

12 | PSALM 12

THE POWER OF PRAYER & THE WORD

God has provided the only sufficient help for God's people in the Bible

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Call to Worship: *Psalm 19:8-10*, “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; 9the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. 10More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.”

Announcements

1. Welcome visitors!
2. Welcome to new deacon: Eddie Garcia. Unanimous vote.
3. Parking lot lighting repair: thank you for giving. We’ve raised \$6300 out of \$10K. Need \$3700 more.
4. Two new Sunday school classes: Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Auditorium (with Jerry Soen) and the Attributes of God in the Youth Room downstairs (with Pastor Mike Tiberi).
5. Mandatory VBS Meeting today for all volunteers. Also need 20 paper egg cartons for crafts.

Introduction

Open your Bible if you will to Psalm 12. The title of our message is “The Power of Prayer and the Word.”

The great architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, was given the challenge of building the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, one of the most earthquake-prone cities in the world. Wright’s investigation showed that a solid foundation could be “floated” on a sixty-foot layer of soft mud underlying the hotel, which would provide a shock-absorbing, but solid support for the immense building. Shortly after the hotel was completed it withstood the worst earthquake in fifty-two years, while lesser buildings fell in ruins around it.¹

What kind of a foundation do you have when everything starts falling apart around you? David had a two-fold foundation of solid rock: prayer and the Word of God.

Scripture Reading

Let’s stand and read Psalm 12:1-8,

12:1-8 | Save, O Lord, for the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man. ²Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak. ³May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts, ⁴those 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.” ⁶The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times. ⁷You, O Lord, will keep them; you will

¹ *Today in the Word*, March 1989, p. 6

guard us from this generation forever. ⁸On every side the wicked prowls, as
vileness is exalted among the children of man.

This is God's Word.

A Machete and a Gun

When I was a kid growing up in Louisiana, every 12-year-old had a machete and a gun. We either had a 410 shotgun or a 22 rifle. That was for hunting squirrel. We also had a machete for cutting down pine trees. One of our favorite things was to build us a little log cabin. We loved to do that. We were protected and we prepared. We could eat and we could build.

The Christian has some spiritual weaponry and tools. God has given us to amazing ways of protection and nourishment: Prayer and the Word. King David constantly needed these two wonderful tools to grow in his walk with God and live a transformed life in this wicked world. Can I ask you: don't you want a better, closer **prayer** life? Don't you want to grow in your communion with God through the **Word**? Then this message this morning is for you.

Hostile World

This Psalm reminds us that we live in a very hostile world. We need weapons to protect us and tools to grow us. This world is the domain of the wicked one where our accuser and enemy is the prince of the power of the air. He had blinded the eyes of all the lost, who do not believe the Gospel.

This world system is diabolically opposed to Christ. They crucified and hated him, and they will hate all who follow him. Sometimes we feel so vulnerable, alone, and unprotected. This Psalm is a reminder that you are not alone and that you have the greatest protection available. Help is available.

David felt this hostility toward him. What does God have available for us when we feel alone and attacked in this world? He's got so many different ways to empower and equip us. Theologians call these things: the means of grace.

We see the first means of grace in verse 1: **Prayer**. The second means of grace is in verse 6: **the Word of God**.

How do we access God's power? We access his power through prayer and the Word.

1. THE POWER OF PRAYER (12:1-5).

PRAYER IS FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD (1)

David looks around, and he sees no one who truly loves the Lord in the leadership of Israel. It would seem he is alone, but instead of despairing, he prays. What a great prayer, "Save" or literally "Help!" That's a great prayer to pray.

The Godly are Never Alone

Prayer is powerful because it is union and communion with the Almighty! Even if you feel all alone, you are never alone. God is with you. Listen to David as he brings his plea to God.

12:1 | Save, O Lord, for the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man.

Even if it seems all the godly have vanished, God is with the child of God in prayer. You are never alone. The **faithful** may seem to have vanished, but the faithful God will “never leave nor forsake you” (Heb 13:5). Come boldly before him. Communion with God is the primary mark of the genuine Christian. Though company on earth seems dark and despairing, God is with David, and God is with you. Isn’t it true? “In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psa 16:11). Jesus said as he left this world, “Be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Mt 28:20, NLT).

Fellowship with God comes First

When you cannot find fellowship on earth, it is because God wants you to find it first with him in prayer. You see God’s providence. David would soon be king, but at this time in his life, he is young and on the run with King Saul chasing after him. He’s despairing and cannot find godly fellowship. It seems like all “the faithful have vanished from among the children of man” (12:1).

Fellowship is a Priority for the Believer

Godly fellowship was a priority for David, and it ought to be a priority for you. I’m so thankful to hear when families look for a church before they accept a job somewhere. We had a family leave us recently and move to Nebraska. Before they would ever accept a job, they made sure there was a Bible believing church to attend. That ought to be our priority.

Sometimes though, we feel the enemies’ soldiers increasing, and we can feel so alone. That’s why it’s so important to walk with God, fellowshiping in prayer. Prayer is fellowship with God. That’s why we are called to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17).

A Challenge to Pray

I want to challenge our church to a season of prayer. You are not going to see a significant increase in your spiritual growth without prayer. You need to fast and pray. Start with one meal, and instead of eating, fast and pray for your spiritual growth. God will start changing you in ways you might not have thought possible. Walking with God, fellowshiping with him in prayer will change you. Prayer is fellowship.

PRAYER FIGHTS AGAINST EVIL (2)

Prayer is powerful because it effectively fights against evil. We sometimes try to take things into our own hands and are very ineffective. But taking things to God is always effective.

The Battle is Spiritual

Look at David’s fight. He feels the ugly words of the wicked. But he does not fight fire with fire. He realizes that this very physical battle is a spiritual battle. He brings these sins of his culture and society to God. God is the one who wins the battle against evil.

12:2 | Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.

Look at what David is facing: lies, smooth, flattering lips, and a double heart. This was written long before we used the term “fake news”, but there was plenty of fake news in his day. Who can you trust? How do you fight against this? David doesn’t respond with an ancient Twitter feed. He instead goes directly to God. He realizes that the battle is the Lords.

Our battle is spiritual. Paul says in Ephesians 6: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12).

Many of the sins mentioned here in Psalm 12, such as lying, flattering, deceiving, boasting, and maligning, are sins of the tongue (*cf* Jer 9:1-9), and the main emphasis of the psalm is on the contrast between human falseness and divine truth.² How do I keep my mind unmired from all the lies? David’s answer: prayer.

A Challenge to Fight through Prayer

Have you put on the whole armor of God today? To put it another way, are you walking in the Spirit? You are not ready for the day if you are not ready to engage in spiritual warfare. How can you fight? Bring evil to God. It may be evil inside of you. It may be evil outside of you. Bring it to God.

PRAYER FOCUSES ON GOD’S JUSTICE (3-4)

Prayer is powerful because it focuses on God’s justice. We pray, “Thy kingdom come thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt 6:10). Have you noticed God’s will is not being done on earth these days? David notices. And instead of being brought down by this world, he brings his burdens to the Lord and is lifted up to a day when God’s kingdom will reign on earth. We need to pray this way.

12:3-4 | May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts, ⁴those who say, “With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us; who is master over us?”

David feels the same way about the terrible injustices going on. Remember he’s being hunted by King Saul. Everything is out of order. It feels that way in our time and in our day. Instead of putting all this upon his own shoulders with either anxiety or anger, he brings it to God. Do you know God has big shoulders?

Flattering Lips!

Listen to David’s prayer. People are **boasting** that they can do what they want, and no one is master over them. They are using flattering or smooth words to cover up the injustices they are committing. They are no longer calling sin what it is: sin! But they call sin “progress” and “forward thinking”. David sees the lying. He feels the injustice all around him. This breaks David’s heart. It also makes him angry. He doesn’t lose his cool or give up in despair, but instead he **waits** on God’s justice in prayer! Hear his shocking prayer.

² Geoffrey W. Grogan. *Psalms*, The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Kindle Edition, 2008), Psalm 12, intro.

A Day of Justice in Language

Prayer is so powerful. David doesn't panic. He trusts in God through prayer. Prayer is his secret weapon. He hears God's voice: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psa 46:10), and he goes right to praying! What do you do when fear and doubts assault you? Christian, you are not allowed for one moment to fear. Put off fear and put on faith. The easiest way to do that is to pray.

Because of David's prayer life, his vision is lifted up towards God's final kingdom, when God shall "cut off all flattering lips" (11:3a). What does that mean? These are lies. The wicked paint their sins against society as wonderful, progressive innovations, but they are nothing but lies and smooth talking – flattering lips. We live in a day when God's name and his people are attacked through **flattering lips** of so-called tolerance, and everything is tolerated except the people and the name of Jesus. We are tempted to either isolate ourselves or disengage from society. David doesn't do that. He brings his burdens to the Lord.

There are horrible things going on in society that need to be overturned. Our society has legalized **child-murder**. It seems like there is no accountability. Take it to God in prayer. Our society is falling apart. Don't panic. Take it to God in prayer. You have no power in yourself. Go to the God with all power.

As David prays, he **envisions a day** when those who "make great boasts" about themselves and blaspheme the glorious name of God **are stopped**. The words of the wicked that David hates are great blasphemies. The words of lost people focus on a life without God and his Word, and they grate on the heart of the believer. They are at their root "great boasts" that blaspheme God. The lost of David's time direct their vain and empty words of their lives defiantly towards heaven.

A Day of Justice in Lordship

The injustices are happening because everyone has thrown the yoke of Christ's Lordship off of them. Listen to the question they ask: "Who is master over us?" (11:4). Does that sound familiar? We hear it every day. It's just like Psalm 2:2-3, "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, 3"Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." They don't want Christ's Lordship over them.

The Day of Christ

David implores the Lord to cut off the tongue that "makes great boasts" (11:3; cf Jas 3:5). Don't you long for the day when the LORD's name is revered? There will be a day when all will bow at the exalted name of Jesus. I can't wait for that day when, "at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil 2:9-11). Until that time, there is a constant assault against the name of Jesus and the name of God.

How can we love those who oppose God while still loving righteousness? It takes a deep **prayer life**. We need to go to God with our desire for justice, but ask God for a calm and loving heart toward those who oppose him. We cannot be an impatient or impulsive people. Prayer makes the child of God patient and calm and loving toward the world. **We can hate the great blasphemies and lawless living without becoming unhinged.** The only way that we can be assured of God's justice is through a deep prayer

life. We are called to reach the lost. And remember: “Such were some of you” (1 Cor 6:11). You were once a blasphemer. You once loved injustice and called it progress. It’s like the hold hymn: “*Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now ‘am found, was blind but now I see.*”

Prayer will Make you Patient

Listen God will one day bring justice, and we should pray for it, but let’s be patient as well. God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9).

We live in a microwave society when we want everything so quickly. He’s rightly angry, but he does not take matter into his own hands. He has to **wait** on the Lord.

What does David want? Bluntly, David wants the LORD to come in judgment and destroy the flatterers.³ If you look at the life of David, most of the time he doesn’t take matters into his own hands. “Vengeance is mine says the Lord, I will repay” (Rom 12:19). David waits on the Lord during King Saul’s reign, but later on with Bathsheba and Uriah, he takes matters into his own hands and makes a disaster of everything.

Wait on the Lord saint. Whatever trial, whatever pressure filled situation you are enduring, God has a purpose for it. When David was offended, he took it to the Lord.

Prayer forces us to wait on God’s timing. We must never get ahead of the Lord.

Gospel Justice

Of course the ultimate hope for justice for the Christian is for God to demonstrate Gospel justice to the sinner by laying all our blasphemies and all our boasts against Christ’s lordship on Christ himself.

PRAYER ALWAYS FINDS AN ANSWER IN GOD’S TIME (5)

Sometimes the trials of life seem unbearable. We groan to God and wonder if he hears. Of course, God hears. His ears hear and his eyelids try the children of men. He hears, but he will answer in his own time. It may not be your time, but you will get an answer. Be sure of this: that answer will be in God’s time, not yours.

12:5 | “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.”

God promises to **arise** and answer prayer. He hears your prayers. He says in Revelation that he keeps all your tears in his bottle. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy” (Psa 126:5).

God’s timing is perfect. David’s day points to an even greater day, when the Almighty King Jesus says, “I will arise... I will place my saint in the safety for which they long.” Don’t you long for Jesus to give you safety. It will in God’s way and time.

Jesus Will Arise on the Mount of Olives

But ultimate safety will arrive with the clouds split and Jesus descends in power and glory to the earth. He will split the Mount of Olives and enter the Eastern Gate of

³ Donald Williams and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Psalms 1–72*, vol. 13, The Preacher’s Commentary Series (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1986), 109.

Jerusalem. And I say, Arise O Lord! Come quickly Lord Jesus. The ultimate answer to prayer is the second coming.

When God comes to deliver His people, He will “cut off” those who practice flattery and deception (11:3), which means separation from the covenant community (Gen 17:14), like the separation of the goats from the sheep (Mt 25:31–33).⁴

Applications on Prayer

1. Prayer is about **fellowship**. Fellowship with God every day. We all feel like pilgrims and strangers in the earth. Commune with God.

2. Prayer is about **fighting**. In prayer we call on God to do the fighting. If you want to fight in your marriage or on your job, then fight on your knees!

3. Wait on God’s **justice**. Prayer allows us to have a meek and gentle spirit in the midst of great chaos. “Be still and know that I am God.” If you lack self-control, you are not a person of believing prayer.

4. Wait on God’s **timing**. God will arise. When we pray, God says, we can remove mountains. But God decides when the mountain moves, not us. Wait on God’s timing.

Transition: Prayer is just one of the spiritual weapons at our disposal. David mentions another one, which the New Testament calls the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. God’s Word is powerful.

2. THE POWER OF THE WORD (12:6-8).

IT’S SANCTIFYING (6)

When God says, “I will arise” -he’s not making an arbitrary statement. God will keep his Word. It’s **pure** and sincere. Every Word of God is true. This Bible is dependable. His Word is so dependable, it’s compared to perfectly tried silver. Every word will come to pass.

12:6 | The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.

God’s Word is **cleansing**. That’s what Jesus said, “Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you” (Jn 15:3). “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (Jn 17:17).

God’s Word can **convert your heart**. “[Y]ou have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Pet 1:23).

God’s Word **will keep us from sin**. “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Psa 119:11).

Do you Bathe Every Day?

Can I ask you a question? Do you bathe everyday? I hope so. You need to let God’s Word wash you everyday. We went camping this weekend. There were no showers. On

⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Worshipful*, 1st ed., “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004), 54.

day two, we all stunk but we didn't know it. The moment I got home, my little daughter Ava said, "Daddy you smell funny!" I didn't know it because I needed a shower.

Sometimes you don't know that you smell bad spiritually until you get into the Word.

We need to pray Psalm 139:23-24,

"Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me,

and lead me in the way everlasting!"

God's Word is sanctifying!

IT'S SUFFICIENT (7A)

God promises to keep his children protected and empowered by the sufficient Word of God.

12:7a | You, O Lord, will keep them;

The implication is that God will keep us by his Word. The Spirit applies the Word. If you want a life and a walk of holiness, you've got to be in God's Word continually. That's how God keeps you in the walk of holiness.

God's Word is **powerful** to keep you close to the Lord. "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12).

Campout Locked In

Friday night Joaquim and Oliver and Elion joined us for the campout but they were not planning on staying the night. They stayed till midnight, but were locked in! But not to worry, we had an extra tent, bedding, air-mattress and everything.

God's Word has everything you need. In Christ you have "every spiritual blessing" (Eph 1:3). In Christ you have everything you need "for life and godliness" (2 Pet 1:3-4).

It's Sufficient to Guide You

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psa 119:105).

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16).

"So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (Isa 55:11).

It's Sufficient to Feed You

Job and Jesus agree. Said Job: "I have not departed from his commands, but have treasured his words more than daily food" (Job 23:12).

Peter said, "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation" (1 Pet 2:2).

When a person is born again, God performs a nature change. We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:10). We become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4), and as a result we begin to "hunger and thirst after righteousness"

(Mt 5:6). That appetite is fueled by hope in God's Word. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Mt 4:4, cf Deut 8:3).

You want to be fed and satisfied? Feed on God's Word!

IT'S STABILIZING (7B)

As you feed on the pure Word of God, it will stabilize you and establish you. God promises to guard us "from this generation forever." Long after the fads and worldly things have faded from view, the promises of God's Word will still be active in the lives of the believer. We endure because his promises endure to us.

12:7b | ...you will guard us from this generation forever.

The Lord establishes those who trust in his Word forever. Jesus tells the story of the wise man who built his **house upon the rock**. And he had a neighbor who build a very similar house, but it was on the sand. Both houses looked stable. But catastrophe was about to happen to one of them. Listen to the words of Jesus.

MT 7:24-27 | Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

If you want a life of stability, build your life on the pure Word of God, the words of Jesus. The passing fads of this world come and go, but if you want a legacy, follow the Word of God. Everything else that promises stability is a lie.

- **Drink** will promise you comfort but make you miserable.
- **Money** promises you everything, but only makes you want more.
- **Relationships** promise you intimacy, but the only one that really knows you and loves you is God.

God is who you need, and the place you meet him is in his Word. He reveals himself in his **Word**. Nothing else will stabilize you. You the stability that comes from being perfectly loved, infinitely comforted, and filled with unlimited joy, then you

IT'S SPURNED (8)

Now listen, God's Word is also spurned. The lost are not only in the world but they are also in the church. David knew this. He was in Israel, among God's chosen people, but he says that the wicked are "on every side". The lost are everywhere. Even in the church. And they hate the Word and those who love the Word. If you love Jesus, prepare to be despised and hated and even hunted by the world. Listen to how David describes how he is hunted.

12:8 | On every side the wicked prowl, as vileness is exalted among the children of man.

The word “prowl” holds a couple of ideas: one is hunting and the other is strutting. So there is this deep pride in the wicked strutting about, on the prowl, hunting down the godly. Doesn't this remind you of another one who is on the prowl, “seeking whom he may devour”? It's our enemy, our adversary, the devil.

There are times when we as Christians have such influence, salt and light, with the world, that we can at times slow down the opposition, but it is always there.

The lost in the world hate the Word of God. They don't want to be bound by the Lordship of Jesus. But the child of God “delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night” (Psa 1:2).

The lost **exalt** the vile and trivial things. But we exalt Jesus. The Word of God and the child of God is rightly opposed by this world. The book of Revelation rightly characterizes this world and its government as a beast, like those who tore up Christians in the Roman Colosseum. This world exalts that which is vile, and it will always oppose the Word of God. What are we to do when we are hunted on every side? We do what David did! Trust in the Lord! He's so much greater than anything you or I are facing. You will find him in **prayer** and in the **Word**. That's where the Lord is found. But he's only found by those who have a sincere humble heart.

Conclusion: Hurricane Barry

I got a call from my twin sister Tammie last night near New Orleans, Louisiana. She said Hurricane Barry had been downgraded from a Hurricane to a tropical storm. You remember the last major storm that came through there she lost her house, and some of you in our congregation helped her rebuild it!

My sister called me to rejoice in the power of prayer and of God's Word. I'm so glad God saved her and gave her a love for his Word. The Word has been the **sword** by her side. She had fought every battle with it. And she told me they had been praying that the storm would bypass their house. Do you believe God controls the weather? She sent me a satellite photo and there's a great big hole in the storm resting right over her neighborhood. Now God doesn't always answer our prayers that way, but he has the power to do that.

Now hurricanes have power. They can wipe an entire city off the map. It almost did that to New Orleans in 2002.

But I want you to know that God's power is infinitely greater than hurricanes and storms. Trust in God's Word and prayer, and you will be firmly established! Hurricanes can displace whole populations, but the child of God that puts his whole trust in the Lord will never be shaken or moved!