

PSALM 52

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 52

*To the chief Musician, Maschil, [A Psalm] of David,
when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him,
David is come to the house of Ahimelech*

Of the title “Maschil”, (see Gill on “^{f693}Psalm 32:1”), title. The occasion of this psalm is here related, the history of which is in (^{f694}1 Samuel 21:7 22:8-10,18,21,22). The sum of it is this; David having fled from Saul, came to Ahimelech the priest at Nob, and desired bread and a sword of him, which were given him, Doeg the Edomite being present at the same time. Sulpicius Severus ^{f694} calls him a Syrian, following the Greek version of (^{f695}1 Samuel 21:7 22:9,18,22); and so does Josephus ^{f695}, through a mistake of the letter **d** for **r**, an Aramite instead of an Edomite; (see Gill on “^{f696}1 Samuel 21:7”) and (see Gill on “^{f697}1 Samuel 22:9”); this man observed what was done for David by the priest; and when Saul complained to his captains that they all conspired against him, and no man was sorry for him, or showed him the intrigue between David and his son; Doeg stood up and related what, and more than what he had heard and seen pass between David and Ahimelech; upon which Saul sent for the priest, and all his father’s house with him, and charged him with treasonable practices; and though he solemnly protested his innocency, Saul would not believe him, but ordered his footmen to fall upon him, and upon all the priests with him; but they refusing, he commanded Doeg to do it, who accordingly did, and slew eighty five priests, and destroyed all in the city of Nob, men, women, children, and sucklings, oxen, asses, and sheep; only Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, escaped, who fled to David, and reported the whole affair; upon which he penned this psalm: in which he has respect not only to the then present case, but to future times, Doeg being a type of antichrist, the man of sin; in his name, which signifies “anxious [and] solicitous” ^{f696}, as he was to gain the king’s favour, and obtain wealth and honour; so is antichrist to grasp all power, civil and ecclesiastical, and to get worldly honour and riches: in the country he was of, being an Edomite; and it is easy to observe, that Edom is the name

which the Jews commonly give to the Roman empire, in which antichrist has his seat and power: in his religion, being a proselyte of the Jews, and was at an act of devotion, detained before the Lord, when he saw and heard what passed between David and Ahimelech; so antichrist appeared with the mask of religion, rose up out of the church, and sat in the temple of God, showing himself as though he was God: in his office, the chiefest of the herdmen, or mightiest among the shepherds of Saul; so antichrist calls himself “*princeps pastorum*”, that is, “the chief of pastors”; assuming to himself the title which belongs to Christ, the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls: and, lastly, in his cruelty in slaying the priests of the Lord. Antichrist is notorious for shedding and drinking the blood of the saints, the faithful confessors and witnesses of Jesus Christ. In this psalm David upbraids him with his glorying in his wickedness, and checks it by observing that the grace and goodness of God to his people ever endures, (^{<1514>}Psalm 52:4); charges him with devising mischief, and loving it, (^{<1512>}Psalm 52:2-4); and foretells his everlasting ruin and destruction, (^{<1515>}Psalm 52:5); which will be seen by the righteous with pleasure, who will have just reason to insult over him, (^{<1516>}Psalm 52:6,7); and the psalm is concluded with an account of the happy condition and comfortable frame of soul the psalmist was in, in a view of all his troubles and enemies; he was flourishing in the church of God, trusted in the mercy of God for ever, and determined always to praise him and wait upon him, which is good for the saints to do, (^{<1518>}Psalm 52:8,9).

Ver. 1. *Why boastest thou thyself in mischief?* etc.] Or “in evil”^{f697}; in that which is sinful; to glory in riches, wisdom, and strength, which are not in themselves evil, is wrong; and to rejoice in such boastings, all such rejoicing is evil; to be a doer of mischief, or sin, is bad; to make a sport of it, worse; but to glory in it, and boast of it when done, is worse still: to be boasters of evil things, is the character of antichrist and his followers, (^{<1512>}Timothy 3:2); who not only boast of their merit, their good works, and works of supererogation, and of their riches, and honour, and grandeur, saying, “I sit as a queen”, (^{<1517>}Revelation 18:7); but of their wickedness in shedding the blood of the saints, thinking thereby they do God good service, and merit heaven, and eternal happiness; as Doeg boasted of his slaughter of the priests, and of his gaining the king’s favour by it;

O mighty man! referring either to his office, being the chief of Saul’s herdmen, and set over his servants, (^{<1517>}1 Samuel 21:7 22:9); or ironically, to the mighty deed he had done, in slaying the unarmed priests, and putting

to death the very sucklings at the breast, and even the innocent sheep, oxen, and asses; or to his great wickedness and power to commit it; though man has no power and free will to that which is good, yet he has to that which is evil; so the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and the eastern versions render it, “O thou! mighty in wickedness”; and to the same purpose the Targum paraphrases it, “mighty to shed innocent blood”; and the note of Aben Ezra is, “mighty to do evil”. A learned writer^{f698} thinks this relates to Saul, and describes him as a man of power and dignity. The character well agrees with the little horn and Romish beast, (²⁰⁷⁰Daniel 7:20 ⁶¹³¹Revelation 13:2,4,7);

the goodness of God [endureth] continually: that is, the love, grace, and mercy of God; this is observed as what is the matter of the saints’ boasting, in opposition to the wicked boasting of Doeg; they glory in the love of God, and in that they know him who exerciseth lovingkindness, which is the source of all the blessings of grace and goodness; and in Christ, through whom all are communicated to them; and in him, as made every blessing to them, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: they ascribe the whole of their salvation, and all they have, to the grace of God, and glory in nothing as of themselves, and as though not received of the Lord. Moreover, the psalmist may take notice of this, as what was his support under all the persecutions he endured from men; that he had an interest in the grace and goodness of God, which is immutable and everlasting, invariably the same in all states and conditions; and that he was encompassed about with the favour of God as with a shield; and that it was not in the power of his most implacable enemies to separate him from the love of God; and therefore it was egregious folly in Doeg to boast himself in mischief; for, be he as mighty as he might, he could not prevent his sharing in the divine goodness, which always continues.

Ver. 2. *Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs*, etc.] Abundance of mischiefs, in a variety of ways, against many persons, even all good men. What properly belongs to the heart is here ascribed to the tongue; because, as Aben Ezra observes, it is the interpreter and discoverer of the thoughts of the heart: out of the abundance of that the tongue speaks and declares the mischief it has devised. Doeg intended mischief to David, when he spoke to Saul, (⁶²²¹1 Samuel 22:9,10); so antichrist devises mischiefs against the saints of the most High, to wear them out, and thinks to change times and laws, (²⁰⁷⁵Daniel 7:25);

like a sharp razor, working deceitfully; that is, his tongue was like a razor; the razor is but a small instrument, and the tongue is but a little member: the razor is a sharp and cutting one, and so is the tongue; and therefore compared to a sharp sword, (^{<35704>}Psalm 57:4); (see ^{<34818>}Jeremiah 18:18); the razor takes off the beard cleanly and wholly; Doeg's tongue was the cause of the utter ruin of Ahimelech's family and the city of Nob; and as a razor may be said to "work deceitfully", when it turns aside in the hand of him that useth it, and with the hair takes off more than it should, even skin and flesh, or cuts the man's throat; so in a deceitful and insidious manner did Doeg work the destruction of Ahimelech and the priests of the Lord.

Ver. 3. *Thou lovest evil more than good*, etc.] Indeed not good at all; such comparatives being strong negatives; (see ^{<49318>}Psalm 118:8,9); a wicked man loves evil, and nothing else; his carnal mind being enmity to all that is good

[*and*] *lying rather than to speak righteousness*; as appears by his affirming that Ahimelech inquired of the Lord for David, when he did not, (^{<10210>}1 Samuel 22:10,15); and by suffering some things to pass for truths which were falsehoods, when it lay in his power to have disproved them: and such a lover of lies is antichrist; (see ^{<5002>}1 Timothy 4:2 ^{<5121>}2 Thessalonians 2:11).

Selah; on this word, (see Gill on "^{<4180>}Psalm 3:2"). The Targum renders the word "Selah" here "for ever", as in (^{<4915>}Psalm 52:5).

Ver. 4. *Thou lovest all devouring words*, etc.] Or "words of swallowing up"^{f699}; such as lies, calumnies, and detractions are, which devour the characters and reputations of men, and are the cause sometimes of their utter ruin and destruction; of the devouring and blasphemous words of antichrist (see ^{<6635>}Revelation 13:5,6);

O [thou] deceitful tongue; (see Gill on "^{<4910>}Psalm 52:2").

Ver. 5. *God shall likewise destroy thee for ever*, etc.] As a just retaliation for the mischief done to others; or, "therefore God shall destroy"^{f700}, etc. even body and soul in hell, with an everlasting destruction, which will be the case of every wicked man, and particularly of the antichristian party, (^{<6440>}Revelation 14:10,11); the word is used of breaking down the house in which the leprosy was, (^{<13445>}Leviticus 14:45); and denotes the utter extinction of Doeg's family, and the irrecoverable ruin of antichrist, (^{<6682>}Revelation 18:21);

he shall take thee away; as fire from the hearth, (^{<2304>}Isaiah 30:14); or as burning coals from the altar: a word from the root here used signifies a censer: and the meaning is, that as his tongue was a fire, and set on fire of hell, and he was as a burning coal, he was fit for nothing but to be cast into everlasting burnings;

and pluck thee out of [thy] dwelling place; “tent”, or “tabernacle” ^{f701}; referring to the tents of shepherds, he being the chief of Saul’s shepherds, or to some stately palace he had built for himself to dwell in, upon his advancement at court; or rather to the tabernacle of the Lord, where he had been an hypocritical worshipper; but now should be cut off from the church of God, as a rotten member, and cast out of the tabernacle of Jacob, (^{<3022>}Malachi 2:12); while David flourished as an olive tree in the house of the Lord, (^{<4518>}Psalms 52:8);

and root thee out of the land of the living. In retaliation for his rooting out Ahimelech’s family, and the inhabitants of Nob; so in like manner he and his should be destroyed root and branch, and not see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, nor enjoy eternal life in the world to come.

Selah; on this word, (see Gill on “^{<4822>}Psalms 3:2”). The Targum renders the word “Selah” here “for ever”, as in (^{<4518>}Psalms 52:3).

Ver. 6. *The righteous also shall see*, etc.] The Targum adds, “the punishment of the wicked”; particularly what is before predicted of Doeg. The judgments of God upon the ungodly, as they are certain, so they will be visible, either in this world, or in that to come, (^{<6151>}Revelation 15:4 ^{<2364>}Isaiah 66:24);

and fear; the Targum adds, “from before the Lord”; not with a slavish fear, with a dread of the same punishment, from which they are free, through the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, by which they are denominated righteous ones; though the judgments of God on others strike them with solemn awe and reverence, (^{<43922>}Psalms 119:120), but with a filial godly fear; with a fear of God for his goodness to them, in delivering them out of the hands of wicked men, which engages them more and more to fear the Lord, and to serve and worship him; (see ^{<6151>}Revelation 15:4);

and shall laugh at him; at Doeg; and so at any other wicked man, when they see the vengeance of God upon him, (^{<4580>}Psalms 58:10); not that they rejoice at that, barely considered in itself, or as it is an evil and mischief to wicked men; for that does not become them, (^{<2147>}Proverbs 24:17,18); but

as it is expressive of the care of God over them, and love to them, in avenging their enemies; and more especially as the glory of divine justice is displayed therein; (see ^{<6681>}Revelation 18:20 19:1,2); for all this will be eminently fulfilled in the destruction of antichrist.

Ver. 7. *Lo, [this is] the man [that] made not God his strength,* etc.] The Targum renders it, “that made not the Word of the Lord his strength”. These are the words the righteous would say, when they should see the destruction of Doeg: see the man, the mighty man, and his end; what all his ill gotten honour and riches are come to; and what his wickedness, deceit, and cruelty, have brought upon him. The righteous make the Lord their strength, put their trust in him, in whom is everlasting strength; do all they do in his strength; fly to him as their “strong hold”, as the word ^{f702} may be rendered; thither they run, and are safe: but the rich man’s wealth is his strong city, (^{<2080>}Proverbs 18:10,11); there he thinks himself safe, and places his confidence in it, as follows:

but trusted in the abundance of his riches; (see Gill on “^{<3986>}Psalm 49:6”); so the antichristian whore is represented as boasting of her riches and honour, and trusting in them, that they would always continue, (^{<6817>}Revelation 18:7); like the fool in (^{<2129>}Luke 12:19,20);

[and] strengthened himself in his wickedness; encouraged and hardened himself in sin, gave up himself to it; and, by art obstinate continuance in it, strengthened the vicious habits contracted; stretched out his hand against God, and strengthened himself against the Almighty; went on in a daring manner, promising himself impunity; and as if his wickedness was his strength, his safeguard and protection: or in his mammon, his wealth and substance; as the Targum interprets it; and so R. Saadiah Gaon ^{f703}, and with which the Syriac version agrees; and then the sense is the same with the other clause. But, alas! what are all such forces of strength, when wrath comes forth from the Lord of hosts? (^{<3368>}Job 36:18,19 ^{<2104>}Proverbs 11:4).

Ver. 8. *But I [am] like a green olive tree in the house of God,* etc.] Or rather it should be supplied, “I shall be” ^{f704}; since David was at this time an exile from the house of God: and this expresses his faith and confidence, that, notwithstanding his present troubles, he should be restored again, and be in a very flourishing condition, in the church of God; which is here meant by “the house of God”: it being of his building, and where he dwells, and where to have a place is the great privilege of the saints; they are planted there by the Lord himself, and shall never be rooted up; they are

fixed there, and shall never go out; which was David's confidence, (⁴²²¹⁶Psalm 23:6); and where he believed he should be as "a green olive tree"; which is a very choice and fruitful tree, has fatness in it, produces an excellent oil; is beautiful to look at; delights in hot climates and sunny places; is found on mountains, we read of the mount of Olives; is ever green and durable, and its leaves and branches are symbols of peace: all which is applicable to truly righteous persons and believers in Christ; who are the excellent of the earth, are filled with the fruits of righteousness; are fat and flourishing; have the oil of grace, the anointing which teacheth all things; are a perfection of beauty, made perfectly comely through Christ's comeliness; thrive under him, the sun of righteousness; grow in the mountain of the Lord's house, the church: their grace is incorruptible, their leaf withers not; they are rooted in Christ, and ever continue; they are the sons of peace, and their last end will be eternal peace. Now as such David was assured he should be, when his enemy would be rooted up out of the land of the living, and cast like a dry and worthless branch into everlasting burnings; the ground of which confidence follows:

I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever; the mercy of God is not only an encouragement to trust, but the object of it; not the absolute mercy of God, but the grace and goodness of God in Christ Jesus, which endures continually, (⁴⁵²¹¹Psalm 52:1); and so does hope in it, which never makes ashamed, but abides to the end. The psalmist seems to have respect to the mercy promised him, that he should sit upon the throne. This he believed, and therefore was assured he should be in the flourishing circumstances in the house of God before mentioned.

Ver. 9. *I will praise thee for ever*, etc.] Both in this world, as long as he lived, and had a being in it; and in the world to come, to all eternity. This is a resolution respecting what he would do, when he should be in the happy condition he was confident of;

because thou hast done [it]; the Targum interprets it, "the revenge of my judgment"; meaning the vengeance of God on Doeg; and to the same sense Aben Ezra and Kimchi: though it may refer to the comfortable and happy condition he should be in, (⁴⁵²¹⁸Psalm 52:8); and which he wholly ascribes to the grace and goodness of God, and not to any merits of his own, and therefore determines to praise him for it;

and I will wait on thy name; on the Lord himself, in his house and ordinances, for his presence and fresh supplies of grace and strength, when

he should be restored. Or the sense is, that in the mean while he would wait patiently on the Lord, until he had accomplished what he had promised, and David believed;

for [it is] good before thy saints; the sense is, either that it is good to wait upon the Lord and for him; which appears to be so to all the saints, by the comfortable experience they have had of it, (²³¹⁸Isaiah 40:31 ²³¹⁸Lamentations 3:26); or the name of the Lord is good unto them, pleasant, delightful, and comfortable, as proclaimed, (⁰²⁴⁶Exodus 34:6,7); (see ²¹⁰³Song of Solomon 1:3); and also (⁶¹⁵⁴Revelation 15:4).