

Psalm 12: The Faithful Disappear
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The substance of this Psalm of David seems to be expressed in the first verse. As David looks around, it seems as though the righteous are vanishing from the earth. Fewer and fewer seek God, while those who reject God seem to abound. What David says 3000 years ago is not too different from our thoughts today.

Do you ever feel that righteousness is decreasing? When you consider this question statistically, the numbers suggest that fewer people attend any church services. One poll (churchleaders.com) indicates that only 25% of Americans regularly attend church of any kind. Another study suggests that the most rapid rise in religion is with those who identify as having “no religious affiliation”. Perhaps this is something observed more personally. Congregations that once measure in the hundreds only have a few dozen members. Congregations that once stood firm in truth are compromising on doctrine and practice. Our fearful observation is the same as David: the faithful disappear.

The feeling that we are alone is nothing new. Consider Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-5), who declared that “I alone remain faithful”. David wrote in Psalm 53:2-4 that there are none righteous. Ezekiel told God that there would soon be no one good left (Ezekiel 9:8-9) as did his contemporary Jeremiah (Jeremiah 15:10-17). There are many times when righteous men and women felt as David did, and as we often do too. From Noah being only one of eight to Jesus alone in the garden, many have had to be alone in their burdens.

But sometimes things are not as they seem. There are three truths to consider. First, that in the moment we feel alone we are not as alone as we think. Second, that when we look back and believe things were once better, we were actually more alone than we thought. Finally, we may not appreciate that from the divine perspective it is ultimately good that we seem alone.

First, consider God’s responses to those who declared they were alone. God said to Elijah that there are still other believers he did not know about in Israel. Then consider what David said about his petition; God made it clear that He was with Him. Even the angels came to comfort Jesus. Then think about what God said to Jeremiah: *Help will come from where you least expect it.* All of these things are true today too.

Second, when we look at numbers and think that faith is in decline, we are not appreciating that we (true believers) have ALWAYS been few. Most who we “feel” are forsaking the Lord were never obedient to the Gospel. Instead, they were “Christian” merely by culture. As our culture changes, the concept of cultural Christianity also changes. Being a cultural Christian (calling themselves Christian merely because society expected it) is not real Christianity; it is the form of Godliness Paul warned of in 2 Timothy 3:5. Our society merely has a fading form of Godliness.

Finally, maybe these changes are better than we realized. We should understand that false professions of godliness are evil before God. But consider how “cultural Christianity” hurts true believers. Jesus said this in Matthew 13:25-40 and the Parable of the tares. Cultural Christianity has deceived many, and many have fallen by its deception. God desires that false faith is destroyed; its decline may be a divine goal. Too, greater good comes from being unique. Consider what Peter said in 1 Peter 1:6-7; the purification of our faith makes it precious to God. God desires that we are the light of the world, and false faith diminishes the light of true faith.

We need to learn to trust God. We should not worry about being “few”; God knows that this is always true. We need to see that being precious means being rare. As well, we should not listen to worldly

statistics. These numbers are always done with “forms of godliness”, so truth is not found in statistics. What we should worry about joining the “many”; many think they are on the right path, but Jesus said in Matthew 7 that this has always been away to destruction. Finally, we should never worry about the Way of Christ vanishing for two simple reasons: first, Sin will always exist. Second, the Gospel will always exist. Thus the Way will never go away.

The word of God lives and abides forever, because “all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. the grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the LORD endures forever.” Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

1 Peter 1:23a-25