accessed April 24, 2020.

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Closing Remarks for Psalm 12 (various commentators)

H. A. Ironside: *Do you know why the people of Scotland love the Psalms so much? They learned to love them when they were being persecuted by those who sought to destroy the Scottish church; and when the Covenanters had to hide in the hills for their safety they sang these Psalms as fitting their exact circumstances, and how much they meant to them. There they were, driven out on the mountainside to hold their meetings for worship and for prayer and praise. It must have been a wonderful thing to hear a company of them lifting up their voices in one of these Psalms.*⁴⁴²

⁴⁴² From <http://plymouthbrethren.org/article/6477> accessed April 24, 2020.

Closing Remarks for Psalm 12 (various commentators)

J. Vernon McGee: *We are living in a day like this, and it will be especially true during the time of the Great Tribulation. Listen to the prophet Isaiah when he says, "Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at His word: Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy'; but it is they who shall be put to shame."* (Isa. 66:5; ESV). *This is a wonderful picture given to us which describes the temple worship in Jerusalem at, I think, the end of the age. The Lord Jesus said in His day, when the enemy came to arrest Him, ". . . this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). We go through times when the enemy has the upper hand, but God won't let something happen to His own unless it will accomplish some worthwhile purpose in their hearts and lives.*⁴⁴³

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An Addendum to Psalm 12

It may be helpful to see this chapter as a contiguous whole:

A Complete Translation of Psalm 12	
A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
Inscription	
To the preeminent one; on the octave [or, <i>sheminith</i>]; a psalm of David.	To the one who is preeminent; on the octave; a Davidic psalm.
David Asks God to Preserve Him	
Preserve [me] [or, <i>Deliver (us)</i>], O Y ^e howah, for the gracious [man] has come to an end; for those who are faithful have ceased [to be] from mankind [lit., <i>sons of man</i>].	Preserve us, O Jehovah, for the gracious believer is no longer, for those who are faithful have ceased to be among men.
Everyone speaks lies [or, <i>emptiness</i>] to his neighbor [or, <i>associate</i>]; they speak with a double heart [and] flattering lips.	Everyone speaks lies and emptiness to his neighbor; they flatter them while thinking something else entirely.
God Intervenes	

⁴⁴³ From <https://archive.org/download/19-Psalms/19-PSALMS.doc> accessed April 24, 2020.

A Complete Translation of Psalm 12	
A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
<p>May Y^ehowah remove all flattering lips, [and] tongues which boast great things, [and cut off those] who have said, “We will prevail because of our speech [lit., <i>tongue</i>]; our lips [are] our own; who is our lord [lit., <i>lord to us</i>]?”</p>	<p>May Jehovah cut down those with flattering lips and those whose tongues boast great things, and those who have said, “We will prevail by our speech; we can say whatever we want to say; no one is our master.”</p>
<p>On account of the oppression of the grace-oriented [or, <i>poor</i>] [and] on account of the clamor of the destitute, I will now arise,” says Y^ehowah “[and] I will place [him] into the safety [or, <i>deliverance</i>] he pants [after] for [or, <i>for which he longs</i>].”</p>	<p>Because of the oppression of the grace-oriented believer and because of the crying out of the destitute, I will now arise,” says the Lord, “and I will put [him] into a place of safety that he desires.”</p>
God Can Be Depended Upon Despite the Evil of Man	
<p>The words of Y^ehowah [are] pure words, [like] silver being refined in an earthen furnace, having been purified seven times.</p>	<p>Jehovah’s promises are pure, like silver which has been refined; words of the earth, having been purified seven times.</p>
<p>You, O Y^ehowah, will guard them [that is, <i>the poor and the needy</i>]; You will watch over us, on account of this people [or, <i>You will protect us from this (evil) generation</i>], forever, [even though] the malevolent prowl all around and [lit., <i>when</i>] vileness [or, <i>terror</i>] is exalted by [lit., <i>to, for</i>] the sons of man.</p>	<p>You, O Jehovah, will guard the grace-oriented and the destitute, and You will watch over us, protecting us from this evil generation forever more, even though the sons of men exalt that which is vile, and the malevolent are everywhere.</p>
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Now that we have all of this put together, let’s observe the organization of this psalm:

Bullinger’s Organization of Psalm 12	
Psalm	Bullinger’s Organization
<p>Preserve [me] [or, <i>Deliver (us)</i>], O Y^ehowah, for the gracious [man] has come to an end; for those who are faithful have ceased [to be] from mankind [lit., <i>sons of man</i>].</p>	<p>A Decrease of that which is good (v. 1)</p>
<p>Everyone speaks lies [or, <i>emptiness</i>] to his neighbor [or, <i>associate</i>]; they speak with a double heart [and] flattering lips.</p>	<p>B Man’s words are false and phony (v. 2)</p>

Bullinger's Organization of Psalm 12	
Psalm	Bullinger's Organization
May Y ^e howah remove all flattering lips, [and] tongues which boast great things, [and cut off those] who have said, "We will prevail because of our speech [lit., <i>tongue</i>]; our lips [are] our own; who is our lord [lit., <i>lord to us</i>]?"	b Their end—they are cut off (vv. 3–4)
On account of the oppression of the grace-oriented [or, <i>poor</i>]	C Oppression (v. 5)
[and] on account of the clamor of the destitute,	D Sighing, clamoring (v. 5)
"I will now arise," says Y ^e howah,	D I will arise (because of the sighing (v. 5)
"[and] I will place [him] into the safety [or, <i>deliverance</i>] he pants [after] for [or, <i>for which he longs</i>]."	C I will deliver them from oppression (v. 5)
The words of Y ^e howah [are] pure words, [like] silver being refined in a furnace; [words] pertaining to the earth, having been purified seven times.	B Jehovah's words are truth (v. 6)
You, O Y ^e howah, will guard them [that is, <i>the poor and the needy</i>]; You will watch over us, on account of this people [or, <i>You will protect us from this (evil) generation</i>], forever,	b Those who are faithful; their end is preservation (v. 7)
[even though] the malevolent prowl all around and [lit., <i>when</i>] vileness [or, <i>terror</i>] is exalted by [lit., <i>to, for</i>] the sons of man.	A Increase of that which is evil (v. 8)

David's psalms tend to be very well organized, so it is nice to see when an exegete both recognizes and shares that organization with us.

Taken from *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 73 (I made a few minor Church Agenges).

After speaking to a particular word for wickedness in v. 8, Bullinger suggested this list of words.

There are many synonymous words to represent the outworking of man's fallen nature. As these are not always translated by the same English word, it is necessary that we should distinguish them. The student, by reference to the following list, will be able to do so :-

Words used to express the out-workings of the sin nature (E. W. Bullinger)

1. chat'a , to sin ; to miss the mark (as in Judges 20:16). Also of the feet, to stumble and fall (Prov. 19:2). Hence, morally, a coming short , blameworthiness -- not necessarily willful. An act of thought, word, or deed, not a condition. Usually (but by no means always) rendered sin, and other words also so rendered.
2. 'asham , trespass , to sin through error or ignorance. Cp. Lev. 4:13; Lev. 5:2-3. Num. 5:6-7. Judges 21:22. 1Chron. 21:3. 2Chron. 19:10; 2Chron. 28:10; 2Chron. 28:13. 'Asham is a breach of

Words used to express the out-workings of the sin nature (E. W. Bullinger)

- commandment, done in ignorance, but, when the guilt is proved, requiring atonement.
3. 'aven , iniquity, specially connected with idolatry. Used because an idol is nothing and vanity (cp. Hosea 4:15; Hosea 5:8; Hosea 10:5; Hosea 10:8. Amos 5:5, marg.). Hence, 'aven comes to mean vanity (cp. Job 15:35. Psalm 10:7. Prov. 22:8, &c.). The word has many renderings, which are pointed out in the passages when it occurs. 'Aven is rather a course of bad conduct flowing from the evil desires of fallen nature, that breaches of the law as such.
 4. 'avah , perverseness , from the root to be bent , or crooked . English wrong , i.e. wrung out of course, expresses it (cp. 1Sam. 20:30. 2Sam. 19:19. 1Kings 8:47. Job 33:37, &c.).
 5. 'amal , trouble , labor , toil . Sin viewed in the light of the trouble it causes; and of its burden ; and its grievousness (Isa. 10:1. Hab. 1:3). Often rendered perverseness (Num. 23:21), also mischief (Job 15:35).
 6. 'aval , unjust , unfairness, sin in its nature as deceitful , dishonesty, that which is not equal and right, unfairness in dealings. Rendered unjust (Psalm 43:1; Psalm 82:2. Prov. 29:27. Isa. 26:10), unrighteous (Lev. 19:15; Lev. 19:35).
 7. 'abar , to pass beyond, transgress. Hence, transgression (Psalm 17:3. Hosea 6:7; Hosea 8:1).
 8. ra'a' , wicked , injurious . From its root, which indicates its nature as breaking up all that is good or desirable; injurious to all others. In Greek poneros , evil , or kakos , bad . Hence especially of moral depravity and corruption, and lewdness. English "good-for-nothing" (1Sam. 17:28), naughty (2Kings 2:19. Prov. 20:14. Jer. 24:2).
 9. pash'a , revolt , rebellion . Sin against lawful authority. Often rendered transgression (Psalm 51:13. Prov. 28:21. Isa. 43:27). In Prov. 10:12 the action of love or mercy shown stands in strong contrast to this character of the sin.
 10. rasha' , wickedness , in the sense of the restless activity of fallen nature (Job 3:17. Isa. 53:9; Isa. 57:20-21); where it refers to the activity of the impious and ungodly, or robbers.
 11. ma'al , treachery , unfaithfulness , breach of trust , often rendered trespass and transgression. It is used of Achan (Joshua 7:1; Joshua 22:20). Cp. Joshua 22:16. 2Chron. 26:18; 2Chron. 28:22; 2Chron. 33:19. Ezra 9:2; Ezra 9:4. Neh. 13:27, &c.
 12. shagag , erring from imprudence, rashness, being deceived, not willfully; and shagah, erring willfully through passion or wine, hence, to go astray . As sin it is to be distinguished from presumptuous or high-handed sin. Cp. Lev. 4:13. Num. 15:22, &c., with Num. 15:30. Psalm 119:21.
 13. zimmah , meditated , wickedness , plotted, planned, and designed; wicked, or lewd purpose, especially of sins of unchastity.
 14. chasad = shameful. A Homonym , meaning (1) Here, and Job 37:13 (where it is rendered "mercy" in A.V. and R.V.). But "lightning" is not "mercy" but chastisement. (2) The other meaning is mercy , lovingkindness , or grace . See note on Lev. 20:14.
 15. shal , fault , committed inadvertently through negligence.

From E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; from Bullinger's Appendices; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:8.

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Doctrinal Teachers Who Have Taught Psalm 12

	Series	Lesson (s)	Passage
R. B. Thieme, Jr.	1985 Ephesians (412)	#888	Psalm 12:2-4
	1976 Assyrian Crisis (809)	#71-75	Psalm 12:1-8
R. B. Thieme, III	Spiritual Wisdom Series		Psalm 12

Word Cloud from a Reasonably Literal Paraphrase of Psalm 12



Word Cloud from Exegesis of Psalm 12⁴⁴⁴

These two graphics should be very similar; this means that the exegesis of Psalm 12 has stayed on topic and has covered the information found in this chapter of the Word of God.

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⁴⁴⁴ Some words have been left out of this graphic; including *Strong*, *BDB*, and *pronounced*.