

O Lord God, our Father and our
Lord in heaven, the light shines in the darkness and the darkness
has not overcome it or comprehended it. May that not be our case
this evening. O Lord God, cause your word to
shine into our hearts. The law of the Lord is perfect.
It restores the soul. The testimony of the Lord is
sure. makes wise the simple, the precepts of the Lord are
right, rejoicing the heart, the judgments of the Lord are clean,
they are righteous forevermore, more to be desirable are they
than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey,
and the drippings of the honeycomb. And so we pray this evening,
O God, that you would draw near by your word and fill us up with
your truth that we might have an anchor, that we might have
hope in the midst of a hopeless world, we might have light in
the midst of a dark world, and that we might have strength,
O God, in the midst of a hostile world to stand firm against the
forces of darkness that are arrayed against us. You might seek first
your kingdom and your righteousness, O Lord God, and that our homes
will be full of love and full of truth. You will remember your
covenant to our children and to our grandchildren, O Lord.
You will keep us kept, our Father, or we shall not be kept at all.
We offer these prayers, O Lord, in Jesus' name, that thine might
be the glory in this place and that your name would be hallowed
here till the day breaks and the shadows flee away. We offer
these prayers in Jesus' name, amen. If you would, please turn
with me in your copy of the word of God to the book of Psalms
and the 12th Psalm. Please listen carefully, this
is the word of God and with what measure you use, it'll be measured
back to you. To him who has, more will be
given. He who does not have, even what he does have, will
be taken away. Let him who has ears to hear what the Spirit
says to the churches. To the choir master, according
to the Shemaneath, a Psalm of David, save, O Lord, for the
godly one is gone. For the faithful have vanished
from among the children of man. Everyone utters lies to his neighbor. With
flattering lips and a double
heart they speak. May the Lord cut off all flattering
lips, the tongue that makes great boasts. Those who say, with our
tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us. Who is master? Who
is lord over us? 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. "'The words of the Lord are pure
words, "'like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, "'purified
seven times. "'You, O Lord, will keep them. "'You will guard us from this
generation forever. On every side, the wicked prowls,
as vileness is exalted among the children of man. Amen, the grass withers and the
flower falls off, but the word of God endures forever. Well, if ever there was a
Psalm
for our day and our age, it's the 12th Psalm. Signs of moral,

social, sexual, spiritual decay abound on all sides. In our day and in the day of David in this Psalter, he's grieved that the godly one is gone and the faithful have vanished. The godly are decreasing and the wicked are flourishing. As you read this psalter, you'll see that again and again and again is situation normal in a fallen world. It'll be like that to the end of the age. William Plummer. One of the great commentators on the Psalms said, it's no new thing for the church to be small, but the strength of the church consists not in the number of her visible members, but in the almightiness of her head. Remember that as we work through this psalm together. So the psalmist is in great distress because the righteous are dying out and the wicked are rising up. These two thoughts bookend the psalm. We've seen it there in verse one and you see it again at the very end of the psalm. On every side the wicked prowl as vileness is exalted among the sons of men or the children of man. And the psalm ends on that note because that seems to be the situation, notwithstanding in the middle of the psalm, he'll have a lot to say about God, God's throne and God's judgment and God's word. Yet all of that's an invisible reality he's laying hold of by faith. The psalm ends as it begins, with the wicked on the upsurge, as it were. And the truth of the psalm, just like the truth of all of the psalms, is a truth you need to lay hold of by faith. You have to hold on to it day after day, and week after week, and year after year, and decade after decade. before you ever get to see it in reality, when the man comes around at the end of time and makes all things new and rights every wrong and wipes the wicked off the earth like one who wipes a plate at the end of a meal. But the fact that the wicked are flourishing and the righteous are vanishing is a burden to the psalmist. And that itself is a searching thought. Is it a burden to you? Are you burdened that the righteous are dying out? We've got to check ourselves. We live in a world of great political acrimony. And it's very easy to be upset that our particular political party is not doing as well as we might like. that conservatism or liberalism, depending on your taste, is up against it. And to be driven more by the concerns of inflation and a struggling economy and the sense that the old America's passed away. And that's a thing that should concern us, I suppose, but is it the thing that concerns you most of all? Are you most concerned for America, or are you most concerned for the people of God and the church? Those are two separate concerns. And while they intersect and interconnect, we need to separate them in our mind and identify what is our chief concern. Which body, as it were, our country or our church, has our highest allegiance and commands our chiefest concerns? He describes the godly in two

terms. Verse one, the godly and the faithful. The word godly in the Hebrew is chasid, from which you might know the Hasidic Jews. And it's a term based upon chesed. It's a wonderful Old Testament word that describes God's covenant love, God's stubborn, faithful determination to be good to you, to be kind to you, no matter what you deserve and no matter what it costs him. He will send his own son to hell in order that he might fulfill his chesed love to you. And so in that sense, it can be the pouring out of God's chesed love. upon the people of God. But it can also be used to describe the echo of that love back to God and out to others. God's people are never a dead end to love. When they are loved, they become loving. They love God and they walk faithfully with their God. And that's the idea there of the godly ones, the chesedim. They live in loyalty to God, they love God. And then the word faithful is the word amenim in the Hebrew, which you might recognize comes from the word amen. And again, it can speak of God, his amen-like character, that God is faithful. God has never had one unfaithful thought, and God has never done one unfaithful thing. He's true to himself. and true to his promises, to his word, to his covenant, and true to his people through time and eternity, forever and ever and ever. But it can also be described as the echo of that faithfulness back to God. We don't just love God, but we love truth. And by his grace to us, we walk in faithfulness to him. So these are men who love God, you might say, and they love truth. Does that describe you? Jesus' words to Peter are always searching, aren't they? Three times Peter denied Jesus. And the Christ who said, I'm Peter, comes to Jesus, go tell my disciples, I'm Peter, remember last Sunday morning? He also comes to Peter and three times asks him, Peter, do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? It's a wonderful thing with Peter when we can appeal not to our own hearts because often they will condemn us and we can appeal to the searching, omniscient mind of the Lord Jesus Christ, and say, Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you. Not as I wish I did, but you know, Lord, that you love me first, and in my heart, there's an echo, dim and faint, of that love back to you again. These are people who are full of a love for God and a love for truth, and of course, the, The fullness of that is seen in Christ. As John says, He is full of grace, which is another way of speaking of chesed, and He's full of truth, our beautiful Savior. Well, in the psalm, the people of Christ are dying out, and the enemies of God are flourishing. How are you to respond in such a time? That's an earnest question. It's

not a theoretical question. I could teach you this evening, perhaps, how to put in a chest drain, which is a tube you put into the chest to relieve pressure, or a pneumothorax, or hemothorax, when there's blood or trouble in the chest that's impeding your breathing. And you might listen to that with some level of interest if you're a guy, and a lot of level of gruesomeness if you're a girl. But if you knew that tomorrow there'd be a mass casualty event in our fair city, and friends of yours and family members of yours would be lying on the ground with a tension pneumothorax, unable to breathe, and that you had to put in a chest drain, you'd be doing it. You'd be counting down the number of ribs and finding the exact spot to put it in, to miss the liver on the right-hand side and so forth, and how to put that chest drain in. You would listen with all together An altogether different level of earnestness, would you, if you knew that you were going to have to do this procedure tomorrow? And not only would you listen with more earnestness, but I would teach you with more earnestness. Well, this psalm this evening is a psalm that you and I need for we live in the midst of just such a culture. And if you don't get your head on straight and you don't get your feet up under you, you will be swept away like the rip currents at the sea when you're standing there and you suddenly feel the sand being sucked between your toes and you find yourself out of your depth and you're terrified. And in that moment, you better know what to do. You don't swim back to the shore. You swim parallel to the rip current. And then when you've escaped it, you get back into the shore. So how do you escape the rip current of a culture, as Ralph Davis says, when the spin doctors seem to be winning and the righteous seem to be losing? Well, there's two things this evening. First of all, get to the root of the problem and get to the throne of your God. First of all, get to the root of the problem. There are two reasons why this is going on and the psalmist is unpacking it for us. First of all, truth is trashed and vileness is valued. That's the root problem of a culture gone to hell. They trash truth and they value vileness. First of all, they trash truth In the place of the vanishing godly, another breed of men rise up to take their place, and as is always the case with human beings, their words tell the story of their hearts. Our mouth is the exhaust pipe of our heart. Jesus says, out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth what is evil. And in the day of judgment, Jesus says, we'll give an account for every careless word that we say. Why? Because our words tell the story of our hearts. It's Paul in Romans three, remember, when he wants to prove that there's none righteous, not even one. There's none who does good. Where does he go? He goes to the mouth. Their throat is an open tomb.

The poison of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Our lips tell the story of our hearts. And we see these words here, that the words of this culture gone to hell, We can break them up into four categories. They're full of empty talk, smooth talk, double talk, and big talk. They're full, first of all, of empty talk. Everyone utters lies to his neighbor, literally empty words. And those words, it can be an empty lie, like an idol, but the essence of the word is emptiness in the Hebrew. Their words are insubstantial, like empty cocktail party speech. There's no substance to them. They're not full of truth. They don't reflect reality. Their words are empty, and they're hollow of true meaning. Now, the church should not be like that. Excuse me. If you turn quickly, I actually feel much better. I really do. I don't sound like it, but I feel much better. If you turn in your Bible quickly to Ephesians 4, We hear about the risen Christ who first descended. He went down until there was no more down left to go on the cross. And then he ascended, verse 10, far above all things, in the heavens that he might fill all things. Verse 11, and from this exalted vantage point, Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, He's teaching ministries, why? To equip the saints that the saints might do the work of ministry for the building up of the body of Christ. Until we all attain to the unity of the faith. We know what we believe. That's the goal of preaching and teaching in our pulpit and from our Sunday schools. The unity of the faith, not the act of faith, but the content. We know what we believe. And of the literally experiential knowledge of the Son of God, we're to know who we believe. And we're to know how to live. To mature manhood to the measure of the stature that belongs to the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful scheming. Notice Paul describes an immature Christian, a child, as someone who doesn't know what they believe. They're tossed about in the waves of every wind of doctrine. They're unstable theologically. But rather, Paul says, speaking the truth in love. We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow, so that it builds itself up in love. And Paul's describing here fellowship, that fellowship is about you and me. It's about being filled from the pulpit by words of truth. It's about being filled in our Sunday schools, in our Bible studies, by words of truth. But it's about taking those words out, and as you use your gifts in the church, wherever you're using them with other Christians,

to be talking about the things of God and love, speaking the truth in love. That's the church, but the world are full of empty words. with no real meaning. They aren't connected to God and his truth. Back to Psalm 12. Smooth talk. Everyone utters lies to his neighbor with flattering lips and a double heart. They speak smooth talk, flattering lips, speech designed not really to communicate but to manipulate. They say one thing, they mean another, they're flattering. They're telling people how wonderful they are, flattering, but behind the heart, there's a knife stabbing. Empty talk, smooth talk, double talk. And a double heart, they speak literally with a heart to a heart. They're like double-minded men, unstable in all their ways. They say one thing, but they mean another. Derek Kidner says, a double heart, literally a heart and a heart, significantly traces the double talk to its source in double think. For the deceiver becomes one of his own victims with no truth to unite his character. There's no integrity there, you see. Empty talk, smooth talk, double talk, and then big talk. Here we see their true colors shining through, as Cyndi Lauper would say. May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts, those who say, with our tongue we will prevail. Our lips are with us, or our lips are our own. Who is Lord over us? Atheism and autonomy go together like water and wet. With no God above us to control us, then we are our own master. I can live as I please. Aldous Huxley famously said once, I have reasons for not wanting the world to have meaning. And those reasons are mostly political and sexual. I want to live the way I want to live in the political realm of the world and I want to sleep with whomever I want to sleep with in the private realm of the world. That's what he's saying. Calvin says, the wicked persons spoken of being armed with their tongues go beyond all bounds and think they can accomplish by this means whatever they please, just as this set of men stood to form everything with their calumnies, that they would almost cover the sun himself with darkness. That's their philosophy. We are our own master. Who will be lord over us? It's the philosophy of atheism. William Murray said, humanism or atheism is a wonderful philosophy of life as long as you're big and strong and between the ages of 18 and 35. But watch out if you're in a lifeboat and there are others who are younger, bigger, and stronger than you are. But it's the mindset of the world. Epitomized by Muhammad Ali, one time he was flying in an airplane. And the captain puts on the fasten your seatbelt sign, and Muhammad Ali is there having his meal. And the air hostess walks past and sees that Muhammad Ali's no seatbelt. And she says to him, sir, fasten your seatbelt. And Muhammad Ali said, Superman don't need no seatbelt. And pick us a flash, he said. And Superman don't need no airplane either. Fasten your seatbelt. With our tongue we

will prevail.

Our lips are with us. Who is master over us? It's an empty boast, seen from the view of eternity. Truth is trashed. Violence is valued. The psalmist ends on that depressing note, on every side, the wicked prowl, they strut about, is the idea, as because vileness is exalted among the sons, the children of man. The idea is vileness, behind vileness, activities of no value, practiced without restraint. Activities of no value, garbage. practiced without restraint, gluttony. Taken together, you have a banquet in the trash can. We see a culture gorging itself on garbage. And it's not Western civilization today, a banquet in the trash can gorging itself on garbage. Malcolm Muggeridge, the great political commentator and writer and satirist after the Second World War, he was converted, of course. He writes about Western civilization. So the final conclusion would be surely this, that whereas other civilizations have been brought down by attacks of barbarians from without, Ours has had the unique distinction of training its own destroyers at its own educational institutions and then providing them with facilities for propagating their destructive ideology far and wide and all at the public expense. Thus did Western man decide to abolish himself, creating his own boredom out of his own affluence, his own vulnerability out of his own strength, his own impotence out of his own erotomania, himself blowing the trumpet that brought the walls of his own city tumbling down, and having convinced himself that he was too numerous, laboured with pill and scalpel and syringe to make himself still fewer. Until at last, having educated himself into imbecility, having polluted and drugged himself into stupefaction, he keeled over a weary, battered old brontosaurus and became extinct. It would be funny if it were not so accurate, and chillingly so. Get to the root of the problem. Truth is trashed, vileness is valued, And secondly, and lastly, get to the throne of God. Talk to him, listen to him. An old commentator called Slade Plummer quotes him, says, temptations are everywhere, but so is the grace of God. And the sooner we go to God with our cares, the better for us. In such a dog-eat world, a psalmist turns to God, save, oh Lord, he says in verse one, Verse three, may the Lord cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts, those who say with our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us, who is master over us? At best, the poor and the needy are forgotten, and at worst, they're trampled underfoot and exploited. But the psalmist says, while they may be forgotten on earth, they are not forgotten in heaven. Verse five, 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 remembers him. the poor and the needy. And notice it's a

word of promise

before it's a felt reality on earth. The now of verse five, this omnipotent now, when God finally rouses himself as if he's been sleeping, is still in the future. It's a word of promise for the psalmist before it's felt in its blistering power. Plumber again, blood and tears both have voices. They cry louder and are heard farther than thunder. They travel even to the throne of God, even though they're shed in some secret place of the earth. Isn't that wonderful? Blood and tears both have voices because the poor are plundered because the needy groan. blood and tears, both have voices. They cry louder and are heard farther than thunder. They travel even to the throne of God, though shed in some secret place on the earth. And the psalmist says, you must

stay yourself. Just like Jesus, when he was reviled, he did not revile him with the turn. When he suffered, he did not threaten him. but he committed himself to God who judges righteously. And sometimes that will be all

you have to hold onto in this world. I promise. But there's coming a day, Plummer says, when the chaff cannot contend with the whirlwind, nor the feather with the burning fiery furnace, Neither can sinful worms ward against the Almighty, neither the multitude of God's enemies, nor the fewness of His friends at all affects the certainty of the deliverance to the righteous and the judgment of the wicked. We set our hearts on eternity Christians. Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed and to purify for himself a people for his own possession. He hasn't come yet, but that doesn't mean he won't come soon. Talk to him. Cry out to him. but also listen to him. All you

have is this promise, a bare word. I will now arise, says the Lord. I will place him in the safety for which he longs. That's a future tense thing. And you think, I want something more than a word. A word. Is that all God's gonna give me, a word? I want him to come with his power and deliver me. The psalmist says, don't forget from whom these words come and what these words mean. That when you have a word from God to lay hold of, you've got something better than the rock of Gibraltar beneath your feet. That's why he says the words of the Lord are pure words. like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times. He's not just giving you a Bible verse to go, oh, why do I believe the Bible's inspired? Oh, because of Psalm 12, verse six. It's a good verse to memorize. But that verse is there in a context, and a verse without a context is a pretext. The reason God is assuring the psalmist that his words are solid and substantial and true It's because all the psalmist has is a word, but it's a word from God. And that matters a very great deal indeed. They're absolutely pure, these

words. The words of the Lord are pure
words. Plummer again, I do read other books rather than Plummer,
but he's been particularly good in Psalm 12. God's words are
pure from all error, all mistake, all equivocation, all deception,
all encouragement to sin, all weakness. They are more replete
with meaning, with faithfulness, with grace, than the best minds
and the strongest faith have ever conceived or are alleged. Oh, there's something
amazing
in the power of God's Word. It differs from all other writings. Absolutely pure,
infinitely valuable,
like silver refined in a furnace on the grounds, purified seven
times. Like when you heat up a metal
like silver, and all the dross rises to the surface, and the
refiner sweeps the broad dross away, and then he remelts the
silver again, and more dross comes to the surface, and he
repeats that process again, and again, and again, and again,
and again, and again, and again, until the seventh time, seventh
being the perfect number of absolute value and purity. Kidner says,
here is solid wealth as against empty tokens, and exact truth
against the flattery, equivocation, and bombast of man in this psalm. If you could
look back from the
psalm, actually, and see the psalm as a comparison between the words
of man, the worms of the earth, and the words of God, the Lord
of heaven. What a difference. They're absolutely pure, infinitely
valuable, and eternally trustworthy. You, Lord, will keep them. You
will guard, and the Hebrew says, you will guard them from this
generation forever. When I first memorized that,
Sam, I thought to myself, it was speaking of the word. And
it is, but there's a beautiful kind of equivocation in the Hebrew.
Is he describing God's determination to keep his word or God's determination
to keep his people? And the answer, of course, is
yes. He keeps his word, but he'll
also keep us from this generation forever. He's keeping us. the people of God from
this generation
and forever? That's the answer. Get to the root of the problem, understand what's
going on, the
people of the Lord, know the times. Don't let the faithlessness of
man undermine your confidence in the faithfulness of God. When
you see the world go to hell in a handbasket, when you see
America devolve, and in one sense, I'm actually very encouraged.
I was at Twin Lakes this week, and I saw so many young men rising
up, full of the Spirit of God, full of the gospel, full of zeal,
planting churches, mostly in the PCA, but planting churches
across America, and it filled my heart with great confidence
that God has raised up such a tide of young men. Price, I'm gonna come to the
ARP. And surely he's not done that
for naught, right? But we may see America unravel. And we are
seeing her unravel. A weary old brontosaurus keeling
over. Our fathers gave us a republic
if we could keep it, do you remember? We're not doing it, we're doing

our very best. We're playing Jenga on a cultural level, pulling out the blocks. And Jenga's a fun game, boys and girls. You pull out the blocks one at a time. You weaken the structure one at a time. But the tower doesn't collapse one block at a time. Eventually you pull out one block too many and the whole thing comes crashing down. We're playing Jenga with our culture. We're pulling out ideas. Male, female, doesn't matter. Human sexuality, doesn't matter. The family, doesn't matter. We're pulling it out. Oh, look, the tower hasn't fallen. It's waving a bit, but that's fine, you know, and we're just pulling them out. And we think that we can keep on pulling them out and we'll not come to a final moment of tipping when it all comes crashing down around us. And that might be our future.

Get to the root of the problem, understand what's going on and why. Men have forgotten God, Sotnitzkin says. That's why all this has happened. And then get back to the heart of your God. Talk to him in prayer. And listen to him in his word and root yourself. You've got a foundation. If only we had the words of men to rest on, we would be in trouble. But my brothers and sisters, you have the words of almighty God. What a word. Absolutely pure, infinitely valuable, and eternally trustworthy. And Jesus says, don't be frightened, my little flock. If it were not so, well, I would have told you. I am the way, and the truth, and the life. You come to me. and I'll bring you to the Father. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for your word. Even Psalms that might look discouraging are full of glory, oh God. Oh, we love the Bible. It teaches the best way of living the noblest way of suffering, and the safest way of dying. Help us to live well and to die well for your glory, oh God. In Christ our Savior's name we pray. Amen.