

# Psalm 12 • The Use of Words

## Introduction

The theme of speech is frequently visited in both the Psalms and Proverbs as this is ultimate betrayal of one's true spiritual condition:

*"Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man." — Matthew 15:17–20*

Here we are presented with the contrast of man's words versus God's words.

For the choir director; upon an eight-stringed lyre. A Psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup>Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases to be,  
For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.

<sup>2</sup>They speak falsehood to one another;  
With flattering lips and with a double heart they speak.

<sup>3</sup>May the LORD cut off all flattering lips,  
The tongue that speaks great things;

<sup>4</sup>Who have said, "With our tongue we will prevail;  
Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?"

<sup>5</sup>"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."

### [Read v.1-5]

**Q: Who is characterized as "ceases to be" and at risk to "disappear"?**

A: The "godly man" and the "faithful".

**Q: What is being described by these two designations? Aren't they simply names for the same thing?**

A: The Hebrew term for "godly" describes someone in a covenant relationship with God who is loyal to the covenant obligations of God's Word; to be "faithful" is to trust and believe in God's Word to the point of showing a personal assurance of its certainty regardless of the situation. They are the dual aspects of what it means to be obedient by God's standard to produce biblical righteousness, the one knowing His Word, the other trusting it, but both practicing it.

**Q: Why would this be a particularly powerful, yet direct contrast to the issue of man's speech in the following verses?**

A: It's the difference between the working of God's Word versus the working of man's word. The one produces righteousness, the other worldliness.

**Q: What is the first and primary way that man's word operates?**

A: "They speak falsehood to one another" (v.2).

**Q: How does this lying take form?**

A: It is couched in false praise ("flattering lips") to conceal a hidden agenda of deception ("with a double heart").

**Q: What happens to someone when their speech goes unchecked?**

A: They begin to declare themselves independent of God's authority: "we will prevail...who is lord over us?"

**Q: What becomes of the state of the earthly target of man's words in such a case?**

A: "Afflicted" and "needy". Man's words result in material harm to others.

**Q: How can a person put a permanent end to this?**

A: He can't; it takes God's intervention—"I will arise" (v.5). Faith in His Word requires faith in Him to fulfill it.

**Application:** Corruption of the truth leads to deception leading to exploitation where man's words are concerned.

<sup>6</sup>The words of the LORD are pure words;  
As silver tried in a furnace on the earth,  
refined seven times.

<sup>7</sup>You, O LORD, will keep them;  
You will preserve him from this  
generation forever.

<sup>8</sup>The wicked strut about on every side  
When vileness is exalted among the  
sons of men.

**[Read v.6-8]**

**Q: What is the definition of “pure words”?**

A: Whenever we come across the word “pure” in Scripture, just substitute the phrase, “unpolluted by sin”. It is always describing something completely free of the pollutive effects of sin, often called “leaven” or “yeast” in Scripture to describe its multiplying effects once it is allowed residence.

**Q: What is an even greater assurance at work where God’s Word is concerned?**

A: It is not just free of sin, but God “will keep them”—that is, God who cannot lie or break His Word is an even greater Guarantor of His Word.

**Q: How does this fit with His act to “preserve him from this generation forever”?**

A: In the midst of a world operating by sin inducing lies and deception leading to exploitation, it is only by God’s working it is possible produce “the godly man” and “the faithful” in the midst of such wickedness.

**Application:** God’s Word is free from **falsehood** and **deception** as silver which has passed through a furnace so as to be completely free of **impurity**.