

“Help, LORD”

Psalm 12

A Psalm of Deliverance

This is another Psalm of David, with a title similar to that of the sixth Psalm.

This Psalm begins with two of the most important words to a Christian – "Help, LORD." It is these words that bring deliverance from those who seek to destroy us, or to defame us, and from the trials we face in life.

Matthew 8:25

²⁵ And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

Matthew 14:30 [Peter when walking on the water]

³⁰ But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

2 Kings 6:27 [The king of Israel spoke this during a famine]

²⁷ And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress?

This Psalm is not so much one on bodily persecution, but it is one on how words can be oppressive, as well as destructive. It also shows how God's Word is used to destroy the wicked.

This can be seen as a Psalm prophesying what man will be like in the latter days - "Lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4).

As one put it (Dr. Thomas Strouse), this is an asymmetrical Psalm – where the parallel isn't just in the verse itself but is a contrasted parallel in structure. It can be considered this way:

1. Verse eight (8) answers to verse one (1).
2. Verses six and seven (6-7) answer to verses two through four (2-4).
3. Vs. 5 is the dividing line between the parallels and it's a promise of God of deliverance for those that are in need of help.

The word for "help" (עֲשֵׂה) is a common word in the Hebrew (it is part of the words that make up the name "Joshua" – Jehovah-saves) – found 207 times, 165 of which are translated by the word "save" in its various forms. It carries the idea of deliverance – "The underlying idea of this verb is bringing to a place of safety or broad pasture as opposed to a narrow strait, symbolic of distress and danger" (Zodhiates).

I. HELP WHEN SOME FAIL – VS. 1, 8

A. Although the psalmist saw this scenario play out in his day as the godly began to wane, and there were fewer and fewer faithful among the people of Israel, this can also be said of the end of the age in which we find ourselves today. As time progresses, we see fewer and fewer that hold to the faith "once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3).

B. "For the faithful fail from among the children of men" – both then and now, this is because they were not then, and are not now, taught the principles of Scripture in a way that would allow them to grow in their faith as God intended. That burden of failure falls squarely on the shoulders of pastors of the past few generations.

2 Timothy 2:1-2

¹ Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

² And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

C. In verse eight (8), David points out that the wicked are every where ("on every side"). There was no where to go to avoid them. And that is especially true "when the vilest men are exalted." He saw that in his day, and he begins the Psalm with a plea for the LORD to help His faithful people during this time of oppression.

II. HELP WHEN OTHERS FLATTER – VS. 2-4, 6-7

A. Verse two (2), although we are viewing it with the next two, is connected with verse one (it's part of that two-verse strophe). As the godly and faithful fail to hold up the Word of God, they will inevitably begin to speak "vanity" – useless, empty things – rather than the doctrines of the Scriptures.

A dangerous person to deal with, especially in the ministry of the Lord, is one who says one thing to gain favor, perhaps, but either means something quite different, or has an ulterior motive in mind in what he says.

1. "Flattering lips" - שֵׁפֶת חִלְקוֹת – literally, "lips of smoothness."

2. "Double heart"

Albert Barnes makes this note: [A]s 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.

B. Vs. 3 – The second verset of this verse describes what is meant by "flattering lips" – "the tongue that speaketh proud things." The LORD will bring judgment upon those that speak with "flattering lips" and "the tongue that speaketh proud things."

C. Verse four (4) develops the issue of pride further, showing that as those that speak as described in the previous two verses gain strength and popularity (as the godly and faithful fail), they will defy God and say (either directly or indirectly by their actions) that they don't fear God, and if He exists, He has no right nor authority over what they say.

This describes people today – even those in the church – and they will become more prominent as the end of this age approaches.

2 Timothy 3:1-7

¹ This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

³ Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

⁴ Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

⁶ For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

⁷ Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

D. Verse six (6) contrasts the words of the LORD with the words of those in verses two through four (2-4). Their words are vile, are proud, are lies – His words are pure as pure can be, with no mixture of anything that could defile.

“Their words were vanity, flattery, and falsehood; and no reliance could be placed on them. In contrast with these words, the words of the Lord were pure. They were to be relied on. All his sayings were true and faithful. 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.” (Barnes)

By application, this is speaking of the entirety of the written Word of God.

Psalm 18:30

³⁰ As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.

Psalm 19:8

⁸ The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

Psalm 119:140

¹⁴⁰ Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

Proverbs 30:5

⁵ Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

E. Verse seven (7) continues with the aspect of words and even though there are those that say the "them" in this verse is not speaking of "the words of the LORD" of verse six, in basic grammar it really cannot be speaking to anything else. There is a grammatical reason why they say it speaks to the "poor" of verse five (the pronomial ending for "them" is masculine while the word for "poor" is feminine) but that grammatical reason does not hold true everywhere in Scripture and is not an absolute rule of Hebrew grammar and syntax either.

The classic Hebrew Grammar book Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar states the following regarding "gender discordance" so called in the Hebrew text.

"Through a weakening in the distinction of gender, which is noticeable elsewhere and which probably passed from the colloquial language into that of literature, masculine suffixes (especially in the plural) are not infrequently used to refer to feminine substantives." (Kautzsch, 440)

F. The second "them" is uniquely speaking to the words David was penning for this Psalm, seen in the phrase "from this generation." However, as is the case throughout the Bible, the entirety of the whole (here, the whole Word of God) is encompassed, and is preserved "for ever."

III. HELP WHEN WE FEAR – VS. 5

A. As the dividing line of the psalm, this verse stands as one of declaration and deliverance.

B. There is help for those who have no other source of help but the LORD. Of course, that is true of every child of God of every age – without Him and His protection and His deliverance, the enemy would destroy us without hesitation.

Conclusion: When we realize the wicked are everywhere, even our friends, then we will be more able to fight him. As the Devil roams this earth, seeking those most capable and vulnerable to attack we need to be able to thwart him with the one weapon he fears - God's Word.

In spiritual warfare as in physical warfare, the effectiveness of

any weapon is directly proportionate to the efficiency of the one operating it. For this reason, during a late, great war, the U.S. Army assigned a new recruit one rifle which he kept throughout his training. It was called his "piece," and it became a part of him. The recruit handled the piece continually, disassembling and reassembling it. He cleaned it. He conducted basic maintenance. He carried it 12 hours a day. When crossing rivers or streams his head might have gotten wet, but his piece had to stay dry.

Six months later in the heat of battle, the soldier knew every inch of it—every mechanism. He understood things that could malfunction and how to remedy them. He could break it down and reassemble it in just seconds, blindfolded. Man and weapon had become a synchronized and deadly, efficient fighting machine.

The spiritual warrior's proficiency with his basic weapons should be no less remarkable. But quite sadly, if believers had to rely on their own Bible familiarity in life and death situations, the majority would helplessly perish.