

Psalm 52

Title: Boasting in Wickedness and Trusting in God

Author and Date: David

Key Verses: Psalm 52:1, 8

Type: Trust

Outline

- A. The boast of the wicked man (verses 1-7).
- B. The trust of the godly man (verses 8-9).

Notes

Title: “For the Chief Musician. Maschil of David; when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.” See the notes on Psalm 4 for the meaning of “For the Chief Musician.” Psalm 52 is the first of four “Maschil” psalms of David (Psa. 52-55). For “Maschil”, see the notes on Psalm 32. There are several psalms in Book II that are attributed to David (see Psalm 51-70). The story of Doeg coming to Saul is found in 1 Samuel 22. Doeg, the chief of Saul’s herdsmen, was a man of importance. He curried favor with King Saul by spying on David (1 Sam. 21:7) and later betraying him (1 Sam. 22:6-23). He reported to Saul things about David with malicious intent when David came to Ahimelech the priest of Nob.

Summary: Psalm 52 describes a contrast between the boast of the wicked man (verses 1-7) and the trust of the godly man (verses 8-9). The wicked man boasts in his mischief (verse 1) and uses his tongue to destroy the godly man (verses 2-4). However, the wicked man himself will be destroyed by God (verse 5) and he will be a laughingstock among the righteous (verse 6). In contrast to the wicked man, the godly man flourishes because he trusts in God (verse 8). The godly man will give thanks to God and will hope in God’s name in the presence of the saints (verse 9).

Verse 1: The “mighty man” in this verse may be a reference to Doeg (or Saul) who wanted to take David’s life in the city of Nob (1 Sam. 22:6-23). The NIV speaks of the boasting continuing “all day long”. However, other versions speak of the “loving-kindness” of God continuing (KJV, ASV, NASV, ESV, etc.). The “loving-kindness” of God (see also verse 8) is God’s steadfast, unfailing love and faithfulness toward his people.

Verses 2-4: The wicked use their tongue to destroy the righteous. This is what Doeg did to David. For the meaning of “Selah” (verses 3 and 5), see the notes on Psalm 3.

Verse 5: Note how God's destruction of the wicked is presented in four graphic ways. For God's destruction of the wicked, see the notes on Psalm 37.

Verse 6: When the righteous "laugh" at the destruction of the wicked, it is joy over God's vindication (Job 22:18-20), not malicious satisfaction or personal vindictiveness at their downfall (Job 31:29; Prov. 24:17). Compare with Psalm 2:4.

Verse 8: A "green olive tree" is a symbol of prosperity and blessing (Psa. 128:3). The godly man flourishes while the wicked man is rooted up.

Verse 9: The psalmist wanted to set a good example of faith and trust "in the presence of thy saints".

Questions

1. What does the mighty man boast in and what endures continually (verse 1)?
2. What is the tongue of the wicked man like (verse 2)?
3. What does the wicked man love (verses 3-4)?
4. What does God do to the wicked man (verse 5)?
5. What do the righteous do when the wicked are judged (verse 6)?
6. What does the wicked man trust in and what does he strengthen himself with (verse 7)?
7. How does the psalmist describe himself and what does he trust in (verses 7-8)?
8. What does the psalmist promise to do in the presence of the saints (verse 9).

Applications for Today

1. The wicked boast in their mischief (verse 1). Who are we to boast in (1 Cor. 1:31)? What are we not to boast in (Jas. 4:16)?
2. Watch your tongue, it can devise all kinds of evil (verses 2-4). What must we always bridle (Jas. 1:26)? What must we refrain from speaking (1 Pet. 3:10)?
3. We must never forget that God will destroy the wicked (verse 5). What will God do to the wicked at the end of time (Mt. 13:49)?
4. The punishment of the wicked is meant to cause the rest of the people to fear (verse 6). What happens when sentence against evil-doers is not executed speedily (Eccl. 8:11)? Why are sinful elders to be reproved (1 Tim. 5:20)?
5. We must never trust in riches, but make God our strength (verse 7). What happens to those who trust in riches (Mk. 10:24)? What will the “love of money” do (1 Tim. 6:9-10)?
6. We must trust in the loving-kindness of God when we are surrounded by wickedness (verse 8). What did the psalmist do when he was surrounded by enemies and adversaries (Psa. 13:5; 55:23)?
7. Let us make the promise – “I will” – to thank God and to hope in God (verse 9). What did Paul do always (1 Cor. 1:4; 1 Thess. 2:13; Philemon 4)? What are we to not hope in and what are we to hope in (1 Tim. 6:17)?