

"Trust" – Where Is Ours?

Psalm 52

The heading of Psalm 52 connects it directly to one of the darkest chapters in David's early life – the tragic events of 1 Samuel 22. After Doeg the Edomite betrayed Ahimelech the priest to Saul, an entire priestly family was slaughtered, with only one survivor: Abiathar. It was a moment of devastating injustice (the powerful crushing the innocent) and David felt the weight of it deeply.

But David didn't respond with vengeance or despair. Instead, he gave us this psalm: a meditation on the character of the wicked, the judgment of God, and the unshakable confidence of the righteous. At its heart is a contrast – where will we place our trust? Is it in the seeming strength of wicked men? Or is it in the covenant mercy of Almighty God?

I want to make a few comments on what is meant by the term "covenant" as it is used. The Bible uses the word "covenant" to describe the formal, binding relationships God makes with His people – like with Noah, Abraham, or David – and ultimately through Christ in the New Covenant. These are real, historical, divine commitments.

When I use the word *covenant*, I mean what the Bible means: God making promises and establishing conditions in a relationship He initiates.

I don't mean the theological system known as *Covenant Theology*, which often blends Israel and the Church and reinterprets God's promises through a different lens. That's not what I hold to, and that's not what this passage is teaching.

Psalm 52 reminds us that the heart of man hasn't changed. In every generation, whether it's the days of Saul or the "last days" described in 2 Timothy 3, the temptation is the

same: to trust in power, wealth, or manipulation. But those who truly know the Lord know where to plant their confidence. David did, and his words still speak to us today.

So, where is our trust?

I. IS OUR TRUST IN THE POWER OF MEN? – vs. 1-5

"Why boasteth thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?"

A. The proud boast in evil – vs. 1

1. "The goodness of God endureth continually" contrasts with the wicked boasting of the "mighty man."
 - a) The same Hebrew word (טוֹב) is used for "goodness" in this verse and for "mercy" in verse 8. This word is hard to translate with just one English word, as is seen throughout the King James Bible.
 - b) It means God's faithful, loyal, covenant love – the kind of love that will never fail, never stop.
 - c) In verse 1, it's God's goodness that keeps showing up, even when evil seems to be winning. In verse 8, it's God's mercy, His faithful love, that David clings to and trusts in. It's the same word, the same God, showing He is always good and always merciful.
2. Human pride is short-lived; God's goodness outlasts the evil of the proud.

B. The deceitful destroy with their words – vs. 2

Doeg's betrayal was not a sword, but a tongue that "deviseth mischief."

C. The wicked love evil over good – vs. 3a

This is what is termed a “moral inversion”: love for wickedness and disdain for righteousness.

Isaiah 5:20

²⁰ Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

John 3:19

¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

D. The wicked delight in lies – vs. 3b

Their comfort is not in truth, but in distortion.

E. The tongue of the wicked is a weapon of destruction – vs. 4

“Thou lovest all devouring words...” – note the imagery of appetite and violence in speech.

The one described in this psalm loves “devouring words” (בלע), a word that means to swallow, engulf, consume, or destroy. These are words meant to wound, destroy, or deceive. And while this verse is a direct indictment of wicked men like Doeg (the one right interpretation), it should cause every one of us to pause (an application).

While we may not use our words to destroy lives in a literal sense, we can still devour people with our speech – subtly, self-servingly, and even without realizing it.

Words meant to get ahead, to gain favor, to shape a narrative, or to win an argument can leave scars just the same.

Psalm 52 exposes what God sees, not just the

speech of the obviously wicked, but also the motives of the heart that speaks.

James 3:8 [greater context – 5-8]

⁸ But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

Ephesians 4:29

²⁹ Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Proverbs 26:28

²⁸ A lying tongue hateth *those that are* afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

Proverbs 29:5

⁵ A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.

F. The end of the wicked is divine judgment – vs. 5

God's judgment is personal ("God shall destroy thee"), sudden, and final: rooted out of the land of the living.

Matthew 10:28

²⁸ And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

II. IS OUR TRUST IN THE POWER OF GOD? – vs. 6-9

"I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever"

A. The righteous will see and fear – vs. 6

1. God vindicates His people; their reverence grows as they witness His justice.
2. "And shall laugh at him" – the righteous see and fear (humility), and then laugh

(vindication), not because they hate the person, but because they love the truth and God has proven faithful.

Let me be clear: this laughter in verse 6 is not the laughter of cruelty. It is not a smug, self-righteous smirk at someone else's fall. It's not the laughter of "they had it coming."

It's the relieved laughter of vindication, of knowing that God was not mocked, that truth stood, that justice finally came. But that kind of laughter is always mingled with humility and reverence, never with pride.

Some have taken verses like this and used them as a license to rejoice in the downfall of the wicked, even to hate those who are enemies of God. But that's not the spirit of Christ. Jesus taught us to love our enemies, to pray for them, to bless those who curse us. When judgment comes, and it will, we can rejoice that God is just, but we must never rejoice in someone else's ruin as though we are better than them.

The righteous laugh in Psalm 52 because God's justice was not mocked, not because they were glad to see a man fall.

Ezekiel 33:11

¹¹ Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Proverbs 24:17-18

¹⁷ Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not

thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: ¹⁸ Lest the LORD see *it*, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.

Luke 9:54-56

⁵⁴ And when his disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? ⁵⁵ But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.* ⁵⁶ *For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.* And they went to another village.

B. The man who trusts in himself will fall – vs. 7

1. Psalm 52:7 says that Doeg “*trusted in the abundance of his riches,*” but 1 Samuel doesn’t directly mention him being wealthy. So how do we understand this?
 - a) Doeg is called “the chiefest of the herdmen” in 1 Samuel 21:7 – a role that, in ancient royal courts, was more than just a shepherd. It likely meant overseeing royal livestock and managing resources, a position of administrative authority, influence, and access to the king.
 - b) In ancient Near Eastern economies, such roles were often tied to wealth or the means to acquire it.
 - c) Psalm 52:7 doesn’t simply say he *had* riches – it says he *trusted* in them. This could refer to material wealth, political privilege, or the security of his position.
 - d) Whether he was rich or aspiring to be, he relied on what he could gain, not on God.
2. The inspired commentary of Psalm 52 reveals

Doeg's heart – he trusted in worldly advantage. It reminds us that you don't have to be rich to trust in riches, just like you don't have to be powerful to put your hope in power.

C. God's mercy sustains the faithful – vs. 8

1. Stability in an unstable world – an olive tree weathers dry seasons because of deep roots. So also does the believer who trusts in God's mercy.

Psalm 1:3

³ And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Jeremiah 17:7-8

⁷ Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. ⁸ For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and *that* spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

Colossians 2:6-7

⁶ As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: ⁷ Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

2. Fruitfulness through faith – just as the olive tree yields valuable fruit over time, the believer yields lasting fruit, not by striving, but by abiding.

John 15:4-5

⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no

more can ye, except ye abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

3. Nearness to God – the olive tree seen here isn't planted out in a field, but in *the house of God*. It's a picture of nearness and fellowship.

Psalm 23:6

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Psalm 27:4

⁴ One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

Hebrews 10:19-22

¹⁹ Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; ²¹ And *having* an high priest over the house of God; ²² Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

D. God's name is good, and He is worthy of praise – vs. 9

1. The righteous live in confidence of God's character: "thou hast done it" speaks of His past faithfulness as the basis for future hope.
2. "I will wait on thy name" – this is active trust and worship.

Conclusion: As David closes this psalm, he doesn't end it in fear or bitterness. He ends it in recognition of who his God is and praises Him. Not because the wicked have disappeared, and not because life is easy, but because God has acted, and David is secure. *"I will praise thee forever, because thou hast done it."* God has judged righteously, He has preserved faithfully, and He has planted David like a green olive tree, rooted in mercy, not shaken by men.

That's the confidence of the righteous: not that we escape every trial, but that we trust in the One who sees, who knows, and who makes all things right. So we wait on His name – because it is good. And we praise Him, not just when the battle is over, but even while we're still passing through the storm; because the Lord has done it and He will continue to do all things well.