
For the Chief Musician. A contemplation by David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, "David has come to Abimelech's house."

PSALM 52: 1 Why do you boast of mischief, mighty man? God's loving kindness endures continually.

The psalmist points out the malevolence of a powerful enemy, and predicts his destruction, Psa 52:1-5. At which destruction the righteous should rejoice, Psa 52:6, Psa 52:7. The psalmist's confidence on God, Psa 52:8, Psa 52:9.

The title is, "To the chief Musician, an instructive Psalm of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and informed Saul, and said to him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech." The history to which this alludes is the following: David, having learned that Saul was determined to destroy him, went to take refuge with Achish, king of Gath: in his journey he passed by Nob, where the tabernacle then was, and took thence the sword of Goliath; and, being spent with hunger, took some of the shewbread. Doeg, an Edomite, one of the domestics of Saul, being there, went to Saul, and informed him of these transactions. Saul immediately ordered Ahimelech into his presence, upbraided him for being a partisan of David, and ordered Doeg to slay him and all the priests. Doeg did so, and there fell by his hand eighty-five persons. And Saul sent and destroyed Nob and all its inhabitants, old and young, with all their property; none escaping but Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, who immediately joined himself to David. The account may be found 1Sam 21:1-7; 1Sam 22:9-23. All the Versions agree in this title except the Syriac, which speaks of it as a Psalm directed against vice in general, with a prediction of the destruction of evil.

Though the Psalm be evidently an invective against some great, wicked, and tyrannical man, yet I think it too mild in its composition for a transaction the most barbarous on record, and the most flagrant vice in the whole character of Saul.

Verse 1

Why boastest thou thyself - It is thought that Doeg boasted of his loyalty to Saul in making the above discovery; but the information was aggravated by circumstances of falsehood that tended greatly to inflame and irritate the mind of Saul. Exaggeration and lying are common to all informers.

O mighty man? - This character scarcely comports with Doeg, who was only chief of the herdsmen of Saul, 1Sam 21:7; but I grant this is not decisive evidence that the Psalm may not have Doeg in view, for the chief herdsman may have been a man of credit and authority.

PSALM 52: 2 Your tongue plots destruction, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.

Verse 2

Deviseth mischiefs - Lies and slanders proceeding from the tongue argue the desperate wickedness of the heart.

Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully - Which instead of taking off the beard, cuts and wounds the flesh; or as the operator who, when pretending to trim the beard, cuts the throat.

PSALM 52: 3 You love evil more than good, lying rather than speaking the truth. Selah.

Verse 3

Thou lovest evil - This was a finished character. Let us note the particulars:

1. He boasted in the power to do evil.
 2. His tongue devised, studied, planned, and spoke mischiefs.
 3. He was a deceitful worker.
 4. He loved evil and not good.
 5. He loved lying; his delight was in falsity.
 6. Every word that tended to the destruction of others he loved.
 7. His tongue was deceitful; he pretended friendship while his heart was full of enmity, Psa 52:1-4. Now behold the punishment: -
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PSALM 52: 4 You love all devouring words, you deceitful tongue.

PSALM 52: 5 God will likewise destroy you forever. He will take you up, and pluck you out of your tent, and root you out of the land of the living. Selah.

Verse 5

God shall likewise destroy thee -

1. God shall set himself to destroy thee; יתצח yittotscha, "he will pull down thy building;" he shall unroof it, dilapidate, and dig up thy foundation.
 2. He shall bruise or break thee to pieces for ever; thou shalt have neither strength, consistence, nor support.
 3. He will mow thee down, and sweep thee away like dust or chaff, or light hay in a whirlwind, so that thou shalt be scattered to all the winds of heaven. Thou shalt have no residence, no tabernacle: that shall be entirely destroyed. Thou shalt be rooted out for ever from the land of the living. The bad fruit which it has borne shall bring God's curse upon the tree; it shall not merely wither, or die, but it shall be plucked up from the roots, intimating that such a sinner shall die a violent death. Selah. So it shall be, and so it ought to be.
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PSALM 52: 6 The righteous also will see it, and fear, and laugh at him, saying,

Verse 6

The righteous also shall see, and fear - The thing shall be done in the sight of the saints; they shall see God's judgments on the workers of iniquity; and they shall fear a God so holy and just, and feel the necessity of being doubly on their guard lest they fall into the same condemnation. But instead of ויראו veyirau, "and they shall fear," three of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., with the Syriac, have וישמחו veyismachu, "and shall rejoice;" and, from the following words, "and shall laugh at him," this appears to be the true reading, for laughing may be either the consequence or accompaniment of rejoicing.

PSALM 52: 7 "Behold, this is the man who didn't make God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness."

Verse 7

Made not God his strength - Did not make God his portion.

In the abundance of his riches - Literally, in the multiplication of his riches. He had got much, he hoped to get more, and expected that his happiness would multiply as his riches multiplied. And this is the case with most rich men.

Strengthened himself in his wickedness - Loved money instead of God; and thus his depravity, being increased, was strengthened.

Crescit amor nummi, quantum ipsa pecunia crescit. "In proportion to the increase of wealth, so is the love of it."

Where is the religious man, in whose hands money has multiplied, who has not lost the spirit of piety in the same ratio? To prevent this, and the perdition to which it leads, there is no way but opening both hands to the poor.

PSALM 52: 8 But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in God's house. I trust in God's loving kindness forever and ever.

Verse 8

But I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God - I shall be in the house of God, full of spiritual vigor, bringing forth evergreen leaves and annual fruit, as the olive does when planted in a proper soil and good situation. It does not mean that there were olive-trees planted in God's house; but he was in God's house, as the olive was in its proper place and soil.

I trust in the mercy of God - The wicked man trusts in his riches: I trust in my God. He, like a bad tree, bringing forth poisonous fruit, shall be cursed, and pulled up from the roots; I, like a healthy olive in a good soil, shall, under the influence of God's mercy, bring forth fruit to his glory. As the olive is ever green, so shall I flourish in the mercy of God for ever and ever.

PSALM 52: 9 I will give you thanks forever, because you have done it. I will hope in your name, for it is good, in the presence of your saints.

Verse 9

I will praise thee for ever - Because I know that all my good comes from thee; therefore, will I ever praise thee for that good.

I will wait on thy name - I will expect all my blessings from the all-sufficient Jehovah, who is eternal and unchangeable.

It is good before thy saints - It is right that I should expect a continuation of thy blessings by uniting with thy saints in using thy ordinances. Thus I shall wait.