

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Sunday School
Placerita Baptist Church
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Psalm 52 — Two Trees

1.0 Introducing Psalm 52

- Psalms with historical content in their headings are relatively few.
 - ◆ Psalms 3, 7, 18, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63, and 142.
- The background for Psalm 52 is 1 Samuel 21–22.
- Matthew 12:1-8//Mark 2:23-28//Luke 6:1-5 contain Jesus's reference to the same historical setting (1 Samuel 21:2-10).
- Perhaps Psalm 52 was placed before Psalm 53 because both possess a similar emphasis on the characteristics of the wicked.

Reading Psalm 52 (NAU)

52:1 A Maskil of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul and said to him, "David has come to the house of Ahimelech."

Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man?
The lovingkindness of God endures all day long.

52:2 Your tongue devises destruction,
Like a sharp razor, O worker of deceit.

52:3 You love evil more than good,
Falsehood more than speaking what is right.

Selah.

52:4 You love all words that devour,
O deceitful tongue.

52:5 But God will break you down forever;
He will snatch you up and tear you away from *your* tent,
And uproot you from the land of the living.

Selah.

52:6 The righteous will see and fear,
And will laugh at him, *saying*,

52:7 "Behold, the man who would not make God his refuge,

But trusted in the abundance of his riches
And was strong in his *evil* desire.”

52:8 But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God;
I trust in the lovingkindness of God forever and ever.

52:9 I will give You thanks forever, because You have done *it*,
And I will wait on Your name, for *it is* good,
in the presence of Your **godly ones**.

For the choir director; according to Mahalath.

2.0 Understanding Psalm 52

2.1 Outline

- I. Description of Doeg’s Wickedness (vv. 1-4)
- II. Declaration of the Demise of the Wicked (vv. 5-7)
- III. Description of David’s Trust in God (vv. 8-9)



2.2 Notes

- **Superscription:** “Maskil”
 - See Psalms 32, 42, 44, 45, 52-55, 74, 78, 88, 89, and 142.
 - A skillful and artistic psalm teaching wisdom.
- **v. 1** “boast in evil”
 - Doeg had the arrogance to think that he pursued his evil deeds with cleverness.
 - He bragged about his wicked accomplishments.
- **v. 1** “mighty man”
 - David had a group of “mighty men” who were his most influential followers (see 2 Samuel 23:8-39).
 - Here, the meaning could be derisive, similar to “big shot.”
- **v. 1** “The lovingkindness of God”
 - “Lovingkindness” is more accurately translated as “loyal love” or “steadfast love.”
 - “Lovingkindness” (“loyal love”) frames the entire psalm (vv. 1 and 8).
 - In addition, “godly ones” (= “loyal ones”) in verse 9 is from the exact same Hebrew root.
 - “God” here and in verse 5 is “El,” while in verses 7 and 8 it is “Elohim.”
 - NIV: “you who are a disgrace in the eyes of God” takes “lovingkindness” as “disgrace” on the basis of the Greek Septuagint.
- **v. 2** “Your tongue devises destruction”
 - One’s words can have a powerful effect for good or evil.
 - See Psalm 12 and James 3. Note especially the last words of James 3:10.
- **v. 2** “Like a sharp razor”
 - Talk about a “sharp tongue”! Doeg’s words were his weapons.



- See Psalm 55:21; 57:4; 64:3; Jeremiah 9:3, 8.
- **v. 3,4** “You love evil . . . Falsehood . . . words that devour”
 - The wicked love evil rather than good for its temporal rewards.
 - See Micah 3:2-3.
 - Such love is selfish rather than selfless.
- **vv. 3, 5** “Selah”
 - See previous occurrences in Psalms 3, 4, 7, 9, 20, 21, 24, 32, 39, 44, and 46-50.
 - See the extensive description of the use of “Selah” by Edmund Layfielde (1630) in Charles Haddon Spurgeon’s *Treasury of David*, 3 vols. (reprint; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), 1/2:224-27.
 - In this psalm “Selah” focuses attention on what it is the wicked love (verses 3-4) and the nature of their final judgment (verse 5).
- **v. 5** Verbs of Judgment
 - “break you down”—A metaphor of demolishing a house.
 - This ruination is “forever.
 - “If God’s love for his people is everlasting, so too is the ruin he will bring upon those who despise and ignore him.”—Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms 1 – 72*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 192.
 - “snatch you up”—A metaphor of scattering embers from a fire.
 - “tear you away”—A metaphor of forced evacuation from a home.
 - “uproot”—A metaphor of uprooting a tree.
 - In summary, destruction of the wicked will be *total* and *final*.
- **v. 6** “The righteous will see and fear”
 - A play on word: “*they* will see” and “*they* will fear” sound and look almost the same in Hebrew.
 - Found also in Psalm 40:3.
- **v. 6** “will laugh”
 - See Psalms 2:4 and 37:13.
 - “It is the lesson drawn from God’s judgment that keeps the laughter of the righteous from being what we would call mere selfish delight at the fall of some mighty enemy.”—James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1996), 2:442.
 - Compare Proverbs 24:17 with Revelation 18:20 and 19:1-3.
- **v. 7** “Behold, the man”
 - The reason for pointing out Doeg was that he did not seek refuge in God.
 - He trusted in his own personal wealth and power.
- **v. 8** “I am like a green olive tree”
 - The olive tree is one of the most enduring of trees.

- Compare Psalm 1:3.
 - Note the contrast with the wicked being uprooted (verse 5).
 - Nob (the location of the Tabernacle when Doeg slaughtered the priests) was on the northern summit of the Mt. of Olives, which derived its name from the olive trees that covered it.
- v. 8 “I trust in the lovingkindness of God”
 - David’s declaration is in direct contrast to Doeg’s trust “in the abundance of his riches.”
 - Doeg was “the chief of Saul’s shepherds” (1 Samuel 21:7).
 - This is the first of three actions taken by a righteous man:
 - “I trust” (v. 8)—an act of faith.
 - “I will give . . . thanks” (v. 9)—an act of praise.
 - “I will wait” (v. 9)—an act of witness (“in the presence of Your godly one”).
 - “I will wait on Your name”: a reference to the covenant name, Yahweh (Jehovah, LORD).
- v. 8 “in the house of God”
 - The reference is not to the Temple, but to the Tabernacle:
 - Exodus 23:19 and 34:26
 - Judges 18:31
 - 1 Samuel 1:7, 24; 2 Samuel 12:20
- v. 9 “I will wait on Your name”
 - The “name” is usually a reference to Yahweh, the covenant name of God.
 - See the third note on verse 1, above.
- v. 9 “in the presence of Your godly ones”
 - The psalmist’s hopeful waiting was public.
 - Serving and worshipping God in hope is a communal exercise.
- **Subscription:** “according to Mahalath”
 - An ancient term of unknown meaning.
 - 250 years before Christ the Jews of Alexandria, Egypt could only transliterate the Hebrew word, because they no longer understood it.
 - Tune? Instrument? Dance?
 - See the heading to Psalm 88.

3.0 Singing Psalm 52

O Mighty Man, Why Wilt Thou Boast?

(Tune: “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day”—“Waltham”)

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|---|---|
| <p>1 O mighty man, why wilt thou boast
Thyself in hateful cruelty,
When God Almighty is most kind,
And ever merciful is He?</p> <p>3 Since, O thou false, deceitful tongue,
In deadly words thou findest joy,
The Lord shall pluck thee from thy place
And all thy wickedness destroy.</p> <p>5 But as for me, my strength is like
A verdant temple olive tree;
My trust is in God’s tender love,
Which shall endure eternally.</p> | <p>2 Thy tongue deviseth wickedness,
A weapon treacherous and keen;
Thou lovest evil more than good,
And falsehood in thy sight is clean.</p> <p>4 The good, confirmed in godly fear,
The pride and folly shall confess
Of those who make not God their strength,
But trust in wealth and wickedness.</p> <p>6 With endless thanks, O Lord, to Thee,
Thy wondrous works I will proclaim,
And in the presence of Thy saints
Will ever hope in Thy good Name.</p> |
|---|---|

— Author: Unknown
Music: John B. Calkin (1872)

4.0 Praying Psalm 52

- Thank You, Lord, for always being faithful. [v. 1]
- Father, teach me to love good more than evil. [v. 3]
- God, keep me from using my words as a malicious weapon against others. [v. 4]
- Help me not to trust money more than You, Lord. [v. 7]
- Let my hope in You be witnessed by those around me. [v. 9]



5.0 Applying Psalm 52

- What we say does matter.
- Wicked people will face a total and final ruin when God judges them.
- God is steadfastly loyal to the righteous.