

# PSALM 52

David, no doubt, was in very great grief when he said to Abiathar (~~1~~1 Samuel 22:22), "I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house," who were put to death upon Doeg's malicious information; to give some vent to that grief, and to gain some relief to his mind under it, he penned this psalm, wherein, as a prophet, and therefore with as good an authority as if he had been now a prince upon the throne,

**I.** He arraigns Doeg for what he had done (v. 1).

**II.** He accuses him, convicts him, and aggravates his crimes (v. 2-4).

**III.** He passes sentence upon him (v. 5).

**IV.** He foretels the triumphs of the righteous in the execution of the sentence (v. 6, 7).

**V.** He comforts himself in the mercy of God and the assurance he had that he should yet praise him (v. 8, 9). In singing this psalm we should conceive a detestation of the sin of lying, foresee the ruin of those that persist in it, and please ourselves with the assurance of the preservation of God's church and people, in spite of all the malicious designs of the children of Satan, that father of lies.

## ~~151~~ PSALM 52:1-5

### THE WICKEDNESS OF DOEG

*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.*

The title is a brief account of the story which the psalm refers to. David now, at length, saw it necessary to quit the court, and shift for his own safety, for fear of Saul, who had once and again attempted to murder him. Being unprovided with arms and victuals, he, by a wile, got Ahimelech the priest to furnish him with both. Doeg an Edomite happened to be there,

and he went and informed Saul against Ahimelech, representing him as confederate with a traitor, upon which accusation Saul grounded a very bloody warrant, to kill all the priests; and Doeg, the prosecutor, was the executioner, <sup>(127)</sup>1 Samuel 22:9, etc. In these verses,

**I.** David argues the case fairly with this proud and mighty man, v. 1. Doeg, it is probably, was mighty in respect of bodily strength; but, if he was, he gained no reputation to it by his easy victory over the unarmed priests of the Lord; it is no honour for those that wear a sword to hector those that wear an ephod. However, he was, by his office, a *mighty man*, for he was set over the servants of Saul, chamberlain of the household. This was he that boasted himself, not only in the power he had to do mischief, but in the mischief he did. Note, It is bad to do ill, but it is worse to boast of it and glory in it when we have done, not only not to be ashamed of a wicked action, but to justify it, not only to justify it, but to magnify it and value ourselves upon it. Those that glory in their sin glory in their shame, and then it becomes yet more shameful; might men are often mischievous men, and *boast of their heart's desire*, <sup>(108)</sup>Psalm 10:3. It is uncertain how the following words come in: *The goodness of God endures continually*. Some make it the wicked man's answer to this question. The patience and forbearance of God (those great proofs of his goodness) are abused by sinners to the hardening of their hearts in their wicked ways; because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, nay, because God is continually doing them good, therefore they boast in mischief; as if their prosperity in their wickedness were an evidence that there is no harm in it. But it is rather to be taken as an argument against him, to show,

**1.** The sinfulness of his sin: “God is continually doing good, and those that therein are like him have reason to glory in their being so; but thou art continually doing mischief, and therein art utterly unlike him, and contrary to him, and yet gloriest in being so.”

**2.** The folly of it: “Thou thinkest, with the mischief which thou boastest of (so artfully contrived and so successfully carried on), to run down and ruin the people of God; but thou wilt find thyself mistaken: *the goodness of God endures continually* for their preservation, and then they need *not fear what man can do unto them*.” The enemies in vain boast in their mischief while we have God's mercy to boast in.

**II.** He draws up a high charge against him in the court of heaven, as he had drawn up a high charge against Ahimelech in Saul's court, v. 2-4. He accuses him of the wickedness of his tongue (that unruly evil, full of deadly poison) and the wickedness of his heart, which that was an evidence of. Four things he charges him with: —

**1.** Malice. His tongue does *mischief*, not only pricking like a needle, but cutting *like a sharp razor*. Scornful bantering words would not content him; he loved devouring words, words that would ruin the priests of the Lord, whom he hated.

**2.** Falsehood. It was a *deceitful tongue* that he did this mischief with (v. 4); he loved lying (v. 3), and this sharp razor did *work deceitfully* (v. 2), that is, before he had this occasion given him to discover his malice against the priests, he had acted very plausibly towards them; though he was an Edomite, he attended the altars, and brought his offerings, and paid his respects to the priests, as decently as any Israelite; therein he put a force upon himself (for he was *detained before the Lord*), but thus he gained an opportunity of doing them so much the greater mischief. Or it may refer to the information itself which he gave in against Ahimelech; for the matter of fact was, in substance, true, yet it was misrepresented, and false colours were put upon it, and therefore he might well be said to love lying, and to have a deceitful tongue. He told the truth, but not all the truth, as a witness ought to do; had he told that David made Ahimelech believe he was then going upon Saul's errand, the kindness he showed him would have appeared to be not only not traitorous against Saul, but respectful to him. It will not save us from the guilt of lying to be able to say, "There was some truth in what we said," if we pervert it, and make it to appear otherwise than it was.

**3.** Subtlety in sin: "*Thy tongue devises mischiefs*; that is, it speaks the mischief which thy heart devises." The more there is of craft and contrivance in any wickedness the more there is of the devil in it.

**4.** Affection to sin: "*Thou lovest evil more than good*; that is, thou lovest evil, and hast no love at all to that which is good; thou takest delight in lying, and makest no conscience of doing right. Thou wouldst rather please Saul by telling a lie than please God by speaking truth." Those are of Doeg's spirit who, instead of being pleased (as we ought all to be) with an opportunity of doing a man a kindness in his body, estate, or good

name, are glad when they have a fair occasion to do a man a mischief, and readily close with an opportunity of that kind; that is loving evil more than good. It is bad to speak devouring words, but it is worse to love them either in others or in ourselves.

**III.** He reads his doom and denounces the judgments of God against him for his wickedness (v. 5): “Thou hast destroyed the priests of the Lord and cut them off, and therefore *God shall likewise destroy thee for ever.*” Sons of perdition actively shall be sons of perdition passively, as Judas and the man of sin. Destroyers shall be destroyed; those especially that hate, and persecute, and destroy the priests of the Lord, his ministers and people, who are made to our God priests, a royal priesthood, shall be taken away with a swift and everlasting destruction. Doeg is here condemned,

**1.** To be driven out of the church: *He shall pluck thee out of the tabernacle*, not thy dwelling-place, but God's (so it is most probably understood); “thou shalt be cut off from the favour of God, and his presence, and all communion with him, and shalt have no benefit either by oracle or offering.” Justly was he deprived of all the privileges of God's house who had been so mischievous to his servants; he had come sometimes to God's tabernacle, and attended in his courts, but he was detained there; he was weary of his service, and sought an opportunity to defame his family; it was very fit therefore that he should be taken away, and plucked out thence; we should forbid any one our house that should serve us so. Note, We forfeit the benefit of ordinances if we make an ill use of them.

**2.** To be driven out of the world; “*He shall root thee out of the land of the living*, in which thou thoughtest thyself so deeply rooted.” When good men die they are transplanted from the land of the living on earth, the nursery of the plants of righteousness, to that in heaven, the garden of the Lord, where they shall take root for ever; but, when wicked men die, they are rooted out of the land of the living, to perish for ever, as fuel to the fire of divine wrath. This will be the portion of those that contend with God.

## PSALM 52:6-9

### THE RUIN OF DOEG PREDICTED

David was at this time in great distress; the mischief Doeg had done him was but the beginning of his sorrows; and yet here we have him triumphing, and that is more than rejoicing, in tribulation. Blessed Paul, in the midst of his troubles, is in the midst of his triumphs, <sup>2</sup>2 Corinthians 2:14. David here triumphs,

**I.** In the fall of Doeg. Yet, lest this should look like personal revenge, he does not speak of it as how own act, but the language of other righteous persons. They shall observe God's judgments on Doeg, and speak of them,

**1.** To the glory of God: *They shall see and fear* (v. 6); that is, they shall reverence the justice of God, and stand in awe of him, as a God of almighty power, before whom the proudest sinner cannot stand and before whom therefore we ought every one of us to humble ourselves. Note, God's judgments on the wicked should strike an awe upon the righteous and make them afraid of offending God and incurring his displeasure, <sup>119</sup>Psalm 119:120; <sup>15</sup>Revelation 15:3, 4.

**2.** To the shame of Doeg. They shall laugh at him, not with a ludicrous, but a rational serious laughter, as *he that sits in heaven shall laugh at him*, <sup>2</sup>Psalm 2:4. He shall appear ridiculous, and worthy to be laughed at. We are told how they shall triumph in God's just judgments on him (v. 7): *Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength*. The fall and ruin of a wealthy mighty man cannot but be generally taken notice of, and every one is apt to make his remarks upon it; now this is the remark which the righteous should make upon Doeg's fall, that no better could come of it, since he took the wrong method of establishing himself in his wealth and power. If a newly-erected fabric tumbles down, every one immediately enquires where was the fault in the building of it. Now that which ruined Doeg's prosperity was,

**(1.)** That he did not build it upon a rock: *He made not God his strength*, that is, he did not think that the continuance of his prosperity depended upon the favour of God, and therefore took no care to make sure that favour nor to keep himself in God's love, made no conscience of his duty to him nor sought him in the least. Those wretchedly deceive themselves

that think to support themselves in their power and wealth without God and religion.

(2.) That he did build it upon the sand. He thought his wealth would support itself: *He trusted in the abundance of his riches*, which, he imagined, were *laid up for many years*; nay, he thought his wickedness would help to support it. He was resolved to stick at nothing for the securing and advancing of his honour and power. Right or wrong, he would get what he could and keep what he had, and be the ruin of any one that stood in his way; and this, he thought, would strengthen him. Those may have any thing that will make conscience of nothing. But now see what it comes to; see what untempered mortar he built his house with, now that it has fallen and he is himself buried in the ruins of it.

**II.** In his own stability, v. 8, 9. “This mighty man is plucked up by the roots; *but I am like a green olive-tree*, planted and rooted, fixed and flourishing; he is turned out of God's dwelling-place, but I am established in it, not detained, as Doeg, by any thing but the abundant satisfaction I meet with there.” Note, Those that by faith and love dwell in the house of God shall be like green olive-trees there; the wicked are said to flourish like a green bay-tree (<sup>4875</sup>Psalm 37:35), which bears no useful fruit, though it has abundance of large leaves; but the righteous flourish like a green olive-tree, which is fat as well as flourishing (<sup>4924</sup>Psalm 92:14) and with *its fatness honours God and man* (<sup>4709</sup>Judges 9:9), deriving its root and fatness from the good olive, <sup>4517</sup>Romans 11:17. Now what must we do that we may be as green olive-trees?

**1.** We must live a life of faith and holy confidence in God and his grace? “I see what comes of men's trusting in the abundance of their riches, and therefore *I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever* — not in the world, but in God, not in my own merit, but in God's mercy, which dispenses its gifts freely, even to the unworthy, and has in it an all-sufficiency to be our portion and happiness.” This mercy is for ever; it is constant and unchangeable, and its gifts will continue to all eternity. We must therefore for ever trust in it, and never come off from that foundation.

**2.** We must live a life of thankfulness and holy joy in God (v. 9): “*I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it*, has avenged the blood of thy priests upon their bloody enemy, and given him blood to drink, and hast performed thy promise to me,” which he was as sure would be done

in due time as if it were done already. It contributes very much to the beauty of our profession, and to our fruitfulness in every grace, to be much in praising God; and it is certain that we never want matter for praise.

**3.** We must live a life of expectation and humble dependence upon God: *“I will wait on thy name; I will attend upon thee in all those ways wherein thou hast made thyself known, hoping for the discoveries of thy favour to me and willing to tarry till the time appointed for them; for it is good before thy saints,”* or *in the opinion and judgment of thy saints,* with whom David heartily concurs. *Communis sensus fidelium — All the saints are of this mind,*

**(1.)** That God's name is good in itself, that God's manifestations of himself to his people are gracious and very kind; there is no other name given than his that can be our refuge and strong tower.

**(2.)** That it is very good for us to wait on that name, that there is nothing better to calm and quiet our spirits when they are ruffled and disturbed, and to keep us in the way of duty when we are tempted to use any indirect courses for our own relief, than to *hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord,* <sup>2185</sup>Lamentations 3:26. All the saints have experienced the benefit of it, who never attended him in vain, never followed his guidance but it ended well, nor were ever made ashamed of their believing expectations from him. What is good before all the saints let us therefore abide and abound in, and in this particularly: *Turn thou to thy God; keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually,* <sup>2116</sup>Hosea 12:6.