

Psalms 18-08-30

This is Thursday, the 30th of August 2018. We're continuing our study in the Hymnal of Ancient Israel, the Book of Psalms, and we pick up tonight in Psalm 12. Psalm 12.

We'll take a moment as we begin to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and our study, and then we'll dive right in. Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for this day and for the wonderful blessings you've bestowed on us. We've had a bounty of rain and of your overarching care for all of us, and individually you work in our lives to give us occasions for growth and to enjoy the hope that we have in the Lord Jesus.

We thank you for those things, and we thank you for the opportunity to spend this time together looking at your Word and hoping to improve our understanding and the application of what we learn in our time that remains to us. We ask that you would be with us and shine the light of your Holy Spirit on these verses from the Psalm that we examine tonight, and may each one be blessed and motivated and encouraged so that we can fulfill your purpose for us both now and in the ages to come. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, I find this a particularly compelling psalm, and you'll see why as we get into it, at least I hope you do. I'm going to be compelled by it whether you are or not, so hopefully you will be.

But I learned something new, and that's always a gratifying thing. I figure that when I feel like I'm not learning anything new, that's going to be the time to stop. That or 40 years, whichever comes first.

I think 40 is a good round number to quit on, so I've got a few years yet, Lord willing. But we start tonight Psalm 12. You'll remember that so far we have seen a peculiar, not peculiar necessarily, but a somewhat obvious pattern in that the psalms seem to be coming in pairs.

Psalm 1 and 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, actually one psalm divided in half. And 11 and 12 we're going to see also seem to be linked in this way. And what I like to think of is that they're leading one to the other in the same way that you often have two hymns that will be sung together because they share a common theme.

Sometimes in a piano arrangement the two will be mixed. It may be hymns about the cross, or about God's grace, or about our journey through this life. And these certainly are linked thematically and even formally in some cases.

But here's the thing that I find even more interesting. This psalm is linked to another psalm, and the link takes us all the way into the New Testament. So let's begin.

We'll read the psalm and then I want to return to the superscription. These superscriptions get short shrift, and I think they are there for a reason, and I think we'll see why tonight. Let's take

a look at Psalm 12.

This is dedicated or sent to the chief musician on an eight-stringed harp, a Psalm of David. Then he begins, Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases, for the faithful disappear from among the sons of men. They speak idly, every one with his neighbor, with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.

May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things, who have said, With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are our own, who is Lord over us? For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy. Now I will arise, says the Lord, I will set him in the safety for which he yearns. The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

You shall keep them, O Lord, you shall preserve them from this generation forever. The wicked prowl on every side when vileness is exalted among the sons of men. Well, the theme here is the predominance, the prevalence, the seeming overwhelming success and visibility of the wicked.

And the aspect of wickedness that is in view is their verbal attack, their verbal assault, the words that they use, the lips that they employ. And in doing this, they oppress the needy and the poor. And there is an appeal to God's promise where he says, Now I will arise and I will set him in safety.

And there is confidence expressed. David says, You will keep them, O Lord, you will preserve them from this generation. And then he closes, as he began, you can see sort of a symmetrical structure here.

You suspect a chiasm is at work. The wicked prowl on every side when vileness is exalted among the sons of men is symmetrical with the godly man ceasing and the faithful disappearing. And instead, there is this idle speech and flattering, double-tongued, double-hearted operation going on.

So that's the general gist of the content. And in keeping with the occurrence in pairs of this thematic material, you'll notice in Psalm 11 that we saw last time, How can you say to my soul, Flee as a bird to the mountain? Look at the wicked. They're bending their bow, making ready their arrow on the string.

The foundations are destroyed. What can the righteous do? Very similar theme about the dominance and prevalence and superior position, seemingly, of the wicked. And so the answer that he gave last time was, beginning in verse 4, The Lord is in his holy temple.

The Lord's throne is in heaven. His eyes behold, and his eyelids are testing the sons of men. He tests the righteous and the wicked and the one who loves violence his soul hates.

He's going to rain coals and fire and brimstone on them. The Lord is righteous. He loves

righteousness.

And so you see the similarity here, the thread that runs through this of the seeming success of the wicked against those who are righteous. And yet, God in heaven sees, knows, and is going to arise and vindicate and justify. And this is important to our hope because, as we've talked about many times in this and other studies, if you expect to be vindicated in the short term, if you, Well, I did what is right.

Why did I still lose my job? Why did things still fall apart? Why did I still fail? Why did things seem to turn out badly when I was trying to do what pleases the Lord? We have to take the longer view. And that's what David is encouraging in both of these Psalms. God is in his heaven.

God does not always act from heaven in an immediate fashion. In fact, he seldom does. He will do it to assure us that he is paying attention and that he will one day vindicate the righteous and execute justice and judgment on the earth.

But it's like the man picking up sticks on the Sabbath. There's a reminder that God is paying attention to those things, but he doesn't strike people dead like Ananias and Sapphira every time they do a bad thing. We wait for the ultimate setting right of things.

And we look to God's past execution of judgment and his past care and rising up on behalf of the righteous and knowing that he will do so again in his time to accomplish his purpose. Well, let's begin here at the beginning now in Psalm 12 to the chief musician. So anytime we see that in the superscription, we know that this is designed for public performance.

This is not a contemplation that David might be playing, you know, to calm himself after a hard day. This is designed for performance and participation in the public. My thought is when David dedicates one to the chief musician, this is one he wants the people to know.

This is supposed to be like the rose called up yonder or rock of ages or greatest by faithfulness or standing on the promises or the hymns that everybody knows or used to know. This is one David hopes will become current and come back to people's minds when they need it in a time of stress. And so anytime my suggestion, and, you know, I wouldn't die for it and I don't know if anybody agrees with me or not, but just think about it.

If you're dedicating this to the chief musician, you're giving it to him, what does he do? He passes out the music to the orchestra and teaches them to perform it. They perform it publicly over and over and people learn it by hearing it. Why is it that generation after generation winds up liking a particular kind of music? In my mother's generation, it was the swing era and the early pop era of the 19th, earlier decades, when my mom was younger.

We won't say which decade it was. It was a few decades ago. Those of us that grew up in the 60s and 70s, you know, you think of the Beatles and you think of the Eagles and you think of, for me, it was a little more Tijuana Brass and things that were current at the time.

But if you grew up in the 1920s, you'd be listening to Paul Whiteman and Whispering, and that was the first million-selling record ever. And so we become acclimatized to what we hear. And if you took all of the kids that are growing up right now listening to whatever that is they're listening to and you could transport them back 30, 40, 50 years, they would like that music.

They would like Tommy Dorsey. They would like, you know, Bing Crosby. They would like Frank Sinatra.

It's what you hear and what reflects your current youth culture now, especially in the last 50, 60 years. The youth culture are the ones that drive taste in music because they've got the money. But the reason I bring that up is David gives this to the chief musician.

This is one that in particular ought to be a part of the common language, the common vocabulary. Why? Well, let's look at the rest of the superscription to see why he wants this to be one of the well-known hymns. And by the way, this is not just well-known in David's day.

They didn't have radio and money-driven music industry in those days. So what becomes traditional in Israel is going to be traditional for centuries, for generations. And there was no thought that, well, what's popular today will be forgotten tomorrow like it is now.

We're such a disposable, castaway culture anymore that, you know, you can't even buy a tie without figuring you won't be able to wear it in public in a few years. But this, David knew that by making it a part of the corpus of national music, that as long as there was a nation, they would know this song. And it would go all the way down, even when the nation is going to be reborn out of its own ashes in a limited sense, down to the time of Christ.

And that's really important. This song was known in the time of Christ. The songs of ascents were known.

Even though there was no longer, for many years, there was no longer a temple to go up to, the songs of ascents were known. But look at the rest of this. It says, On an Eight-Stringed Harp.

On an Eight-Stringed Harp. And when you look at your Hebrew down on your New King James text note, one of the reasons I like the New King James is they'll give you these notes. Do you see down at the bottom, do you have a number two on yours like I do on mine? When it says, On an Eight-Stringed Harp, and down at the bottom, it says Hebrew what? Does it say anything on yours? Have you got a New King James? Oh, well, let me tell you what it says.

It goes down to the bottom and it says, Sheminith. S-H-E-M-I-N-I-T-H. Sheminith, or Shemineth.

Shemineth. And the S-H-M-N are associated in Hebrew with the number eight. Hence their interpretive guess that this was an eight-stringed harp.

Maybe and sort of. But there's a lot of uncertainty about the music of the Ancient Near East. But

I'm going to tell you something that will warm the cockles of at least one person's heart that I know, and it certainly did mine.

David didn't play the harp. Little David, play on your harp. Hallelujah.

I learned that when I was a little kid. You know, we sang it in front of church. Little David, play on your harp.

Well, he didn't play a harp. David played something different. Now, there are two ancient instruments that have come down to us as stringed instruments.

Remember we saw in Psalm 6 where it was talking about Neginoth, and we saw that that was plucking, that's finger picking. What David played was the kinnor, K-I-N-N-O-R. And it is not a harp, it is a lyre, L-Y-R-E.

Now, for bonus points, what's the difference between a harp and a lyre? You'll never get it, let me just tell you. The harp is the more ancient of the two. Here's the evolution in 30 seconds of harps, lyres, and down to our modern stringed instruments.

Initially, way back in the dawn of time, people made bows. You put a string on a stick, your arrow flies, right? You remember that we saw this in Psalm 11, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready the arrow on the string. Well, the bow and the string, they found that when they weren't shooting arrows and they plucked that string, it made a sound.

They said, well, that's interesting. I wonder if I put two or three strings on here, will they make different sounds? And you get two or three different notes because when you tie multiple strings, they're not at the same tension, not the same length. And so this is the origin of the earliest stringed instruments, is the bow with strings across.

Pretty soon, they thought, you know, I can't get too many strings on the bow because as you get closer to the middle, they're not working anymore. So let's put a stick across the bow and run them 90 degrees to the way they were before. Well, so you've got a U shape with a bar across the top and several strings coming down from this cross stick where the old string used to be.

Then that is your harp. And instead of being a solid stick, they found they get a lot more resonance and a lot more tone out of something that was hollow. So they made a hollow body.

They would drill a little hole, put the string through, tie a knot in it, and then run it up to the stick. So a harp has a hollow body with the strings coming down from a stick and the strings go into the hollow body. And this was the ancient instrument with variations for a long time.

But one day, somebody discovered that they could get even better sound if instead of running the strings into the hollow body directly, they had a bridge on the side of the hollow body and ran the strings over the bridge and then attach them. And the vibration of the string is more

fully transmitted into the hollow body by its lateral vibration on a bridge than it is through its end. Make sense? And so the difference between a harp and a lyre is on a harp, the string goes directly into the hollow body.

A lyre has a bridge. It can be very similarly shaped, but the strings go over the bridge and it has a more resonant, pleasing tone and a wider range of tone because of that bridge. So the k-i-n-n-o-r is an ancient lyre.

Now the other thing is the harps were big and vertical, just as they are today. They stand on the ground, right? And harps were vertical. Lyres were initially also vertical.

But beginning somewhere between 3000 BC, somewhere in the vicinity, I mean this is a thousand years before Abraham, 500 years before Abraham, they have found paintings where the nomadic, ancient Near Eastern people, i.e. the Israelites, said, you know, it's a pain lugging this thing around. Have you ever known a kid that was learning the harp or somebody in an orchestra that plays the harp and they're lugging this thing around? It's huge. It's ungainly.

It's unwieldy. So they said, you know what, I'm going to make a smaller one and I'm going to turn it 90 degrees and make the strings run horizontally and I can carry it under my arm and I can plink it. And it is extremely similar to a guitar in that sense.

It has a bridge. It has strings that run sideways that you can play with both sets of fingers, but it's portable. When you're a traveling people, you can just take it with you.

So if you're a shepherd and you're traveling the hills of ancient Judah, do you want one that stands on the ground or do you want one that you can tuck under your arm and walk around and check on the sheep and play it as you're going or sit by your fire into the night and gaze at the stars and listen to the sounds of the night and play this small portable lyre called a kinur? Well, that's David's instrument. So why am I investigating all of this so closely? Because when he says on an eight-stringed harp, the word for harp is not there. This simply says al, which is upon, shemineth.

And so we have to figure out what does shemineth mean? Well, it could mean on the eighth. It's a feminine plural. It could be sheminoth or shemineth, but the ith ending is sort of feminine.

It would be shemonim or something, shemonim if it was going to be masculine. And we have that form in a few places. But the other meaning of shaman, the root, especially if you move the dot from one side of the sheen to the other, and it's a wordplay thing, and the Hebrews are always fond of doing this, it means fat or stout.

And it comes from the idea of eight, but it's distinguished from it by saying an S, a sibilant S instead of an SH sound. But why would it mean fat or stout? Well, seven is the number of completeness, satiety, you're full, you've filled everything up. Eight is superfluity.

This is something my granddad used to say at the end of a meal. He said, I've had my

sufficiency and any more would be a superfluity. And that would be having seven portions and then going on and having an eighth.

Eight is like too much. And so it came to mean fat or stout or substantial, something very solid and of substance. And if you will turn to 1 Corinthians, I probably didn't even get here with my note.

That's okay. I'll figure out where it is. Not 1 Corinthians, 1 Chronicles 15.

1 Chronicles, we'll hope my memory's holding out here. 1 Chronicles 15. Yes.

The old machine is rusty, but it still works. 1 Chronicles 15. And what we're looking at here is starting verse 16, 1 Chronicles 15, 16.

David spoke to the leaders of the Levites. By the way, this is really going somewhere. This is not just music.

So hang on, you'll see why I'm belaboring this in a minute. David spoke to the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers accompanied by instruments of music, stringed instruments, harps, and cymbals by raising the voice with resounding joy. So the Levites appointed all of these guys and you're listing them down.

The singers in verse 19, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan sound the cymbals of bronze. Zechariah, Asael, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Uni, Eliab, Mosiah, and Benaiah with strings according to Alamot. Notice, strings according to Alamot.

Next verse 21, Mattithiah, Eliphileh, Micneah, Obed-Edom, Jehiel, and Azaziah to direct with harps on the Shemineth. Now it's not harps, it's lyres. That's lyres on Shemineth.

And the strings in verse 20, those are the harps. So the harps are on Alamot and the lyres are on Shemineth. I don't have time to agonize through all the Hebrew, just trust me on this.

And the upshot of it is the harps with the strings going into the hollow body, they are better with high notes. They're soprano. It's the upper register.

It's everything above A440. The Shemineth, the stout, fatter, rounder, more solid tones are down below. So when David organizes this orchestra, he's got the harps playing up high and he's got the lyres playing down low because with that bridge, they pick up the vibrations of the low notes, which don't come through the end of the string very well.

And so the lyres are tuned low and the harps are tuned high. So you get this full range of beautiful plucked string accompaniment along with your singers and the rhythm section. So they've basically got a band with percussion, with violins, and with cellos, if you will, except they're not bowed, they're plucked.

But the same sort of range. So upon Shemineth. Now, why would this be important? Could it be

eight strings? It could, but I don't think so because of this passage.

The two kinds of instruments are tuned differently. Now, if it was different strings, why would you say that the lyres are upon Shemineth? Are you taking strings off or adding strings on? They're already built with the number of strings. This isn't the kind of language you would use to denote the number of strings, an eight-stringed lyre.

And plus, all of the pictures I've ever seen, the things have seven strings. All of the detailed pictures, they've got seven strings. But what's really cool is, you remember Herculaneum is the other town that got destroyed along with Vesuvius and Pompeii and Herculaneum? Well, same thing, they found murals and pictures and all of that.

And there's a great picture, somebody's mural on their living room wall, and it shows these little winged, when I was little, they called them little winged cherubs, you know, little angelic creatures, but these are like something the Romans would have believed in. They wouldn't know the word cherub, but they're little winged chubby babies playing an instrument. And it is a lyre, but it's got 12 strings and it's got a whammy bar.

You can see detail, and they found drawings in other places where there was actually springs, metal springs put into these later lyres that allowed for vibrato. And there's a spring system, and the third little nymph on the right, if you look at him, he's got a pick, it's a plectrum, it looks like a short butter knife kind of, but it's made out of something. But he's playing the strings with a pick, and his left hand is on a whammy bar.

It's a 12 string guitar in Herculaneum back in the days of Vesuvius. And the other two are operating other parts, you know, sounding notes or whatever, but he's picking the thing and hitting the whammy bar. It's amazing.

But the reason I'm bringing this up is that as we saw, and I know it got kind of obscure, but you just have to trust me, and you have to really kind of know Hebrew and just have your head inside this particular space on Psalm 9 and 10 with that acrostic and the missing letters. There's a code there. There is superimposed information.

The form is communicating in the same way that the content communicates. And the Lord Jesus, I am convinced in my own mind, I'm the only person that thinks this, I'm the only person that's ever talked about it that I can find, but there is coded information in the form of Psalm 9 and 10 that I think the Lord Jesus Christ was aware of as he managed the group of disciples. And there's a lot in there.

And maybe one of these days I'll write it up in some kind of a coherent form where I don't have to try to get it across in a 35-minute lesson or a 55-minute lesson even. But let me say this. This one is easier, but it's the same kind of thing.

Okay, so having stuck with me this long, here's what I'm driving at. You know this word shemineth even though you don't think you know it, but you do. You've heard it many, many

times, but you just don't know that you've heard it.

Let me start with the Hebrew word for winepress. The Hebrew word for winepress was also the name of a famous Philistine city where David went when Saul was chasing him. And later on he went there and he let the spit run down his beard.

You remember the name of that city, Philistine city? Gath. Gath is the Hebrew word for winepress. Okay, there's several town and village names that are like gath heifer and gath this and gath that, but the plain old gath means winepress.

So let's say you have a winepress, but it's a special winepress. It's unique in some way. Maybe you've got eight winepresses all in one place, although I don't think that's it.

But maybe you've got a really heavy duty stout winepress. You've got the biggest winepress in the area. This is the monster caterpillar tractor of winepresses.

And so what you call it is gath shemineth. Say that to yourself a few times quickly. Gethsemane.

Gethsemane. Gath shemineth. That's where the name comes from.

You know the cave they found the cave. They've seen the notches in the wall where the great huge beams went in, and they had giant rocks, and they could press grapes. They could press olives, but it started out as a grape press and became used for olives.

You could press anything in there. You put your stuff in. It's like your, you know, vegematic.

Whatever you put in, it's going to press. So gath shemineth is gethsemane. Now in the entire 150 song songbook of ancient Israel, there are only two psalms that have upon shemineth in their title.

Only two. This is one of them. The other one we've already studied.

Do you remember? I mentioned it just as a teaser about 15 minutes ago. Remember neganath, upon neganath, upon shemineth. Remember neganath was plucked.

Shemineth is the low register, the the bigger. This is like a jumbo guitar. This is one that's got the, I was reading, there's a really really fantastically talented Russian guitarist, and I was looking, he's got a custom-made guitar that's modeled after a Taylor, but it's got extremely well-defined mid and low range tones.

The thing sustains all day long. He can hit a note, and you can go make a sandwich and come back, and the note is still sounding. It's just the most amazing guitar I think I've ever heard, and I've heard a lot of nice ones.

But the mid to low tones, when you can get that to come out of a stringed instrument, it's just gorgeous. I think my favorite orchestra instrument is the cello, because it's just so evocative

and well played. There's just nothing like it, but it's that low register.

That's what shemineth is. It's the fat, round, solid, lower register. But you can imagine also that you can play a lot of somber and sober music in that range.

You're not playing the flute and dancing. You're not playing the high banjo notes or the little mandolin notes up high for people to do a Virginia Reel or something. You're down in that low register.

The other song was Psalm 6. Psalm 6 and Psalm 12. Now you think about the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane, and when he finds himself in Gethsemane on the night before he is going to be crucified, and he's rehearsing the Word of God in his mind, do you think it's possible that he would go back to the two songs his great-great-grandfather David wrote upon shemineth? One of them is this one. The other one, just go back and review it real quickly.

Psalm 6. You may not remember the content of that, but in the light of what we've just discussed, listen to these words once again in Psalm 6. O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger, nor chasten me in your hot displeasure. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak. O Lord, heal me, for my bones are troubled.

My soul is also greatly troubled. But you, O Lord... And then he just breaks off. How long? Return, O Lord, deliver me.

O save me for your mercy's sake. For in death, no remembrance of you. In the grave, who will give you thanks? I am weary with my groaning.

All night I make my bed swim. I drench my couch with my tears. My eye wastes away because of grief.

It grows old because of all my enemies. Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity, for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord has heard my supplication.

The Lord will receive my prayer. Let all my enemies be ashamed and greatly troubled. Let them turn back and be ashamed suddenly.

And you know who it was who did not turn back and who relied on the grace of his father to go forward, and he drank the cup. The other song is our song tonight, Psalm 12. And read this one again with maybe a little bit of fresh light on it.

Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases. The faithful disappear from among the sons of men. Where were the three disciples Jesus took with him to the private place in Gethsemane to pray? They fell asleep.

They failed. They weren't there. And what kind of accusations were brought against the Lord that are coming to a head on that fateful night? They speak idly, everyone with his neighbor, with flattering lips.

This is literally, in Hebrew, smooth lips. It's insinuations. It's well orchestrated.

You remember how they twisted his words? This man said that he could destroy the temple and build it back in three days. It wasn't what Jesus said. Did he talk about the temple being destroyed and he would rebuild it in three days? He didn't say he was going to destroy it, but they just took his words and twisted them.

They made all of these accusations that were insinuations and falsely motivated. With a double heart, they speak. May the Lord cut off all smooth lips and the tongue that speaks proud things.

Who have said, with our tongue we will prevail. We'll make these accusations. We'll get the Romans to crucify him.

We'll trump up these charges. We'll say he's a troublemaker. He's spoken against Caesar.

He's going to be the king instead of Caesar. We have no king but Caesar. Smooth words, double-tongued.

Our lips are our own. Who is Lord over us? What do they say when Pilate brings him out? Behold your king, Pilate says. What do they say? Who is master over us? Not this man.

We have no king but Caesar. For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now I will arise, says the Lord. I will set him in the safety for which he yearns.

The words of the Lord are pure words like silver tried in a furnace of earth. What did Jesus say about the sign of Jonah? As Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, the Son of Man will be where? In the heart of the earth. And this purification seven times, Shemineth goes to eight.

It's turned all the way up and then some. You shall keep them, O Lord. You shall preserve them from this generation.

From this generation. This generation seeks a sign. No sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah.

But you will preserve the righteous from this generation. The wicked prowled on every side when vileness is exalted among the sons of men. Upon Shemineth, the winepress of God's wrath.

Well, there's a lot more that we can see in this psalm, but it is amazing how much you can find just even in the superscription. And we haven't even gotten to the content yet. But you know how sometimes when a passage is meaningful to you, you'll highlight it or you'll put a star by it or you'll keep the bookmark of your Bible at a particular page where you want to turn.

And you can imagine the Lord Jesus as He learned and memorized scripture after scripture and as He operated in His ministry and went about and they would come from time to time to this winepress area. It wasn't the first time they'd been there. But He knew on that night there was

a bookmark in His soul for these passages.

Wait until we get into the early 20s of the psalms. Turn a few pages over. If you don't think these psalms were on the Lord's mind, look at Psalm 22.

What are the first words in Psalm 22? And of course this is later in that same string of events. So what do we bring from this for ourselves? Even though we've not delved into the content, this is an age where so much is done verbally. People's careers are made because they get picked on some television show to be America's next big thing.

They win on The Voice or they outsing everybody else. It's all about achievement that doesn't involve building anything or fixing anything or helping anyone. It is a victory of entertainment.

It is a victory of capturing the adulation of others. Not because you served your country, not because you made it through tough times, not because you have accomplished anything that reflects the glory of God. It's all about the glory of you and whatever vocal talent you inherited.

Not just that, but you look at the sweeping tides and waves of the troubled sea on the internet with what is said. And somebody can be made in a day and they can be destroyed in an hour with innuendo and with misreporting and leaving things out and accentuating things. And by the time the truth comes out, the person, it's too late for them.

There's no rehabilitation. They can't come back. It's all smooth lips and everybody wants to jump on a bandwagon of correctness.

As I mentioned a little while back, if you want some entertaining reading and some informative reading and some insightful, at least it'll give us insight into what's going on, look into a little bit this idea of the social justice warrior and how from the comfort of your armchair, you can opine and you can rally for some cause, somebody that you feel has not gotten their just desserts. You don't actually do anything. You just talk a big fight.

You're for it. And you chime in when other people are for it. And it's all a big conversation.

What does it do? The poor are just as poor. The victims of bigotry and insensitivity are just as victimized. But you've talked a big fight and you feel better.

And everybody that's chimed in, it's all a big self-congratulatory little circle of well-thinking. But you haven't done anything. You haven't invested yourself.

You haven't sacrificed anything. You're playing to the crowd for your own advancement and to be well thought of yourself. You want to be well thought of because of what you're for, but you're for it in the abstract.

You're not for it by doing anything. Well, that's what this is, the tongue that speaks proud things. With our tongue, we will prevail.

And in Hebrew, this is very graphic. It has the idea of I am marshalling an army to accomplish this victory. And it's an army of words.

The words are going to do it. I'm sending my words out. They're going to fight the battle.

I'm back here in the rear, marshalling the forces and sending them hither and yon. And they say the pen is mightier than the sword. The pen is mightier than the sword until the guy with the sword walks in.

You pick up your pen. I'll pick up my sword. We'll see how long that lasts.

The only reason people can be mighty with a pen is that somebody with a sword has already created the environment and the freedom where you can speak your mind. There would be no pens. There would be no computers.

There would be no internet if it wasn't for the greatest generation winning a couple of world wars and establishing the industrial prosperity and the basis upon which everybody can now sit around and further away their time opining. The sword always comes first. Then the pen can be mighty.

But the pen doesn't actually do anything. If somebody is inspired by words, the inspiration does nothing until they act on the inspiration. Your knowledge of the Word of God can be a wonderful thing, but until you act on it, until you apply it, until it makes a difference in what you do.

I want you to notice that the Word of the Lord are pure words purified seven times, like silver tried in a furnace of earth. There's a little bit of textual obscurity we'll look at next time. Purified seven times.

What is the contrast here? Notice that that's in the center. We'll look at that structure, but in the center it's the words of the Lord. They have value.

They have intrinsic value like highly refined silver. Those are the words that last. Those are the words that are eternal.

Those are the words that make a difference. When we incorporate those into our thinking, into our talking, and into our doing, that's what makes the difference. That's what makes the difference.

It is the words of the Lord. So we'll get into the content here next time, but what do you think sustained the Lord Jesus through the darkest hours of his life? It was the same thing he told Satan at the very outset of his ministry. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

The words that come from God, and this is rhema. These are spoken words. These are the things that God has said.

When God speaks, things happen. When he says, let there be light, there is light. When he says, let there be, there is.

These are action words. When God loves, it's an active love. It makes things happen.

We don't want to be warriors that talk a great fight. We want to be those who make and who do. We'll see the verb *assah* in here next time.

To make or to do. It is something that happens, but it all begins with the word of the Lord. That is the word that secures our salvation.

That is the word that grants us eternal life. That's the word that assigned us as members in the body of Christ. That's the word that assures us of resurrection and of eternal opportunity.

It's God's word, and look at the things that flow out of it. They're not abstractions. They're not just wonderful aphorisms.

God's word makes things happen. The word of men is all lips and tongues, and God's going to cut them off. There's kind of a graphic picture there.

You're proud, boasting. Try that with no lips. Try that with no tongue.

It's a sobering thought. Well, let's close here in a word of prayer, and we'll get into the meat of this next time. Father, thank you for the truth of your word and not only its content, but its form and the many levels and layers that reflect the divine authorship of our scriptures.

We thank you for your Holy Spirit that can read us into the truths that are beyond the reach of our mortal minds and our human brains. We pray that as we reflect on these truths and as we look at their pertinence and their application in our lives, that your Holy Spirit will be our teacher and will help us to see clearly how we can live more fully dedicated to your purpose, more fully reflecting the glory of the Lord Jesus who died to give us these privileges. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.