

• *More on problems*

• *Corrupt society marked by corrupt talk*

I have entitled Psalms 9-19 Problems and Answers. Psalms 9-14 focuses on problems; Psalms 15-19 focuses on answers. One of the biggest disasters in society everywhere in the world is the way in which human sinfulness shows itself in our talk. Triumph in the use of the tongue might be slow in coming. In David's time he was conscious that his people were far from perfect. *'The faithful have vanished'*, ¹ he says. His country was full of deceitful slanderous talk.

¹ 12:1

David was not wanting to run away from his problems (as Psalm 11 makes clear) but there were not many remaining within the kingdom of Israel to give him any help. David makes it a matter of prayer.

¹*Yahweh, save! For the godly one is gone;
for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man.*

• *Unclean speaking, lies, flattery, boasting and arrogant talk*

As so often the mark of corrupt society was corrupt ways of talking. We remember Isaiah's confession. 'I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips' ¹. The nation was full of sins of talk. There were lies and flattery ² and what David calls 'a double heart' ³. The tongue was used for boastfulness ⁴ and arrogant ill-treatment of the poor ⁵. So if the foundations are destroyed by foul and ugly talk, what can the righteous do?

¹ Isaiah 6:5
² 12:2
³ 12:2
⁴ 12:3
⁵ 12:4

1. The righteous can pray

1. **The righteous people can pray.** Of course this is the great lesson of the Book of Psalms; in nearly all of the psalms (there are some exceptions) we find the people of God praying. This is the record of their prayers and songs. David tells God of the situation ¹ and asks for God to deal with it.

¹ 12:2

²*Everyone utters lies to his neighbour;
with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.
³May Yahweh cut off all flattering lips,
the tongue that makes great boast,
⁴those who say, "With our tongue we will prevail,
our lips are with us; who is master over us?"*

• *Our need to confess*

Only Jesus can pray such a prayer totally without self-righteousness, David represents and foreshadows Jesus. Jesus needed to make no confession, but we shall have to say 'I am a man of unclean lips' at the same time as we ask God to cut off the sins of the 'people of unclean lips'.

God promises to hear such prayers.

⁵*"Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan,
I will now arise," says Yahweh;
"I will place him in the safety for which he longs."*

2. The righteous can turn from faithless words to faithful words

2. **The righteous people can turn from faithless words to faithful words.** God's talk is trustworthy though human talk is full of deceit and corruption.

God's words are pure.

^{6a}*The words of Yahweh are pure words.*

The Hebrew word is the plural of *tahor*, it means clean for God's use (like the ritually clean sacrifices of the tabernacle), having no impurities which deceive or mislead, being free from the sins of speech that are so typical of men and women.

• *God's word is pure, tested and true*

God's words have been tested and have proved true. They are

^{6b}*like silver refined in a furnace on the ground,
purified seven times.*

David is thinking of the written Scriptures. The Mosaic writings were already in existence in David's time. Some of the history books (Joshua, Judges and Samuel) were no doubt in existence. Some psalms were already being circulated. David already had written Scriptures on which to meditate day and night.

• *Words which are claimed to be God's word need to be tested*

• *God never says anything that is contrary to written Scripture*

• *God does speak directly by His Spirit today – but this should never be allowed to overshadow Scripture*

• *God's words will be fulfilled*

• *The faithful will wait for the right time*

God has various ways of speaking and most of them need to be tested. We should test anyone who reckons he has a prophetic gift, especially if he or she starts making predictions about what will happen in the future. There are always people around who will be predicting earthquakes and 'wars and rumours of wars' - and of course there are always 'wars and rumours of wars'. Jesus said such times would come and he added: 'but the end is not yet!' Gifts of tongues and 'words of knowledge' need to be handled carefully. God never contradicts himself, never teaches anything contrary to his written Scriptures, does not guide us one way today but contradict himself tomorrow – and is not in the habit of giving lots of prophecies about his people getting rich!

The Word of God that does not need to be tested is the written Scripture. It is the written Word of God which has been endlessly attacked but has proved itself to be reliable again and again. It is the Bible (and the parts of it that existed in David's day) which is 'like silver refined in a furnace on the ground'. Certainly, God can speak directly by his Spirit (as in Acts 8:29), but these little bits of direct guidance, which we receive from God, must never be allowed to overshadow the greatest form of the Word of God – the written Scripture.

God's words will be fulfilled.

^{7a} You, Yahweh, will keep them....

God's words may keep us confident when we stand almost alone. The godly may have gone and the faithful may have vanished, but David can still say



^{7b} 'you will guard us from this generation forever'.

He ends at that point. The problem is still there. The answer has not come yet.

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

But although the answer to David's problems has not come yet, David is content to let matters rest there for the moment. God's answer will come in due course. Yahweh will keep the threats against wickedness; He will fulfil the promises to the righteous. It may take some time and the faithful will have to wait for the **right** time, but God's answer is always on its way for those who persist in faith. Meanwhile we wait for history to work out to fulfil all of God's purposes – and we live on the written Word of God.

12:2

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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