

The Talking Dead

Psalm 12 May 18, 2025

Did you know Hollywood has been making zombie movies for almost 100 years? They were first brought to the silver screen in 1932's *White Zombie*.¹ We're fascinated by stories of how the uninfected will survive in a world that has been overrun by the living dead.

Often those stories begin with one individual who believes they are the *last* healthy human on earth. *I Am Legend*, *Omega Man*, there are many others. Even though they think they're alone, they hold out hope for a cure, hope that they will make it out alive.

By the end of these movies we always discover that the protagonists are *not* alone. There are others still alive. Together they do what they can to avoid the plague and escape danger.

Believe it or not, David paints a similar image in Psalms 11 and 12. Of course, his world wasn't reeling from a global pathogen or nuclear fallout. David looked at the *spiritual* state of the world and it looks like *Omega Man*. In Psalm 11 he wrote, "When the foundations have collapsed, what can the righteous do?" In Psalm 12 he says, "The Godly have all disappeared from the human race."

Today's Psalm serves as a soundtrack for the children of God living in a crumbling world - a world plagued by sin and suffering its consequences. But it is *not* a song of resignation. It's not *It's The End Of The World As We Know It (And I Feel Fine)*, it's a song of confidence that God is a Savior and He not only moves to protect us, but He has provided us with a cure that can undo the devastation this plague has wrought on the culture and institutions around us.

Psalm 12:1 - ¹ Help, Lord, for no faithful one remains; the loyal have disappeared from the human race.

Did David *really* think he was the last faithful believer in the entire human race? Well, apparently he *felt* that way. We have these sort of hyperbolic feelings sometimes in our lives, right? Flashes of hopelessness or confusion, even complaint against God? This song begins as a complaint.

We don't have to pretend like we never feel this way. We don't have to fake our prayers or act like we're never frustrated or discouraged. There's a whole category of Psalms called lament Psalms. This is one of them.² A lament is an expression of some sort of complaint or hurt or sorrow to God.

Now, we don't *stay* in an attitude of complaining. We'll see David moves from confusion and complaint to clarity and confidence. But God wants you to be open and honest with Him when you pray to Him, when you sing to Him. *He already knows what you're thinking and feeling, anyway.*

¹ <https://www.library.cmu.edu/about/news/2017-10/legacy-dead-history-zombie>

² Frank Gaebele, Willem VanGemern, Allen Ross, J. Stafford Wright, and Dennis F. Kinlaw. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs. Vol. 5.*

David's song opens with a simple word: HELP! God, SAVE! What would we do if right now, from outside, we heard someone screaming for help? I imagine a whole bunch of people would go outside to see what they could do. And David knows that God not only has *power* to save, but that He is *listening* for the cries of His people.

The Psalms are very clear on this fact. God listens closely and carefully to us.³ Our calls, our needs, our desires, our questions. God hears them and answers.

David's assessment was that the Godly were fast disappearing from the human community. The result was not pretty. He realized we have an urgent need to be saved *not* from a comet hitting the planet, *not* from a virus, *not* from alien invasion. We need to be saved *from ourselves*.

But what does it mean to be faithful or loyal? These terms refer to people who keep covenant with God.⁴ Those who believe God and respond with faith and obedience and go His way through life according to the principles and directives and leading He gives. And that *can* apply to anyone.

Psalm 12:2 - ²They lie to one another; they speak with flattering lips and deceptive hearts.

In the movies, zombies are usually identified by how they *look*. In this song, they are identified by what they say. Their words are categorized as lies and deceit and flattery. The term here literally means, "a lip of slipperiness."⁵ The human tongue spouts empty talk, smooth talk, and double talk.⁶

The problem is we're all *naturally* infected with this condition. You don't have to teach a child to lie. Humans are so prone to lying we have to start judicial questioning by making people promise they *won't* lie. David wasn't immune. He lied to Achish. He lied to Ahimelech. He lied about Bathsheba.

Lying is a part of the human condition. But it's something we need to be saved from. It's a malignancy we must partner with God to root out of our lives if we want to bear spiritual fruit.

As David moved through the hordes of humanity, he heard lie after lie. Why do we lie to people? Our friends and family and neighbors? Sometimes it's because of jealousy, sometimes fear. Sometimes we're trying to manipulate others for our own purposes. But lying is destructive to societies and to relationships and to our own hearts. It is a deadly virus.

Flattery is a form of lying that doesn't feel like a big deal to us. But God's Word gives us warnings even about this *lesser* type of lying speech. Proverbs explains that flattery causes ruin.⁷ Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians that it is *not* a tool we should use.⁸ Our relationships and institutions cannot survive if they aren't built on truth and trust and honesty and genuine unity. So, if you give your

³ See Psalm 10:17, 4:3. 66:18, 116:1

⁴ C. Hassell Bullock *Psalms, Volume 1: Psalms 1-72*

⁵ James Waltner *Psalms: Believers Church Bible Commentary*

⁶ Derek Kidner *Psalms 1-72*

⁷ Proverbs 26:28

⁸ 1 Thessalonians 2:5

language life an audit and discover traces of flattery or manipulation, allow the Lord to deal with it in a loving, cleansing way, because we don't want Him to deal with it *this* way:

Psalm 12:3 - ³May the Lord cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaks boastfully.

That escalated quickly! But this plague has to be dealt with. We see in Acts how Ananias and Sapphira lie to the Holy Spirit and to the church and what does God do? He cut them off by killing them. Now, that isn't what He usually does these days, but it illustrates the seriousness of this issue.

It's not actually about the words themselves, it's about what's going on in our hearts. From the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.⁹ And what we see is that, among the ungodly, the plague of pride has infiltrated their hearts and spread to their lips and then corrupts their relationships *and* their whole perspective. Look at verse 4.

Psalm 12:4 - ⁴They say, "Through our tongues we have power; our lips are our own—who can be our master?"

The truth is, our tongues *do* have power. The words you say can change lives. James says your tongue can set the course of a life on fire.¹⁰ Or we can use our words also to build up and draw people out of darkness by preaching the truth that will set them free.

The people speaking in verse 4 are so impressed with their powers of speech they say, "Who can be our master?" The term they use is a play on Adonai.¹¹ "Who's my God? *I'm* my own God and master!" That's what the person who is not in covenant with Jesus has convinced themselves of.

But here's the truth: You are *not* your own master. Your tongue is *not* your own. In fact, it's not even *your breath* in your lungs. It's God's. The Bible makes that very clear in Job and Isaiah and Acts. You're alive by God's grace and mercy. And you belong to Him, not only because you are His creation, but also because He bought you with the blood of His Son Jesus Christ.

Today, if you're not a Christian, you may *think* you're your own master, but you're not. In reality, you are *enslaved* to sin. You are held captive by the Devil. You are a citizen of the kingdom of darkness and will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire unless you are rescued and the *only* way for you to be rescued is by being in covenant with Jesus Christ, Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. You can be saved today, right now, by believing and calling out to this rescuing God.

Psalm 12:5 - ⁵"Because of the devastation of the needy and the groaning of the poor, I will now rise up," says the Lord. "I will provide safety for the one who longs for it."

⁹ Matthew 12:34

¹⁰ James 3:6

¹¹ Bullock

"Longs for" here can also mean the person who puffs or pants for it.¹² Those who realize they don't want to stay trapped in the plague of sin and the devastation it brings to life.

You see, it's not just about little white lies, it's not just about a little flattery here and there. Words lead to actions. This plague has led to a world where violence is done to the helpless. Where the weak are crushed and left defenseless. But God will not allow that to continue. He *hears* their cries. He sees their suffering and He moves with power and compassion on their behalf.

You Christians, be encouraged that God *still* hears your groanings. Paul tells us in Romans how the Holy Spirit is here to help us in our weakness, interceding for us with inexpressible groanings.¹³

But notice that David is no longer alone. In verse 1 it was as if he was the last man standing. But now we see there *are* others. God sees them and He is mindful of them all.

Psalm 12:6 - ⁶The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in an earthen furnace, purified seven times.

The antidote to the plague of proud hearts and corrupted tongues is the eternal word of God. His word is not proud, it is pure. In fact, "seven times" here is actually the dual form. So David is saying that God's word has been refined and purified seven times *twice*.¹⁴

Why does that matter? Well, here we are in a sin-ridden world, a world where the truth of God is often under attack. A world where we sometimes face pressure for being in covenant with Jesus.

What happened when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were faced with pressure and opposition and attack? They told Nebuchadnezzar they would not bow to him as master. They remained faithful to the Lord. They trust His promises. So what did Nebuchadnezzar do? He had the furnace heated seven times hotter. And what happened? God intervened to save these faithful ones. His word, His promises not only withstand the furnace of life, they withstand a furnace heated seven times hotter. They could've gone another seven times hotter still and God's truth would've remained just as pure, just as valuable, just as reliable in any circumstance.

We sing God's words, we decorate our homes with them, that's good. But they are not *only* good for melody or decoration. They are as beautiful and useful and valuable as the purest silver.

Psalm 12:7 - ⁷You, Lord, will guard us; you will protect us from this generation forever.

Which generation? The one we're in. David sang this song many centuries ago. We can still sing it today. Because God is *a/ways* faithful in every generation. His mercy, His power, His goodness, His care for us is never diminished.

¹² Kidner

¹³ Romans 8:26

¹⁴ Bullock

David is no longer alone. Now it's "us." What a good thing that God connects us *with* one another, as living stones knit together for strength and encouragement and cooperation and community.

The complaint has given way to confidence. Though at times we may be outnumbered, we are *never* outmatched because our God is with us and He says that He is *ready* to perform His word.¹⁵

Psalm 12:8 - ⁸The wicked prowl all around, and what is worthless is exalted by the human race.

We get one more similarity to the zombie flick here. The wicked, we're told, "prowl all around." They're wandering in the dark, not really going anywhere, just looking for victims. That's what sin does to humanity - to the sons of Adam. That's the second time David uses that terminology. Where we read "human race" he says the sons of Adam.

Christians *were* sons of Adam, but we've been born again thanks to the work of the *Second Adam*. Now, we are sons and daughters of God. So great is the love of God that He allows us to be called His children.¹⁶ And we do not wander through life aimlessly, trying to satisfy cheap and worthless desires. Now we walk with God toward glory, toward life, toward the future He has set aside for us.

The ungodly heart elevates what is worthless. It exalts insignificant things. Cheap and gluttonous and shameful excess.¹⁷ That's what a heart and a society dominated by sin celebrates and worships and builds up for itself. But we don't have to be infected with that plague. We are people who walk with purpose - people who *know* where we're going, and so we lift up and build and worship that which is eternal.

In most zombie movies, the hero's goal is to kill as many of them as they can. Or, at least, the goal is to get as far away from them as possible. God's way of doing things is not like that. Yes, He rises up to protect His people and fight for them when need be, but He has delivered the cure and then sends us out to try to rescue the infected so that they, too, can join our assembly of the living. Because His merciful, loving care extends to *all* the lost of this world. They need help just like we do. And before He rises up in ultimate judgment, He sends us out with the cure of the Gospel, to seek and to save others just as we were sought and saved. So they, too, can become children of God.

What do the righteous do when the foundations are crumbling? When it seems like the Godly are fast disappearing? Go and make disciples, knowing that God is with us, protecting us, caring for us, sending us out in His grace and His life and His power.

¹⁵ Jeremiah 1:12

¹⁶ 1 John 3:1

¹⁷ Kidner