

PSALM FIFTY-TWO

PSALM 52

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Doeg the Edomite Denounced.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers 1-5, Doeg Remonstrated with, Described, and Threatened.
Stanza II., vers. 6-9, The Laugh of the Righteous over him.

(Lm.) Instructive-psalm—By David—When Doeg the Edomite entered and told Saul and said to him, David entered the house of Ahimelek.

- 1 Why wilt thou boast thee in wickedness O mighty man all the day?¹
- 2 Engulfing ruin thou devisest—thy tongue is like a whetted razor.²
- 3 Thou lovest evil rather than good—falsehood than righteousness.
- 4 Thou lovest all devouring words—O³ deceitful tongue!
- 5 God also will pull thee down—for ever snatch thee away, will pluck thee up tentless—and uproot thee out of the land of the living.
- 6 So will the righteous both see and revere—and over him will laugh:—
- 7 “Lo! the mighty man⁴ who made not God his stronghold, But trusted in the abundance of his riches—was strong in his wealth!”
- 8 But I am like a luxuriant olive-tree in the house of God. I have put my trust in the kindness of God to the ages and beyond.
- 9 I will thank thee to the ages that thou didst effectually work,

1. M.T.: “the kindness of God all the day.” Sep.: “lawlessness all the day.”

2. M.T. adds: “O thou worker of deception”—Dr.

3. So Per.; others—“a” or “the deceitful tongue.”

4. Vocalised as in ver. 1.

STUDIES IN PSALMS

I will proclaim¹ thy name that it is good, before thy men of kindness.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) For Dancings.²

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 52

Written by David to protest against his enemy Doeg (I Samuel 22), who later slaughtered 85 priests and their families.

You call yourself a hero, do you? You boast about this evil deed of yours against God's people.³

2 You are sharp as a tack in plotting your evil tricks.

3 How you love wickedness—far more than good! And lying more than truth!

4 You love to slander—you love to say anything that will do harm, O man with the lying tongue!

5 But God will strike you down and pull you from your home, and drag you away from the land of the living.

6 The followers of God will see it happen. They will watch in awe. Then they will laugh and say,

7 "See what happens to those who despise God and trust in their wealth, and become ever more bold in their wickedness."⁴

8 But I am like a sheltered olive tree protected by the Lord Himself. I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.

9 O Lord, I will praise You forever and ever for Your punishment.⁵ And I will wait for Your mercies—for everyone knows what a merciful God You are.

EXPOSITION

It would be a fair inference from the superscription of this psalm alone, that there *was* a man of the name of Doeg, bearing the character here described, when David wrote this psalm. But seeing that, in I Sam. 21:7, 22:9-19, we find a man of that name, evidently capable of the baseness here attributed to him, there is

1. *Gt.*: "utter" or "proclaim." *M.T.*: "wait on."
2. So Thirtle, reading *meholoth* instead of *mahalath*.
3. Literally, "the lovingkindness of God continually."
4. Literally, "strengthened himself in his wickedness."
5. Literally, "because You have done it."

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no excuse for declining the identification. By some, indeed, it has been regarded as a matter of surprise, that the psalmist should go no further than notice Doeg's mischievous tongue, and should not also have alluded to his atrocious cruelty in slaying the priests of Nob. This difficulty is removed by pushing the writing of the psalm just far enough back to make way for the easy supposition—which the very wording of this superscription favours—that Doeg privately gave Saul the information about David, before he publicly proclaimed it in the presence of all Saul's servants. He *entered* and told Saul, before he openly proclaimed it. Doeg was overheard; and David informed of this private communication. That hypothesis exactly meets the case. It is to be observed from David's words to Abiathar on receiving from him the news of the massacre (1 Sam. 22:22) that he already knew enough of Doeg's character, to be at once apprehensive when he met him at Nob that he would go and tell Saul. The spirit of prophecy at once seized David and moved him to write as he here does. To the known facts may be added two expressions in the psalm itself slightly confirmatory of its superscriptional origin. Doeg was a foreigner, but had *not* come, like Ruth (2:12), to take *refuge* under the wings of the God of Israel. The tabernacle was at this time at Nob, which "was thè nòrthern summit of Olivet, a mountain which derived its name from the olives and olive-yards with which it once was clothed"—Per. Hence with peculiar aptness the psalmist says: *But I am like a luxuriant olive-tree in the house of God.*

Of the psalm itself, there remains little to be said. By its pointed denunciation of a particular man, it comes into line with Isaiah's denunciation of Shebna (Isa. 22) and Jeremiah's denunciation of Passhur (Jer. 20) and of Hananiah (Jer. 28).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Since this is a psalm given over to a denunciation and description of one man—it will be essential that the reader know him. Read I Samuel 21:7—22:22.
2. Why not mention the slaughter of the priests?
3. What specific punishment did God promise Doeg?
4. Why is the reference to the olive tree especially appropriate?
5. Doeg can teach us a good lesson—what is it?