



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Book of Psalms

## Psalm 12

Bishop Youssef



# Introduction

- The title of this psalm reads, *To the Chief Musician. On an eight-stringed harp. A Psalm of David*
- The title is simply stating the audience, the instrument, and the author of the psalm
- In this Psalm David complains about the malicious words of his adversaries, and in contrast praises the pure and precious word of God
- The Arabic has "Concerning the end (of the world which shall happen) on the eighth day
- A prophecy linked to the Coming of the Messiah



# Introduction

- The Psalm is a lament over the discouragement of men
- Why it was composed, and the occasion is unknown, and there is nothing in the psalm itself to enable us to decide
- Some think that this Psalm was made when Doeg and the Ziphites betrayed David to Saul, see 1 Samuel 22 and 23
- This Psalm is number 11 in Agpeya and it is prayed at the First Hour (Prime)





# Introduction

## Psalm Outline

- A Cry for Help 12:1
- Falsehood Prevails 12:2
- A Plea for God to Judge Those Who Speak Wickedly 12:3-5
- The Pure Word of God 12:6-7
- Safety in the Midst of Difficulties 12:8



# A Cry for Help 12:1

- As it was mentioned in the introduction, the exact circumstances under which David wrote this psalm are unknown, and it could have been during many different periods in his life
- The Psalmist laments the decrease of good faithful men
- *Help, Lord*, A short but expressive, fitting, and useful prayer
- A decline of godly men should be a call for more prayer
- When godliness leaves and disappear, faithfulness inevitably follows
- Without the fear of God, men have no love of truth
- He sees the extreme danger of his position



# A Cry for Help 12:1

- David was a warrior and a great soldier, but we see here that he also had to deal with the battles of gossip and the unkind remarks of dishonest and deceitful 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 slanderers surrounding him





# Falsehood Prevails 12:2

- Instead of the *godly man*, David saw around him those who spoke with unfounded empty talk, *they speak idly everyone with his neighbor*, and who were two-faced liars, *flattering lips...a double heart*
- *speak idly*, Hypocrisy, hollow and unreal
- They speak that which is false and a lie, either doctrinal or practical; what was not according to the word of God, and was vain and empty, shallow, and corrupt; and which no godly and faithful man would do
- The core meaning of *flattering lips* is that they *say what people want to hear*



# Falsehood Prevails 12:2

- They speak as if they had two hearts
- The one urging them to hate their neighbor and make plans against David
- And the other incite them to pretend a friendship for him
- So, they speak from a kind and upright heart, when they really have another, even a cruel and deceitful heart
- There are many such talkers today
- Those who know the *right* answer for every occasion but speak with no honesty or transparency of heart
- They constantly speak what people hope to hear





# A Plea for God to Judge Those Who Speak Wickedly 12:3-5

- David felt somewhat helpless against these destructive talkers
- He found his refuge in the Lord, to whom he appealed to *cut off...the tongue that speaks proud things*
- It might be also a statement designed for warning, that all such persons would be punished
- David despised these destructive tongues, not only for what they said, but also for the pride that made them so difficult to stop
- St. James reminds us that, *"If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless."*
- It is a very dangerous thing to have a tongue that is not controlled by the Holy Spirit



# A Plea for God to Judge Those Who Speak Wickedly 12:3-5

- The tongue is a gift but if we misuse it, it becomes fire and can “*defiles the whole body*” (James 3:6)
- Whatever we desire we can accomplish through our tongues - by persuasion, or by threats, or by skill in argument
- *we will prevail*, By raising and spreading insults and offences and evil gossip concerning him by which Saul will be highly and cold-heartedly enraged against David
- And the hearts of the people turn away from him; which was indeed a very likely way to prevail against, him, and that by their tongues only



# A Plea for God to Judge Those Who Speak Wickedly 12:3-5

- St. Augustine comments on this verse by saying, “Proud hypocrites are meant, putting confidence in their speech to deceive men, and not submitting themselves to God.”
- *Who is lord over us?* Who can control or restrain us?
- Who can interfere with us and hinder our action?
- They do not believe in any righteous Judge and Controller of the world, who can step in to disturb their plans, and ruin their purposes
- Many think, because they have the ability of speaking, that therefore they may speak what they please





# A Plea for God to Judge Those Who Speak Wickedly 12:3-5

- St. John Chrysostom says, “Who is our master? O, what a diabolical remark! O, what a demonic spirit! Do you see, human being that you are, all of nature proclaiming your Lord’s strength, wisdom, care, providence, while your body, your soul, your life, all things visible and invisible are but crying out, raising their voice and trumpeting the Lord’s power, and you say Who is our master? This is a mark of madness, of frenzy, this is the sign of a corrupt spirit.”
- *For the oppression of the poor*, The ungodly having been threatened, a promise of assistance is made to the righteous whom they oppress



# A Plea for God to Judge Those Who Speak Wickedly 12:3-5

- The Lord announced that He would act on behalf of the *poor* and *needy* victimized by these proud, unstoppable talkers
- In due season the Lord will hear the ones who cry day and night unto Him
- Nothing moves a father like the cries of his children
- The Lord is longsuffering to those who are living in sin
- We also know that He listens and hears the prayers of His own
- *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 proud talkers



# The Pure Word of God 12:6-7

- In contrast to the idle, two-faced, lying, and proud lips of David's adversaries, God's words are *pure*, as if they were fine *silver...purified seven times*
- The Lord's perfect words present a most radical contrast with the wicked words of proud sinners
- The purity of God's Person assures the purity of His promises
- Men often speak rashly, and promise what they cannot do, and deceitfully, what they never intend to do
- But God's words are different; they are *like silver*
- Silver that is passed through fire seven times when the greatest possible purity is desired





# The Pure Word of God 12:6-7

- The excess is consumed, and only the bright, precious metal remains
- In the same way, God's words are free from all error and unfaithfulness; His words are completely and perfectly pure
- *You shall keep them*, God having promised to set the righteous, who are oppressed, in a place of safety (verse 5), the psalmist is sure that He will keep them and preserve them from the wicked *generation* which has possession of the earth
- There will always be a generation of proud and wicked men as long as the world exists, but God will secure His people no matter how bad the times are

# Safety in the Midst of Difficulties 12:8



- 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
- 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
- We might feel that this psalm ends on a sad note

# Safety in the Midst of Difficulties 12:8



- But David 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*
- 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





# Discussion

- What is flattery?
- What will God do to the tongue that speaks flattery?
- What is the other sin that is condemned in this Psalm?
- How do the wicked convey their flattery and their lies among us?



# Discussion

- What does this Psalm teach us?
- How do we apply this Psalm?
- How does this Psalm teach us to worship God?
- Why is this Psalm so appropriate for our day?