

Doctrine of the Imprecatory Psalms

1. An imprecatory Psalm, found within the Ketuvim (wisdom literature) of the Hebrew Bible, is a Psalm that invokes judgment, calamity, or curses upon one's enemies or those perceived as the enemies of God.
2. Imprecatory Psalms include the following: Psalms 5, 6, 11, 12, 35, 37, 40, 52, 54, 56, 58, 69, 79, 83, 109, 137, 139, and 143.
3. Jesus quoted from the imprecatory Psalms in John 15:25, and John 2:17, while Paul the Apostle quotes from Psalm 69 in the Epistle to the Romans (11:9-10 and 15:3).
4. Several New Testament passages quote Imprecatory Psalms.
 - *Matthew 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*
 - *Matthew 26:23 And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. 24 The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born.*
 - *1 Corinthians 16:22 If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.*
 - *Galatians 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*
 - *Galatians 5:12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.*
 - *2 Timothy 4:14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works:*
 - *Revelation 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*
5. Harsh judgments are prayed for reflected in the words of Psalm 109.

Psalm 109

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David

Here is a prayer for...

- Satanic Oppression. *6 Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand.*
- Judicial Condemnation. *7 When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin.*
- A Premature Death. *8 Let his days be few; and let another take his office.*
- A Disrupted Family Life. *9 Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.*
- A Generational Curse. *10 Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.*
- Retributive Justice. *11 Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour.*
- A Life without Mercy. *12 Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children.*
- An Extinct Posterity. *13 Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out.*
- Divine Retribution. *14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.*
 - ❖ The Petition. *15 Let them be before the Lord continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.*
 - ❖ The Motive. *16 Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart.*
- Lex Talionis. *17 As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.*
- A Cursed Life. *18 As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. 19 Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.*

- Private and Public Shame. *29 Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle.*
6. While imprecatory prayers are harsh they serve a variety of purposes.
 - An imprecatory prayer can serve to alarm the ungodly of the error of their ways and the need to repent.
 - An imprecatory prayer can be a form of self-catharsis (self-cleansing of anger) or even a group catharsis during corporate worship.
 - An imprecatory prayer can form a framework for another message of mercy and blessing based upon confession, repentance and restoration.
 7. In an ever increasing politically correct society liturgical reforms has led to the removal of imprecatory prayers in many worship services that once followed the Reformed tradition.