

Whose Voice Are You Listening To?

Psalms 52-53

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This morning, we will work through Psalms 52 and 53. Now, here's the deal: Psalms 52, 53, 54, and 55 actually form a minicollection of four Psalms and today we will cover Psalms 52 and 53 because they form a couplet.

Let's consider these two Psalms separately, then bring them together. The superscription at the beginning of Psalm 52 tells us much about it. It tells us approximately when it was written and why it was written. Look at the superscription:

*TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A MASKIL OF DAVID, WHEN DOEG, THE EDMITE,
CAME AND TOLD SAUL, "DAVID HAS COME TO THE HOUSE OF AHIMELECH."*

Last Sunday, we saw that Psalm 51 was written sometime after David committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband killed. Now, we are considering a Psalm that was written describing an event that occurred before David became king. He was on the run from King Saul. So, if you haven't figured it out yet, the Psalms are not placed in chronological order. They tell the unfolding story of redemption but they are not placed in chronological order according to when they were written.

Now, back to Psalm 52. David and his men needed food and supplies, so they stopped in the city of Nob, where Ahimelech was the priest, and he gave them the Bread of Presence to eat and gave David Goliath's sword. Doeg the Edomite was there and witnessed what Ahimelech did, so he went and told King Saul. Saul then sent his men to kill Ahimelech and the priests who served with him. When they got to the city of Nob, the Israelite men would not kill the priests, so Doeg, who hated God and Israel, killed them. David heard of Doeg's treachery, and as a result, he wrote Psalm 52 as a lament for this evil act.

Psalm 53 is a Psalm of David and is almost an exact copy of Psalm 14. There are a few changes, but for the most part, and for specific reasons, they are the same. They are alternate versions of the same hymn included in the Psalter. It fits nicely in this mini collection right behind Psalm 52.

By the way, they didn't put Psalm 53 behind Psalm 52 because it was called Psalm 53. The numbers were added after the collection was assembled.

I want to press pause right here and consider the organization of the Psalter. Even the organization of the Psalter is inspired by the Holy Spirit. The organization of the Psalter helps us understand the redemptive storyline of Scripture and points us to its fulfillment in Jesus.

Psalm 53 was placed behind Psalm 52 because Psalm 53 builds on the idea of how the godless carry out wickedness against God's people. When you bring these two Psalms together, they become a powerful portrait of human sin contrasted with God's steadfast love. Both Psalms confront the reality of evil, corruption, arrogance, violence, and unbelief. In them, we will hear the voice of the wicked calling out and tempting God's people to abandon God.

Now that the table is set, let's go to work on these two Psalms. Have you ever watched the daytime game show *The Price Is Right*? My mother loved that show. When we visited her, we had to watch it with her. It's one of those game shows where the audience can actually help the contestants. The contestants try to guess the price of an item, and everyone in the audience starts yelling the price they think is right. Usually, the contestants have family members there and, somehow, over all the voices, they find them and try to listen to what they are saying. Still, it is incredibly difficult because there are so many voices.

Here's the deal: Life can be this way sometimes. We have choices we need to make, and then everyone begins to speak at one time. It's like they are yelling at us on a game show telling us what to do. They want us to make the choice they think is right. However, what we must do is to listen to the voice of the Lord in His word and trusted counselors and mentors who love us. However, sometimes the noise of the voices is so loud it is hard to discern the Lord's voice.

Psalms 52 and 53 speak to this very experience. These two Psalms are wisdom Psalms. While Psalm 52 is a lament, it does so with a call to wisdom. It echoes Psalm 1, which calls us to be a tree planted by the streams of Christ's living water. These two Psalms also echo the two voices in Proverbs: *Lady Wisdom*, who calls to the simple, and the *voice of the forbidden woman, which is the voice of the fool*.

In the same manner, in Psalms 52 and 53, we hear the voice of the wicked calling us to ignore God and trust in ourselves. We also hear the voice of the LORD calling us to trust in the steadfast love that is evidenced in Christ, His righteous life, His death on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead. These Psalms lead us to ask: *Whose voice are you listening to?*

Let's work through these two Psalms and consider the voices that are trying to get our attention. Let's evaluate our lives and determine whose voice we are listening to in life.

I. The Voice of the Wicked Calls Us to Ignore God (vv. 1-4, 53:1)

Psalms 52 and 53 open with the loud, boastful voice of the wicked proclaiming lies and deceit. In the voice of the wicked, we hear how they love evil and reject God. Listen to vv. 1-4 and Psalm 53:1 and notice how the psalmist employs the imagery of the voice of the wicked calling to whoever will listen:

*Why do you boast of evil, O mighty man?
The steadfast love of God endures all the day.
 ² Your tongue plots destruction,
 like a sharp razor, you worker of deceit.
 ³ You love evil more than good,
and lying more than speaking what is right. Selah
 ⁴ You love all words that devour,
 O deceitful tongue.
Ps. 53:1 The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, doing abominable iniquity;
there is none who does good.*

Before we get too deep into these verses, I want you to notice the sentence tucked in v. 1 that says,
The steadfast love of God endures all the day.

This sentence is very important, and I will come back to it at the end of the message. The truth of God's steadfast covenant love bookends Psalm 52.

For now, let's consider the voice of the wicked. The psalm opens with a striking question. The wicked man is described as a "*mighty man*." The Hebrew term can refer to someone powerful or influential. In context, this description fits Doeg. He is King Saul's man. He had enough influence to bring disastrous consequences upon Ahimelech and God's priests.

But David asks why such a man boasts in evil. The answer is that the wicked person does not merely commit evil; he loves it. Sin has become a source of satisfaction. He takes pride in the evil he commits.

The bottom line is that Doeg had a wicked heart. He personifies the voice of the wicked that calls to the simple and the fool. Did you catch the words for the voice of the wicked? [*He boasts, he has a razor-sharp tongue, he loves lying, he loves words that devour, and he is deceitful*]. Then in Psalm 53:1, "*The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'*" So, this guy is talking to himself and lying to himself.

When we think about the voice of the wicked, we must think about the great struggle with evil that humanity has faced since Genesis 3. The serpent's temptation in Genesis 3 was the original voice of evil. He lied to Adam and Eve, telling them to eat from the tree of the *Knowledge of Good and Evil* and that *"You will be like God."*

What we see in Doeg and the fool in Psalm 53 is a struggle that we all have. If we are not careful, we will listen to and obey the voice of evil. Here's the deal: Apart from grace, we are slaves to sin, and we will listen to or fall prey to the voice of the wicked. Whether that is coming from others or from our own evil hearts.

Yet, we must also heed the warning implied in these Psalms. We must make sure we examine our own hearts. Here's the problem: It is not that we can fall prey to the voice of evil, but if we are not careful, we will hear the voice of evil coming from our own mouths. We can say all kinds of evil things about others and say evil things to others.

Remember, when we point the finger at those whom we believe to have evil voices, we also have three fingers pointing back at us. The problem of the evil voice is not always out there; it is in our hearts.

Jesus said in Matthew 15:18-19,

But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

Also, the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 3:10-18,

As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." ¹³ "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." ¹⁴ "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." ¹⁵ Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known." ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

So, here we are apart from God's grace; we will be the voice of evil and say evil things, and we will listen to the voice of evil as if it were our god. We will lie to ourselves. We are in a desperate condition. We are in for a world of hurt unless our hearts change. So, first, we hear the voice of evil calling us to forget God. Let's keep going.

II. The Word of the LORD Judges the Wicked (vv. 5-7, 53:2-5)

God is characterized not only by His steadfast love but also by His justice. Because God is just, He will not allow something as beautiful as His faithful loving-kindness to be trampled upon or ignored forever. So, David declares in Psalm 52 and in Psalm 53 that God will judge the wicked Doeg and the fool who says there is no God:

*But God will break you down forever;
he will snatch and tear you from your tent;
he will uproot you from the land of the living. Selah*

*⁶ The righteous shall see and fear,
and shall laugh at him, saying,*

*⁷ "See the man who would not make
God his refuge,*

*but trusted in the abundance of his riches
and sought refuge in his own destruction!"*

*Psalm 53:5 There they are, in great terror,
where there is no terror!*

*For God scatters the bones of him who encamps against you; you put them to
shame, for God has rejected them.*

David announces the certainty of divine judgment when he said:

"But God will break you down forever."

The psalm emphasizes not only the certainty of God's judgment but also the permanence of God's judgment. The person who builds his life upon deception and treachery will ultimately discover that his foundation cannot stand. As one pastor said, *"self-reliance plus self-deception equals self-destruction."*¹

The lie the wicked believe is that they will escape judgment because God either doesn't care or they believe that there is no God. They have listened to the voice of the serpent. But judgment is coming, and Hell is coming with it.

Now, look at v. 6 because it is one of those verses that makes us do a double-take. We need to linger over v. 6. Look at it again:

*The righteous shall see and fear,
and shall laugh at him.*

The language of v. 6 is surprising because it seems to encourage the righteous to rub their victory in the face of those about to be judged for all eternity. It seems contradictory to the Christian ethic when you consider that we are called to love our enemies and pray for them.

The Hebrew word for *"laugh"* can also be translated as *"celebrate."* We must understand that celebrating the judgment of the wicked has to be understood in light of the cross of Christ. The cross is the judgment upon the Son of God for sinners who trust in Him and judgment upon the world that ignores the Savior. So, when we reach the end of time, and we all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will see that the great reversal has come.

Here's what I mean: If you have suffered horrible injustice and found no justice in this life, then when we reach the Judgment Seat of God and all accounts are settled, you will celebrate God's justice. You will glorify the God who doesn't sweep injustice under the rug or just blow it off. There may be no justice in this life, but that doesn't mean God has forgotten and will not give justice in the end. He will, and if you ignore Him, Hell is coming with that judgment.

When this day comes, the righteous will celebrate the glorious judgment of God on those who have tortured the people of God and, most importantly, who crucified the Lord of Glory. Now, those who laughed at Christ on the cross will weep and mourn. Revelation 18:20 says:

*Rejoice over her [the wicked city who tortured God's people], O heaven, and you
saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against
her!"*

Also in Revelation 19:1-3,

*After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in
heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our
God, ² for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute
who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood
of his servants." ³ Once more they cried out, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her
goes up forever and ever."*

Psalm 53:5 points to this day when it says the enemies of God and His people are in great terror in the face of God's judgment. Yet, on that day the people of God celebrate that the Son of God reigns and is now fully

¹ I heard Mike Breau say this in a sermon. I can't remember which one, but I want to give credit where credit is due.

glorified because every knee has bowed and every tongue has confessed that Jesus is Lord. They celebrate and rejoice in the goodness and justice of God Almighty.

Psalm 52:7 is the exclamation point on judgment. The word “See” in v. 7 is the psalmist's call to all to behold the judgment of the wicked and learn from it. So, the judgment in vv. 5-7 culminates in the final judgment.

Psalm 52 anticipates that final judgment. It warns us not to build our lives on anything except Christ. This means the gospel of Jesus Christ explains how sinners can escape judgment by trusting in the person and work of the One who was judged in their place on the cross. Jesus is the Word made flesh who came and died in the place of sinners. He was judged in our place and for our sin. The only way to escape God's judgment is by confessing your sins to God and placing your faith in Jesus as your Lord and Savior. The question remains: *Whose voice are you listening to?*

III. The Voice of the Righteous Calls Us to Confess Faith in Jesus (vv. 8-9, 53:6)

The contrast is now dramatic. The wicked man is uprooted, but David is planted. The wicked man trusts in his riches, but David trusts God's steadfast love. The wicked man seeks refuge in himself, but David found refuge in God.

Look at what he says in vv. 8-9 and Psalm 53:6,

*But I am like a green olive tree
in the house of God.*

*I trust in the steadfast love of God
forever and ever.*

*⁹ I will thank you forever,
because you have done it.*

*I will wait for your name, for it is good,
in the presence of the godly.*

*Psalm 53:6 Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion!
When God restores the fortunes of his people,
let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.*

David's confidence is not in his own strength. His confidence is, “*I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever.*” Verse 1 of Psalm 52 begins with the confession of God's steadfast love, and now as we come to the end, we double down on our faith in God's steadfast love.

It is essential that we remember that the culmination of God's steadfast love is seen in the cross of Christ. The person and work of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection are the fulfillment of and display of God's steadfast covenant love. As the Apostle Paul said, “*God came in Christ to reconcile the world to Himself.*”

The image of “*the olive tree in the house of God*” is rich imagery in Scripture. Olive trees symbolize fruitfulness, vitality, blessing, and permanence. But in particular, this imagery should take our minds back to the Garden of Eden and the original place of God's dwelling with man.

However, this sweet fellowship man had with God in the Garden was broken when Adam sinned, and in Adam's Fall, sinned we all. Now, fast forward to Psalm 1, where we learn there are two ways to live. We can walk in the path of sinners or walk in the path of the righteous. We can be the tree planted by streams of water, bearing the righteous fruit of God, or we can be the chaff/husk of wheat that the wind blows away in judgment.

Finally, Psalm 52:9 and Psalm 53:6 tell us that David chose to walk in the way of the righteous, and therefore salvation came for him because he listened to the voice of the Lord. *So, whose voice are you listening to?*

When we think about whose voice we are listening to, Psalm 52 and 53 echo the two voices in Proverbs and the two ways to live in Psalm 1. The question of whose voice we listen to is older than Psalms and Proverbs. It goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden and Genesis 3, when Adam and Eve listened to the voice of the serpent instead of the voice of God. Since then, these voices strive to compete with God's voice in our lives.

Like the people on those game shows, thousands of voices scream at us to listen to them. Social media sends you notifications to your phone, calling for your attention. It pleads for you to listen to what someone said about you or accuse you of something stupid you may have said or done. People troll you, accuse you of being a bad Christian, and say that your beliefs are stupid and foolish.

Yet the voice of social media is not only an evil attack; it is also a voice of distraction and escapism. It calls you away from spending time with God in His word and in prayer. It calls you to waste your life staring at a black screen, chasing dopamine hits when someone likes what you posted. This is the voice of evil masquerading as an angel of light so that you don't know its evil. This is the deceitful voice of evil calling you away from God.

Society and culture scream for your attention, trying to get you to conform to its image. If you are a Christian, it calls you a bigot and a racist for following Jesus. Culture wants you to abandon your faith. If you're not a Christian, society and culture will try to shame you for even considering trusting Jesus as your Savior and following Him. Culture will cancel you and ostracize you in order to break you down, so you abandon your faith in Jesus. It will call you a fool for believing in myths and legends. Our society and culture literally tell us that there is no God.

You may have a family or extended family who treat you much like the culture does. This gets even harder when the attacks are close to home. Their voices carry a lot of weight and influence in your life. However, Jesus warned us in Matthew 10:21-22,

Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, ²² and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

The voice and attack of the wicked may come from within your own family and from your very own flesh and blood. Bottom line: Following Jesus doesn't mean everything will get easy. Even within your family, the voices troll you and scream at you to forget Jesus. They call you to abandon your faith and come back to the family where you are "loved."

If it isn't enough to have all of these outside voices screaming at us to listen to them, many of us struggle in our own minds. We are constantly talking to ourselves about what to do, who we are, and how to make the best decisions. We shame ourselves for our mistakes and sin. We beat ourselves up and forget God's grace that sustains us. The problem is that we often give ourselves bad advice. So, the voice of "self" is another voice that can mislead us.

Finally, that isn't bad enough; we also have an enemy, Satan, working overtime to organize all kinds of voices to get us off track. He certainly doesn't want us to listen to the voice of the Spirit of God in His Word and the godly counsel of God's people.

So, back to our question: *Whose voice are you listening to? Who are you going to listen to? What are you tempted to do? Are you trying to fight this battle on your own?*

Here's where we turn to Jesus and learn how to apply the gospel to our lives. Remember what Jesus did and that He is still working in your life. The gospel reminds us of what Jesus did for us: His perfect life, His death in our place for our sin, and His resurrection from the dead. When the voices flood into our hearts and minds, we can come to Him and rest in Him.

Next, what does Jesus say? Consider what Jesus is saying to you through His word and His Spirit. How does the message of the gospel remind you that Jesus cares for you, loves you, values you, delights in you, and will help you fight sin and listen to the God's word?

Are you listening to Jesus' voice in the gospel, His word, and by His Spirit, or are you listening to the voice of the enemy? Are you worshipping Jesus as you are hit with a barrage of voices that confuse you, condemn you, or cancel you?²

² The application for this sermon is adapted from the Gospel Care Collective, Jason Kovacs, *Summer in the Psalms*, 2026.