

Real Hope in a Perplexing World

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[0 : 01] You're very welcome indeed. My name is Paul, one of the staff team here at the Tron, and we're here today, Wednesday lunchtime talk, to read from God's Word and to then listen to a short talk for inquirers and Christians alike. So you're very welcome indeed. There's lunch, tea and coffee to be enjoyed afterwards, so please do stay on and enjoy our time together.

You'll also see there should be some little cards on the way out which just give the details of the Wednesday lunchtime talks, take one away, give it to a friend and bring them along to hear about the Lord Jesus. So they're on the way out, so do make use of those.

We'll be looking at Psalm 12 this lunchtime, so do turn there and you'll find it on page 452, 452, if you're using one of the blue Bibles there. And as you're turning, I will pray.

So let's pray. Our Father God, would you please help us as we gather here in the middle of a busy day, the issues of the moment, the relational concerns that weigh in our minds, the next problem to be solved, all the thoughts swirling in our minds. Help us now to listen to your Word, to focus our minds on what is truly important, that which is eternal and not merely temporal. Help us to listen to your sure and certain words of promise and truth this afternoon and to respond in trusting obedience. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let me read Psalm 12, page 452. Psalm 12, page 453.

[2 : 14] Psalm 12, page 453.

Your 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 prowl as vileness is exalted among the children of man.

well i wonder do you ever feel like sticking your head in the sand the world is moving too fast in a direction you don't like and you just want to get off you feel perhaps very much at odds with what you see and hear in the world around you whether it's attitudes to marriage and sex or perhaps it's all that we hear about gender these days it might be political crises or political issues whatever it might be it is tempting isn't it to plant one's head in the sand but that is not the christian life the christian life is not one in which the head is planted firmly in the sand which is not to say that the opposite is true the christian life is not blind optimism either but rather it is realistic and this psalm psalm 12 which we just read together is profoundly realistic it expresses perhaps better than we do our feelings our emotions as we look out on the world around us we can often feel isolated and alone and that is exactly david's experience as he penned this psalm his heart is heavy as he observes the children of men and as he hears their words which are deceptive lying words david observes as perhaps you do too the lies spoken so freely in society and he feels the isolation of faith and so he calls out verse one he calls out to the lord for salvation but strangely and perhaps to our surprise the psalm doesn't end up where we think it ought to end up usually we would expect the pattern to move from darkness to light from despair to real delight but that is not the pattern here in fact the psalm ends up exactly where it begins look at verse one the faithful have vanished from among the children of man look on to the end of verse eight on every side the wicked prowl as vileness is exalted among the children of man it ends as it begins and doesn't our experience match david's as we live amongst the children of man the world that you and i will walk out into in about 20 minutes time will be very much like the one we left 10 minutes ago and david is absolutely realistic about that but what has changed is his perspective and i trust ours too as we spend some time in the psalm you see the bible tells us how things really are and that gives us real solid hope so let's look at the psalm more closely in three parts firstly then verses one to four we live for the moment in a world of lies and we see here the pain of the faithful believer so look down with me those verses david observes the children of men he laments and it's not so much a personal lament this isn't a personal crisis but rather it's a wider societal crisis that he observes this is something out there amongst the children of man but it has for him real personal implications and in particular it's the words of men that are the problem notice all the speech related language here he speaks about uttering lies he speaks about flattering lips speaking from a

double heart and the first thing David mentions is the impact this has on him look at verse one David feels isolated fearful even the godly one is gone the faithful have vanished from among the children of man now if you're a believer here this afternoon isn't it the case that we see more clearly and feel more keenly the real tragedies of the world around us we discern perhaps more readily the lies the propaganda because God in his word has revealed his plans and his purposes for his world and so we know the heights from which creation has fallen we know the glory of the promised new creation which is yet to be and so we feel and understand the depth to which the world around us has plummeted to and it grieves us and rightly so and at times it can be overwhelming can't it the untruth that comes from every angle whether it's the deceit and dishonesty of a co-worker or the lies spoken as truth in the media whatever it is it comes at us from every angle the propaganda that flies in the face of scientific consensus just think of the recent debates to do with gender fluidity and in particular in relation to children scant regard is paid to the scientific data that would urge extreme caution and yet society's plowing ahead straight on into it that data is played down silenced because we live in a post-truth world now isn't that the world we live in where lies are spoken untruths are presented as truth verse 2 everyone utters lies to his neighbor with flattering lips they speak and that verse 2 sums up exactly what we observe every day in society at large and as we see this as we hear it as we watch it we can feel quite alone it can feel quite intimidating can't it but perhaps for you it's closer to home that you observe the lies of men where false speech is most close to you maybe it's a personal relationship that's gone wrong you've witnessed the lies the double-heartedness perhaps it's from those you'd least expect how could they be so deceitful you think and it rattles us you feel like you're alone disappointed am I the only one left who sees this for what it is verse 4 sums up so well the attitudes we see all around us whether it's in society in general or in the lies we know so well verse 4 with our tongue we will prevail our lips are with us who is master over us it's the bold assertion of self-sovereignty isn't it it's the claim of autonomy matched and accompanied by the utter and outright rejection of any external authority who is master over us

I can say what I like I can live just like I want to I and I alone am the master of my fate that is the mantra that is the dogma of the day but it's lies and lies that can make the believer feel quite alone but they are lies that are exposed look at verse 5 because the poor are plundered because the needy groan I will now arise says the Lord this is what all the lies and untruth results in the poor are plundered the needy groan it is often isn't it the poor that pay the price of society's lies in his recent book a better story Glyn Harrison the former professor and head of psychiatry at Bristol University he makes this telling observation he says that those who are suffering most in our society as a result of the sexual revolution particularly in terms of easing of divorce law are not those who drove it forward it's not the liberal elites rather it's the poor they're the ones who suffer and we see that all around us don't we broken homes broken families and the outcomes for children from broken backgrounds are generally poorer the lies of the sexual revolution they promised freedom didn't they but it's delivered plundering and groaning and it's the less well off who are bearing the brunt we live in a world of lies observes David he feels the isolation of society's lies he describes it for us but he also exposes it and he does the only thing that he can and it's the one thing that you and I must do it's the cry in the very first word in the psalm save verse 1 save oh Lord save verse 3 cut off all flattering lips we are to call out to our God to rescue us from all the lies around us and the psalmist gives us great reassurance here in verses 5 and 6 this is our second point yes we live in a world full of lies but verses 5 and 6 we belong forever to the God of truth and we see here the promises of a faithful God look there middle of verse 5

[13 : 19] I will now arise says the Lord I will place him in the safety for which he longs and these words of the Lord in contrast to the words of the children of men these words are pure words like silver refined in a furnace on the ground purified seven times God promises rescue safety salvation and what sweet words of comfort they are to the believer who feels alone as David does he longs for safety and the Lord will provide us and his promise is quite unlike the promises of the children of men verse 6 is emphatic isn't it God's words in contrast to the lies of men are utterly trustworthy he will do just as he says no double talk with God no deceit his words are pure like refined silver verse 7 says you O Lord will keep them that is the Lord will keep his words and without this without this as a foundation there is nothing if the Lord is not a keeper of promises if his words are not pure if he is unable to keep them then there is nothing the basis of faith crumbles if God's words are proved to be feeble but God's words are true and powerful and trustworthy that is the testimony of the Bible from the beginning to the end

God is a keeper of promises his words are true so when all around us seems deceptive when the words of men we dare not trust his words his words stand firm and David stood firm in them because he knew that God was trustworthy and don't we have even more reason to trust his words and be careful who we listen to don't we have even more reason to seek safety in his promises yes we also experience the isolation of faith that David experienced but we look back on the word of God become flesh we look back on so many promises fulfilled the serpent crusher promise in Genesis 3 has come the one who had crushed the father of lies has now come we have a risen and ascended savior and that fact that brings absolute certainty for you and I every promise of his word will come to pass and you and I have absolute certainty about our salvation and the silencing of lying lips if we trust in the Lord that is

David's perspective isn't it second half of verse eight he says you will guard us from this generation forever that is the cry of faith that is the basis of faith in the midst of life's trials and the feelings of isolation and loneliness we cry out to our God who promises eternal security and we trust him to provide it Hebrews 11 begins with these words we do so because faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things unseen and so despite what you and I might see no matter how we might feel you know there is more the visible world is not all there is we have his words his promises and they are true they are pure and in them alone and seen most fully and brightly in our Lord

Jesus Christ we have real and lasting security and safety and what a huge relief that is for us for you for me to have a God who speaks truth whose words are trustworthy so when we see wickedness being praised everywhere the answer is not to join in instead we should wait for his promise of salvation and judgment that is what he promises so wait trust him because he is the God who keeps promises friends we know that in the midst of all the untruth and deception that we live in and breathe every day we know that there is a steadfast God who will keep us safe we belong forever to the God of truth and wouldn't it be great if that's where we finished up but this is not a seven verse psalm verse 8 throws a bit of spanner in the works and it ruins my nice two point sermon but here's point 3 looking at verses 7 and 8 we are a people living a paradox and we see here the perplexity of a faithful life let me read those verses again 7 and 8 you oh

Lord will keep them you will keep your words you will guard us from this generation forever on every side the wicked prowls as vileness is exalted among the children of man yes yes God preserves us yes we know our eternal future is secure but dishonesty it still rules the day as we head out the door in a few moments time the world will look very much like it did when we left it lies will still be uttered we will still feel the isolation of faith but the bible is refreshingly realistic because it describes the world as it really is and so here in verse 8 David seems to end up where he begins the wicked prowls the vileness is exalted doesn't that just sum up so well what we see week in week out and our experience of the world well it seems to undercut what we've just heard about God and his rescue but this psalm is teaching us as it concludes in this way that we are a people living presently we are living a paradox we are as the apostle people

[20 : 04] Peter describes in his first epistle we are elect exiles we are exiles in this world it's a foreign land and so God's promises of rescue and security they are true but we don't fully at this moment in time fully experience them the victory of true words is not instant and you and I need to know that as one preacher put it even the pure words which promise safety and wake the response of faith do not wholly scatter the clouds we will still have to for the moment live amongst the lies and double talk the vileness of the children of man and we'll have to do so until Christ returns but why why must we be a people who live a paradox it would be so much better if we didn't have to why well it's primarily because of the patience and the grace of the

Lord Christ with his life his death his resurrection his ascension has begun the fulfillment of all that was promised in the scriptures but it's not yet complete we are waiting for him to return to claim his kingdom we don't yet live in the new creation and that great future promised is not yet is it we wait there is a delay but it is a gracious delay yes in many ways it's a painful delay for those who are Christ because it means that we don't yet experience all that we will experience one day and it does mean that for as long as we wait God's people will have reason to sing and sing again Psalm 12 but it is a gracious delay for all who are not yet Christ he is calling rebellious people lying people those who boldly declare who is master over me he's calling them even today to repent and turn once again to him perhaps that's you here even this afternoon but friends the fact that we observe lies all around us the fact that we experience the pain of isolation that should not cause us to doubt for a moment the sure and certain salvation that

God has promised for his people the evil that you and I observe does not undermine for a moment the eternal safety and security of God's people so let's be realistic let's be as realistic as the Bible is about life in this present world but let's also be as hopeful as the Bible is as it looks forward to eternal security and calls us to trust God's pure words not the lies of the world but his sure pure trustworthy words because we are a people according to the apostle Paul who walk by faith and not by sight let's pray and then we'll sing together our father God help us to trust in you the

God of all truth whose words are true and pure and Lord help us not to listen to the father of lies whose lies are everywhere would we not join in would we not despair but rather trust you so help us to do that we ask in Jesus name Amen to almir A the gave a good and