

Dissing A Fool

Psalms 52 June 15, 2025

A diss track is a song written with a particular target in mind, attacking their character or choices, often mockingly, while promoting the author's choices and perspective. They're most often associated with rap and hip hop, but the fact of the matter is you can find examples in pop, country, rock, folk, soul, thrash metal, and samba, too.¹ One list traces diss tracks as far back as 1933 and many big name artists have their own entries.

John Lennon and Paul McCartney traded diss tracks after the Beatles broke up. Pink Floyd has a couple. Lynyrd Skynyrd, Bob Dylan, Queen, Fleetwood Mac, Green Day, Ed Sheeran, and Justin Timberlake all have diss tracks of their own. And then there are artists like Eminem and Taylor Swift who have built whole careers around writings songs that target certain people for public criticism.

Does it surprise you that there is a diss track in the Psalter? In Psalm 52, David calls out Doeg, trashes his choices and character, and declares he is a washed up failure headed for a grizzly end.

David wasn't being petty like so many modern artists. Remember: David was a prophet on top of being a poet.² But Psalm 52 is *also* given to us as an instructional guide. That's what a *Maskil* is, by the way - a song that will help us skillfully understand God's wisdom for life.³

This is one of the rare Psalms that gives us a specific time or situation connected to its writing. We see it there in the superscript above verse 1.

Psalm 52: Title - For the choir director. A Maskil of David. When Doeg the Edomite went and reported to Saul, telling him, "David went to Ahimelech's house."

The context of this song is important. Saul, the first king of Israel, refused to obey God. So, the Lord announced the kingdom would be taken from him and given to David. Saul wasn't happy about that, so he started a long campaign of trying to kill David.

At one point while David fled to the city of Nob where the priest Ahimelech lived. Ahimelech gave him some provisions. The problem is, Doeg was there and he was loyal to Saul. Eventually he told Saul what happened and killed Ahimelech and 85 members of his family. Doeg is a very bad guy.

Psalm 52:1 - ¹ Why boast about evil, you hero! God's faithful love is constant.

Right from the start, we see this is not just a song about one person, it's a song about good and evil. As Doeg is contrasted with David, we realize it's about the choice each of us has to either love

¹ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_diss_tracks

² Acts 2:29-31

³ Derek Kidner *Psalms 1-72*

God and go His way or love evil and go our own way. God's way will end in life, man's way will end in death. It's not just a diss track, for us it's a decision track. Which way will we go?

The two men representing these two paths have more similarities than we might think. David was a shepherd who was put in charge of all the fighting men of Israel.⁴ Doeg was *also* a shepherd - Saul's *chief* shepherd - who was also put in charge of all Saul's servants.⁵

Both were fierce warriors - cunning and valiant. Both were *mighty*. Both had horrible instances of slaughtering whole towns of people. So what made them different in the end? It's that the inclination of their hearts took them on separate paths to separate destinations.

Doeg was was proud and selfish - ready to do anything he had to to get ahead. *David* was humble and loved the Lord. He was ready to do whatever was necessary to serve God and submit to Him.

Psalm 52:2-4 - ² Like a sharpened razor, your tongue devises destruction, working treachery. ³ You love evil instead of good, lying instead of speaking truthfully. *Selah* ⁴ You love any words that destroy, you treacherous tongue!

Doeg held onto the news about David and Ahimelech until it was most advantageous for him to share it - until the moment it would win him the *most* favor with an increasingly paranoid Saul.

But Doeg wasn't just doing some dirty work to get ahead in life. He really *loved* evil. It's shown in stomach-churning carnage when Doeg goes to Nob at Saul's command and doesn't just kill Ahimelech, but every man, woman, child, and even the animals there.

While David's life was being used by God to save Israel from her enemies and build up the spiritual life of the nation with songs and poems praising God, Doeg became a lethal wrecking ball.

It started with his wicked words. Of course, words aren't the cause of evil, they're a symptom of it. From the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. But words fan the flame of our hearts' desires. Where it says, "Your tongue devises destruction," the word denotes Doeg's "evil desires."⁶

Have you ever talked yourself into something? Talked yourself into being upset? You weren't really bothered by that thing someone said or did, but then you started talking about it with someone else, and by the end you're all fired up and angry?

Our words matter. The tongue has enough destructive power to set the world on fire.⁷ We can look at a life, whether it's ours or someone else's, and know a lot about the trajectory that life is on based on the speech coming out of a person. Do they speak the truth or do they lie? Do they tear down or build up? Do they always find something to complain about or are they thankful to God?

⁴ 1 Samuel 18:5

⁵ 1 Samuel 21:7, 22:9

⁶ Donald Williams, Lloyd J. Ogilvie *The Preacher's Commentary, Volume 13: Psalms 1-72*

⁷ James 3:6

Doeg was a person who had *dedicated* himself to words that destroy.⁸ What are we dedicated to? What do our hearts desire? What do we love most in life? Our words will tell us.

Psalm 52:5 - ⁵ This is why God will bring you down forever. He will take you, ripping you out of your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living. *Selah*

The song opened with David asked Doeg, "Why? Why are you like this? Why are you doing what you're doing?" He may have been taunting Doeg, but the question was also a warning. When a person lives out verses 1 through 4, they only have verse 5 to look forward to.

God will not stand idly by while the wicked work their evil in the world. They are definitely, certainly, without exception headed toward a terrible judgment.

Verse 5 is like one of those scenes where the hero is on the phone with the bad guy and says, "If you hurt them, I'm going to hunt you down and tear you limb from limb," and they start to detail all the ways they're going to destroy them.

There are four intense verbs used here. First, He will bring them down. Those who reject God and go their own way often think they're elevated themselves above others - they've fought their way to the top of the heap - but God says, "I'm bringing you down." But not just back down to earth, down to the grave. Down to sheol. Ultimately, the weight of their sin will bring them down to the Lake of Fire, paying the penalty for their rejection of Jesus Christ for all eternity.

Second, God will *take* them. They will be snatched wherever they are. There is no place they can hide, nowhere they can run where God's justice won't find them, where His arm can't reach them.

Third, they will be ripped out of their tent. No home. No safety. Isolated and laid bare.

Finally, they will be uprooted from the land of the living. Their way has only one destination: Death.

God's judgment isn't just a slap on the wrist. When sinners refuse to receive His salvation, *this* is what they're choosing. You may be powerful, mighty, successful - you may tower above all the weaker people around you, but you're not greater than God. And all of us *must* answer to Him. And if you are not willing to let Him deliver you from the guilt of your wickedness, He will *destroy* you.

Psalm 52:6-7 - ⁶ The righteous will see and fear, and they will derisively say about that hero, ⁷ "Here is the man who would not make God his refuge, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, taking refuge in his destructive behavior."

Doeg was a murderer who scoffed at God's laws but what does Psalm 52 say was his *biggest* mistake? "Here is the man who would not make God his refuge."

⁸ John Goldingay *Psalms, Volume 2: Psalms 42-89*

Don't get me wrong: His violence and murders were horrible crimes against God and man. But remember: David committed similar sins. When he was in Philistine country, he would go to towns and kill everyone so no one could reveal what he was up to.⁹ It was a very dark time for David.

The difference was that David was cleansed from his guilt because he loved the Lord and he would turn back to the Lord and take refuge in his God.

By contrast, Doeg said, "I'll take care of my own life. My wealth will save me. My abilities will protect me. I will command my own future through the force of my will and the strength of my sword."

But it all led to destruction and death. Yes, he gained wealth for a time, but the bill came due. The charges for his wicked words, his evil deeds, his rebellion against the King of heaven. Instead of repenting, he rejected the God of Israel. So, instead of being cleansed, he was condemned.

This year on the Isle of Man, a tourist was stopped for speeding only for the police to discover they had been ticketed for the same thing when they visited 12 years earlier - only they never paid the fine. The driver was arrested and brought to the station and *forced* to pay their debt.¹⁰

You and I are sinners. We've all fallen short of the glory of God - of His standard of perfection. We've done wrong things in thought, word, and deed against our Creator and our fellow man. For these wrongs, we must pay the penalty. The bad news is that these infractions are capital offenses. The wages of our sin is death. *But*, the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

If you will not believe - if you decide you're going to try something else - some other religion, or your own good deeds or just ignoring the issue altogether, then you will die in your sin. But if you surrender and repent and take refuge in Jesus Christ, then He is able to take your debt, pay the penalty Himself, and give you the wealth of His righteousness. *That's* the difference between David and Doeg. One man trusted God. The other trusted himself, trusted his wealth, trusted his own strength and greatness. And in the end, one had everlasting life and the other, death.

Now, David was far from perfect. And, like David, we still make mistakes and fall into sin. But when you trust in God, He continually cleanses you and restores you and makes you right, conforming your life and transforming you from the inside out so that your end is glory, not guilt - life, not death. Look at what happens for David in verse 8.

Psalms 52:8 - 8 But I am like a flourishing olive tree in the house of God; I trust in God's faithful love forever and ever.

Physically, David was *not* safe and snug in the Tabernacle. He was on the run as Saul used all his resources to hunt him. But David knew what was true on a higher level: The care God had for him

⁹ 1 Samuel 27:9

¹⁰ <https://motorsport.manxradio.com/news/isle-of-man-news/visitor-with-outstanding-speeding-fine-caught-12-years-later>

and the future God planned for him. He could say with confidence, “I *am* flourishing in the house of my God.” Because God’s ability and affection *are* more consequential than our predicaments.

Olive trees were the most important tree in Israeli life.¹¹ They could live for hundreds of years and yielded gallons of oil year after year.¹² Olive oil was used for cooking, for lamps, for ointments and medicines, for cosmetics, and in formal worship in the house of God. These trees have a root system that combines a deep taproot with wide spreading fibrous roots, giving the tree stability and great nutrient uptake *and* the ability to adapt to various soil conditions.¹³

David said, “*That’s* my life. Not just being watched by God, but safe in His presence. He’s brought me into His own home and allows the tap root of my life to reach into *Him*. And He is going to cultivate my life so that it can produce gallon after gallon of oil for all sorts of purposes.”

Because of that, even while he had to run for his life, he knew that God’s love would see him through, because God’s love is loyal and active and never fails. And so, David chose to root his life, his hope, his future in Who God is and the promises He has made.

Psalm 52:9 - ⁹ I will praise you forever for what you have done. In the presence of your faithful people, I will put my hope in your name, for it is good.

And so the contrast has been laid out for us. Instead of being destroyed, David would endure. The end for the righteous is goodness and hope and eternity. Doeg has been obliterated since verse 5. He only made it half way into the song before it all came crashing down.

In the meantime, David chose to not only praise the Lord, but to *wait* on Him. That’s what he meant by “put my hope in Your name.”¹⁴ To wait with faith and endurance.¹⁵

Doeg wanted to make a name for himself, and he did - a terrible name. David concentrated on the name of His God. He knew that what we really need is God’s leading, His action, His provision. That *He* will accomplish what He desires in us. That’s our hope. And it is a hope that will *not* disappoint.

And so, whatever you’re facing, whether it’s a period of waiting, or a time of frustration or fear, of danger or discouragement or simply the unknown, choose the path of David. Sing a song of hope in your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And “may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁶

¹¹ C. Hassell Bullock *Psalms, Volume 1: Psalms 1-72*

¹² TPC

¹³ <https://greg.app/olive-tree-roots/>

¹⁴ James Smith *The Wisdom Literature & Psalms*

¹⁵ *Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament*

¹⁶ Romans 15:13