



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 52

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- This Psalm is titled *To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation of David when Doeg the Edomite went and told Saul, and said to him, "David has gone to the house of Ahimelech."*
- The terrible events that prompted this Psalm are recorded in 1 Samuel 21 and 22
- All the Versions agree in this title except the Syriac, (the old Syrian language), which speaks of it as a Psalm directed against vice in general, with a prediction of the destruction of evil
- According to the title it is a Psalm of David and there is no reason to doubt that he was the author



Introduction

- The occasion on which it was composed is stated in the title
- Doeg was one of Saul's chief shepherds (1 Samuel 21:7)
- Saul was chasing after David, trying to kill him
- David had fled to Ahimelech the priest at Nob, 1 Samuel 21:1
- By Ahimelech he had been supplied with bread, and equipped with the sword with which he himself had slain Goliath
- An Edomite was present at that time, his name is Doeg, whose character was well known
- David felt that he would not hesitate to betray anyone, or do any act of wickedness, if it would serve his own purposes 1 Samuel 22:22



Introduction

- Doeg the Edomite, in order to secure the favor of Saul, and to show that there was one at least who was friendly to him, and was willing to deliver up to punishment those who had encouraged David in his rebellion, informed Saul of the fact that David had been seen with Ahimelech at Nob, and that Ahimelech had given him food and the sword of Goliath the Philistine
- Saul charges Ahimelech with conspiracy and ordered his guards to kill him and his whole family
- The guards refused, recognizing that it was sinful to raise their hands against the anointed servants of the Lord
- Saul orders Doeg to kill Ahimelech and his family



Introduction

- *“So Doeg the Edomite turned and struck the priests, and killed on that day eighty-five men who wore a linen ephod. Also Nob, the city of the priests, he struck with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and nursing infants, oxen and donkeys and sheep—with the edge of the sword.”* (1 Samuel 22:18-19)
- It was the conduct of Doeg in this matter that is the subject of this Psalm
- Doeg is called the Edomite, he was probably a native of Idumea
- Some have supposed that he was a native-born Jew, and that he is called an Edomite because he may have had his residence in Idumea



Introduction

- The character denounced in the Psalm is in some respects like what was supposed Doeg to have been
- He was a man of wealth and importance as the chief of Saul's herdmen
- His tongue was "a deceitful tongue," because although the facts he reported were true, his story was told with malicious intent and fatal result
- Psalm 52 is a largely focused on Doeg's wickedness and David's confidence that God will bring judgment on the wicked
- The psalmist speaks as the representative of the sufferers



Introduction

- Some believe that 'Doeg the Edomite' symbolizes 'Judas' who betrayed his Lord, under the deception of the kiss; the same way 'Doeg the Edomite' delivered the priests to death, under the pretend of appearing as loyal to his master, and caring about the peace of the people
- And some believe that the Psalms 52 to 55 present to us a clear portrait of the 'antichrist'



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- The Wicked Man 52:1-4
- The Response from Heaven 52:5
- The Reaction and Response of the Righteous 52:6-7
- The Psalmist's Confidence in God 52:8-9



The Wicked Man 52:1-4

- David thought of Doeg the Edomite and the evil report he brought to King Saul
- He thought not only of the report itself, but also in the *boast* and joy Doeg took in delivering the message
- Doeg, the Idumean, boasted that by his accusations he had ruined a priest of the Lord, and his entire family
- For when Saul heard from him that David had been hospitably received by Achimelech the priest, he burst into such a rage, that he not only ordered Doeg to put Achimelech to death, but also eighty-five other priests that were along with him



The Wicked Man 52:1-4

- He then destroyed their city, slaying men and women, and children, even the animal
- As bad as his actions were, how much worse it was for Doeg to be proud of what he had done
- A flood of evil flowed from this maliciousness; he justly deserved to be called mighty in iniquity
- Doeg murdered 85 priests who were not trained for battle – hardly the work of a true *mighty man*
- This is the nature and characteristic of the wicked men
- They are proud of their actions and do not see any evil in them



The Wicked Man 52:1-4

- To be boasters of evil things, is the character of antichrist and his followers, 2 Timothy 3:2; who not only boast of their value, their good works, and of their riches, and honor, and greatness, saying, "I sit as queen", Revelation 18:7; but of their wickedness in shedding the blood of the saints, thinking thereby they do God good service, and earn heaven, and eternal happiness; as Doeg boasted of his slaughter of the priests, and of his gaining the king's favor by it
- David earnestly believed that Doeg's way would fail
- God's *goodness* would outlast his evil



The Wicked Man 52:1-4

- It's true that Doeg was a *mighty man*, but that was nothing compared to *God* and His never-ending *goodness*
- God's love to His people is not changeable, but everlasting and therefore not to be hindered or defeated by any wicked plans
- And therefore, though God may have permitted Doeg to strengthen for a season, yet He will defend, and in due time deliver, His people
- Since this Psalm concerns the evil report of Doeg, David mentions the *destruction* that came from what Doeg said



The Wicked Man 52:1-4

- There was an evil heart and mind directing that *tongue* to work *like a sharp razor, working deceitfully* but it was all evident by what Doeg said
- The *destruction* brought by Doeg's evil report was real and terrible
- 1 Samuel 22:18-19 tells us that he murdered 85 priests, and others in the city of Nob
- Sins of the tongue: falsehood, slander, false witness, and other similar sins are frequently denounced in the Psalms and by the Prophets



The Wicked Man 52:1-4

- The wicked always say things that are cutting and hurtful to others *Like a sharp razor*
- It becomes second nature to speak things that cause emotional pain
- In speaking about the tongue, James said, “*With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so*” (James 3:9-10)
- Then the next characteristic described is a love of evil



The Wicked Man 52:1-4

- The wicked man chooses evil instead of good, like the nobles denounced in Micah 3:2, “*You who hate good and love evil; Who strip the skin from My people, And the flesh from their bones;*”
- David here addressed Doeg’s wicked heart and mind
- He tells us the source of that accusation, and says that it did not proceed from out of character or accident, but from the evil and malice of the man; who always preferred and loved evil to good, and lies to truth
- Doeg’s falsehood was not one simply so, or a mere lie; it was more, because it caused the death of Achimelech, and was thus an *iniquity*



The Wicked Man 52:1-4

- *Selah*, In general, it indicates a pause in the sense, as well as in the musical performance
- Others consider it as an affirmation of the truth of anything, good or bad; and interpret it "verily", "truly", as, answering to "Amen"; so be it, so it is, or shall be
- Now in verse 4 David assigns further reason for calling Doeg's conduct a lie and an iniquity, and says it was a truly fatal, malicious, falsehood, causing the ruin of so many innocent people
- *You deceitful tongue*, This may be the worst part of the description



The Wicked Man 52:1-4

- The wicked person takes joy in evil and loves harmful words
- Doeg's lies caused the destruction of an entire City
- To intend another's harm and enjoy its effects is of the utmost evil
- David declares that either Doeg is himself a deceitful tongue or that he loves deceitful tongues
- Either way, Doeg is a liar and he loves lies



The Response from Heaven 52:5

- Then David started to describe the everlasting ruin that will come upon those who love evil and whose tongue is like a razor unless they repent
- Because *the goodness of God endures continually* (Psalm 52:1), Doeg and his kind, all the evil doers, would be destroyed *forever*
- This threat was a prophecy about what will come upon Judas, the son of perdition, who went and hanged himself
- Or about the anti-Christ, whose reign would not last for more than three and a half year, Revelation 14:10



The Response from Heaven 52:5

- God will completely destroy him, not only in this world, but in the next; so that he shall be ruined for eternity, left absolutely desolate in this world, and condemned forever in the world to come
- This will be the just retribution of the wicked, who, in seeking to hurt others, harm themselves forever
- God will not always allow this kind of destructive lie to rule
- The word *likewise* is significant
- There is a resemblance between the sin and its punishment, Micah 2:1-10



The Response from Heaven 52:5

- The heartless oppressors who have driven the poor from their homes will be driven from the land
- As a just retaliation for the malice and harm done to others
- St. Augustine says, “We should have roots in the land of the living. The root could be hidden from sight; whereas the fruits would be visible ... Our root is our love, while our fruits are our works. If your works come out of love, your roots are in the land of the living.”
- The destiny of the wicked man is effectively and persuasively described by various figures



The Response from Heaven 52:5

- He pictures himself securely deep-rooted in the castle of his wealth, but God will break him down (Judges 8:9) and that forever, so that there will be no restoration of the ruins
- He is comfortable in his home, but God will take him as a man takes a coal from the fireplace with tongs and plucking him out of his dwelling, drive him forth as a homeless wanderer (Deuteronomy 28:63; Proverbs 2:22; Job 18:14)
- *take you away* the verb in Hebrew is elsewhere used only in the sense of taking up and carrying fire or coals: Isaiah 30:14; Proverbs 6:27, 25:22
- He is “spreading himself like a native green tree” (Psalm 37:35), but God will uproot him out of the land of the living



The Reaction and Response of the Righteous 52:6-7

- The first impression by the scene is that of fear
- Not alarm, but awe; a deeper reverence for God and His authority over the world
- Every manifestation of the Divine power and justice produces in the righteous man a feeling of awe
- Many will profit and be instructed by the punishment of the wicked
- The next impression that of mockery and ridicule for the *boaster* who trusted in his wealth, as we read in the Book of Psalms, “*He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision.*” (Psalm 2:4)



The Reaction and Response of the Righteous 52:6-7

- Such rejoicing is no mere merciless triumph at the wicked man's ruin
- Unkind satisfaction at the hardship of the wicked is condemned, Job 31:29; Proverbs 24:17
- But because the judgement of the wicked is an illustration and proof of the authority of God, it must be welcomed with joy by the righteous
- Previously David told us about Doeg's sins of destructive and deceitful words and of loving evil and lying
- Here he exposed an associated sin – a failure to trust God and the trust of great *riches* instead



The Reaction and Response of the Righteous 52:6-7

- Some people often are drawn to evil and lying because they fail to trust that God can and will work through goodness and truth
- In writing *trusted in the abundance of his riches*, David may point to something implied in the 1 Samuel 21-22 account that Doeg did this for the sake of *riches*, either immediate or eventual
- For the sake of money, he murdered more than 85 people
- 1 Samuel 22 indicates that Doeg did this to gain the favor of Saul, and the favor of a king could be a path to significant *riches*
- And no doubts Saul richly rewarded him for what he did

The Psalmist's Confidence in God 52:8-9



- David concludes the Psalm by showing that he has taken quite a different path; for he will not be *pluck ... out ...* nor rooted out as a withered tree, like Doeg; but he will send down his roots deeper and deeper, like “A fruitful olive tree,” always in bloom, always bearing fruit; and, being such, he has, consequently, *trust in the mercy of God forever and ever* hoped that God would assist him forever, and to eternity
- Observe the contrast he draws between himself and Doeg comparing him to a dry tree, and himself to a fruitful olive tree
- He predicts that Doeg will be rooted out of the land, while himself will be rooted in the house of God

The Psalmist's Confidence in God 52:8-9



- Doeg put his trust in his own riches; David in God's mercy
- But who is the speaker here in verse 8?
- Is it the psalmist? Or is the speech of the righteous in verse 7 continued, but with a transition to the singular, in order to express the personal faith of each individual?
- Even if the psalmist is the speaker, he speaks as the representative of the righteous
- David pictures the righteous standing tall and standing strong with God, enduring any storms that may come
- Not only are the righteous strong, but they are fruitful and flourishing

The Psalmist's Confidence in God 52:8-9



- The righteous are growing
- All of this is taking place in the house of God
- The righteous are pictured as being near God and as family members of God
- By implication, David is stating that the wicked are none of these things
- Evildoers will not flourish nor endure the storms of life
- Further, the wicked are not near God and not in the family of God
- Though the righteous suffer at the hands of the wicked, justice will come against the wicked

The Psalmist's Confidence in God 52:8-9



- One characteristic of the righteous is always praising God
- Like God's mercy, his gratitude also shall be
- While others boast in their riches he will boast in his God; and when their glorying is silenced for ever in the tomb, his song shall continue to proclaim the lovingkindness of God forever
- *You have done it*, David views his prayer as already answered and the promise of God as already fulfilled
- Doeg's evil had not yet gone away but David could praise God in the confidence of faith

The Psalmist's Confidence in God 52:8-9



- And he is praising God in hope and will praise Him in the presence of all the saints
- The evil of man had not made him lose confidence in God and in the truth that God's *name is good* – His character and entire being
- It is good to wait upon the Lord and for Him; which appears to be so to all the saints, by the experience they have had of it, Isaiah 40:31
- It may also mean that the name of the Lord is good unto them, pleasant, delightful, and comfortable, as proclaimed, Exodus 34:6; Revelation 15:4

The Psalmist's Confidence in God 52:8-9



- St. Augustine says, “Further, a man discerning the sweetness of the name of God, and wishing to unfold and wishing to show the same, and not finding persons to whom he may unfold it; for to the Saints there is no need that he show it, because they even of themselves taste and know, but the ungodly cannot discern what they will not taste: doth, I say, what, because of the sweetness of the name of God? He hath borne him forthwith away from the crowds of the ungodly. “And I will look,” he saith, “for Thy name, for it is pleasant, in the sight of Thy Saints.” Pleasant is Thy name, but not in the sight of the ungodly. I know how sweet a thing it is, but it is to them that have tasted.”



Discussion

- To whom is this Psalm addressed?
- How did the psalmist describe the wicked? (52:1-4)
- What did David repeat three times to emphasize his point? (52:5)
- What is the final destiny of the wicked?
- What can we learn about the righteous from this Psalm?



Discussion

- What causes the downfall of the wicked?
- How will the righteous react to the downfall of the wicked?
- Why did David compare himself to an olive tree?
- In what specific ways was David different from the wicked?
- What vow did David make to the Lord in the conclusion of the Psalm?