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The Imprecatory Prayer

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

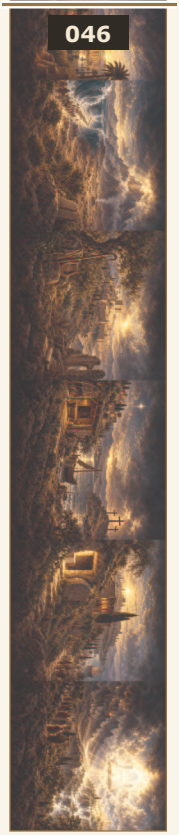
PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE





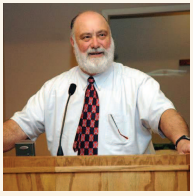
Help me, O LORD my God: O save me according to thy mercy.

PSALM 109:26

The imprecatory prayers of Scripture confront the reader with questions of evil and divine justice. John Weaver considers their meaning, their place in prayer, and the difference between biblical petition and personal vengeance. This series asks believers to examine both the content and the motives of their prayers.

"When David or any other biblical character prays an imprecatory prayer, the matter is left entirely with God."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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CHAPTER 1

The Imprecatory Prayer-1

Introduction to Imprecatory Praying

I want to welcome everyone to Reedy River Presbyterian Church. We are glad you are here for our spring Bible conference of 2010 on imprecatory praying. I am Bill Boney, a ruling elder here, and we will have Pastor Weaver preach to us tonight through Thursday night on this very common subject, which we always hear about in imprecatory praying, right? If you are like me, you have never heard a lecture or sermon on that. I am hoping this will be an event that will really enrich our prayer lives. Imprecatory praying is a very misunderstood and very neglected topic in the Reformed churches today—in all churches.

After the service tonight, there will be fellowship and light refreshments for any who wish to stay. There is also a basket in the rear and one in the fellowship hall for a freewill offering, if you are led to give, for Pastor Weaver and his labor in the Word.

Pastor Weaver is a native of Georgia, like myself, and a graduate of Bob Jones University; he also attended graduate school there. Since then, he has moved to the Reformed faith. He has a Bachelor

of Arts degree in theology and has been in Christian ministry for over forty years. So we have a little bit of experience tonight. He has pastored, been a church planter, and started Christian schools around the country. He has traveled throughout the country, preaching and lecturing in churches, colleges, and conferences like this. He is now engaged in evangelistic and conference ministry, traveling across the country and expounding the Word of God. He has preached in America, Canada, and England.

He is the author of three books: The Christian and Civil Government, The Sovereignty of God and Civil Government, and Biblical Truth About God's Righteous Vengeance. In addition to all this, he preaches weekly in Waycross and in Live Oak, Florida, at Reformed Baptist churches. His sermons are recorded and sent to many areas of the country, as well as to Europe, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, and Wales.

His sermons consist of biblical expositions dealing with theology, economics, history, southern history, constitutionalism, civil government, and practical Christian obedience—a wide range of subjects. He and his wife, Alice, have four children and six grandchildren.

We thank Brother Bill and Reedy River for allowing us to have this venue. We try to bring Pastor Weaver up at least once a year. It is always difficult trying to find a place that is suitable, and this fit real well, so we appreciate it.

For those of you who listen to Pastor Weaver regularly on Sermon Audio, if you are interested in contributing to that, there are expenses every month. If you want to put something in the basket and note that, it would be very good. We occasionally have people who help with that, and we could certainly use some assistance on a fairly regular basis. That is really all I want to say. Thank you for allowing this, and we hope that you will be blessed by it.

It is a joy to be here, and I am thankful for the opportunity. Sermon Audio goes everywhere. I receive emails from Italy, from Korea, including South Korea. In fact, one day I came home and there was a message flashing on my phone. I pushed the button, and the voice said, “Hello, mate. I’m wondering if there is a like-minded

Reformed church anywhere here in Western Australia." You know how big Australia is. We do send tapes to Australia, but, Lord have mercy, one person is over here and another is way over here. There was no way in the world I would know if a like-minded church was anywhere near him in Western Australia.

It is certainly a blessing to have those messages go out. I want you to open your Bibles tonight to Psalm 104, verse 35. Normally, when I teach, I ask people to turn with me in the Bible. If you can keep your fingers nimble, we will turn to a lot of Scriptures. Certainly, I believe you should see for yourself what the Word of God has to say. The two messages that I preached prior to this series on imprecatory praying dealt with Jesus Christ, our divine Advocate. Now we will consider imprecatory praying.

The second message I showed was where David said, "Plead my cause, O Lord." That is exactly what an advocate does. Those two messages led directly into imprecatory praying. There is much about this, not only in the Bible, but it is also a hot subject today, and we certainly need to understand it.

So look in Psalm 104, and let us pray before we read. Our Father, we are so thankful for the Lord Jesus Christ and for his grace and mercy. We pray that you would teach us, open our eyes, give us understanding, and grant us, Lord, that we may serve thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In thy name we pray. Amen.

The Shocking Prayer of Psalm 104:35

Psalm 104 and verse 35. The psalmist writes, "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. Praise ye the Lord." Now look at that. It is just one simple verse: "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more." All I can say is, what a prayer request.

Can you imagine a modern-day politically correct, multicultural church member raising his hand in a packed church service with a special prayer request? When the pastor calls upon him, he says, "I would like for everyone to pray that the sinners would be consumed out of the earth and the wicked will be no more." Finally, he would

add, “And when that is done, I will bless the Lord and say, ‘Praise the Lord.’”

Can you imagine the scene? The pastor would be dumbfounded, the congregation almost aghast, and silence would pervade the auditorium. How in the world does one respond to such a prayer request? The modernist pastor would simply denounce it as unloving and unkind. The fundamentalist pastor would probably say that it denies evangelism and would keep us from reaching the lost. Many so-called Christians would refuse it, saying, “It seems like that is condemning them to hell, and therefore it could not possibly be biblical or Christian.”

Yet remember that this psalm was written by David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, the man called in the Bible the man after God’s own heart. Here this sweet psalmist of Israel, the man after God’s own heart, prays, “Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth and let the wicked be no more.”

Contemporary Controversy over Imprecatory Prayers

Imprecatory praying is certainly a hot topic today. If you really want to know how hot the topic is, all you need to do is go on the Internet and type in "imprecatory prayers" or "imprecatory praying." You will find a lot of hits about two pastors—one on the East Coast, one on the West Coast—who have prayed publicly for God to kill certain public officials who are openly rebellious, wicked, and sinful. These pastors are excoriated, castigated, and slammed on every hand.

In fact, there is one man, I believe he is in Texas, against whom a Christian pastor has been publicly praying. Now the man who is being prayed against is suing the pastor who is praying against him. I find it absolutely amazing that many of these people who claim not to believe in God and not to believe the Bible surely do not want to take any chances about someone praying against them. He is trying to do everything he can to stop this Christian pastor from praying against him.

Is it unchristian or unbiblical to pray the imprecatory prayers that are given to us in the Bible under divine inspiration?

There are some individuals who say that this type of Old Testament praying conflicts with New Testament teaching. Therefore, in their eyes, what we need to do is simply go by the New Testament. The problem with that thinking is that it presents an unnatural dichotomy between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Moreover, it implies that the Old Testament is untrustworthy or outdated. It also presupposes that there is a change of God from the Old Testament to the New Testament, or at least a change in God, which would deny His immutability—that is, that God does not change.

When an individual begins to think like that, he will probably go as far as one modernist preacher did. He said, "The God of the Old Testament is a dirty bully." Why would anyone say that? Because they have taken it upon themselves to bring God and His Word to their bar of human reasoning, and they are now sitting in judgment against God and His Word, determining what is right and what is wrong. If one individual can do that, why should not every individual have the right to do it? Pretty soon, none of the Bible applies, because there is something in it that everyone hates, despises, and detests. Then you end up with absolutely no Bible at all.

Biblical Definition and Scope of Imprecation

I am going to try to answer those questions for you, and a whole lot more, before this series is over. But let me ask the question: What is imprecatory praying? An imprecation is an invocation of judgment, calamity, or curse upon one's enemies or upon the enemies of God. Such curses span the breadth of biblical revelation. If you begin in the book of Genesis and go to the book of Revelation, you will find imprecatory prayers and imprecatory curses literally everywhere. In fact, these imprecatory curses form an integral part of the covenant renewal described in Deuteronomy chapters 27 through 30. I might add that the New Testament ends in the book of Revelation. When you get to Revelation chapter 6, what are those saints under the altar crying? “How long, O Lord God, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood which was shed upon the earth?” These souls are crying for divine vengeance.

Some of the most powerful imprecations in Scripture are found in the Psalms. There are no Psalms that contain only imprecations. However, there are Psalms that contain mostly imprecations. You will find those Psalms in Psalm 7, Psalm 35, Psalm 55, Psalm 58, Psalm 59, Psalm 69, Psalm 109, Psalm 137, and Psalm 139, along with a whole lot of others in the Bible.

Remember that an imprecation is a curse. It is a denunciation that conveys a desire or a wish for evil, or for someone to have a malediction placed upon them. Thus, you are praying against some individual or against some activity. It is an anathema; it is an execration. It is calling down and asking God to curse that individual, to destroy that individual, or to destroy that activity.

New Testament Examples of Imprecatory Prayers

Let me show you some of these in the New Testament to begin with. We are going to come back to Psalm 104. In 1 Corinthians chapter 16, verse 22, I want you to know what the Apostle Paul prays. He says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha." Look closely at that: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha."

Now, the interesting thing is that "anathema" is literally a Greek word. You will see how it is translated in just a moment in another portion of the Bible. The word "anathema" means to be cursed, doomed, damned, set aside for certain and sure destruction. In 1 Corinthians 16:22, he says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be doomed, damned, cursed, set aside and marked out for certain and sure destruction." But notice: it is "maranatha." The word "maranatha" simply refers to the Lord's coming.

Paul is saying, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be doomed, damned, cursed, marked for certain destruction at the coming of our Lord."

If you will turn in your Bibles to Galatians chapter 1, you will see how Paul uses the same word again. Galatians 1:8 says, "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." Note, "let him be accursed." Verse 9 says, "As we have said before, so say I

now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed."

The word "accursed" in verse 8 and the word "accursed" in verse 9 is the word "anathema," the same word used in 1 Corinthians 16:22, when Paul said, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha." He says, "If anyone, even an angel from heaven, preaches any other gospel than the gospel of the grace of God through Jesus Christ, let him be doomed. Let him be damned. Let him be set aside for certain and sure and absolute destruction."

We have seen two passages where Paul prays for the man who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ to be doomed, damned, cursed, set aside, and marked for certain destruction. We have also seen where he prays that if anyone, even an angel, preaches any other gospel than the gospel of Jesus Christ, he too is to be doomed, marked, and set aside for certain destruction. Now you have to ask this question: Was Paul uncharitable and unchristian when he prayed that God would doom and damn everyone who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ and who would pervert the gospel of the grace of God? Was Paul unchristian and uncharitable? The answer is no. Why?

Paul's prayer was simply reflecting the teaching of Scripture on the subject. We are talking about imprecatory praying, and to pray an imprecatory prayer is to call down a curse, a malediction, or an anathema upon someone. Paul had prayed, "If anyone love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed," and if anyone perverts the gospel, let him be accursed.

Notice what Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 1:7: "And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe, because our testimony among you was believed in that day."

Certainly, what Paul prayed in 1 Corinthians 16:22 and in Galatians 1:8–9 was in line with what is going to happen when our Lord comes. You must understand that men like to forget one simple truth: the Word of God contains sanctions. It contains positive sanctions and negative sanctions as well.

Covenantal Sanctions: Blessings and Curses

“Sanction” is another word for either a blessing or a cursing. When the Bible has positive sanctions, it refers to blessings. When it has negative sanctions, it refers to curses. There are curses as well as blessings. Read Deuteronomy 28 or Leviticus 26, and you will find all of the curses contained there for those who violate God's law. You must understand that there are basically only two kinds of people in the world.

Covenant keepers and covenant breakers receive different sanctions. Covenant keepers receive positive sanctions—that is, they receive blessings. Covenant breakers receive negative sanctions—that is, they receive curses. This is taught throughout Scripture, as Psalm 1 plainly shows. David describes the godly man and then draws a contrast with the ungodly man. On the godly man, he pronounces positive sanctions; on the ungodly man, he pronounces negative sanctions.

David writes, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

Let us break this down so we can understand what David is saying. He says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." We can use the word advice: blessed is the man who does not walk in the advice of the ungodly. He does not listen to their advice, wisdom, or counsel because he understands that it is totally contrary against the Word of God.

What will happen when a man does listen to the advice of the ungodly? David says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners." If you listen to the advice of the ungodly, the next thing you know, you will

be associating with the ungodly. You have heard the old adage, "Birds of a feather flock together."

Then David says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." That is agreement. What began as advice moved to association and ends in agreement. David is describing the blessed man, the godly man, the man who receives positive sanctions: he does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, he does not stand in the way of sinners, and he does not sit in the seat of the scornful.

“But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law does he meditate day and night.” Here is the positive sanction: “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.”

Here is the negative sanction upon the ungodly man: “The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore, the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”

David, the warrior king, wrote Psalm 1. He was a man of the covenant, and he believed and approached civil polity and spiritual worship with a firm understanding of positive and negative sanctions. In Psalm 1, David extols the righteous man, the godly man who meditates in God’s law and obeys God’s law. God says through David that this godly man is like a tree planted by the rivers of water; that is, he gets plenty of nourishment, nutrients, and water. Therefore, he bringeth forth fruit in his season. His leaf doth not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

Then David gives the strong contrast: “But the ungodly are not so. The ungodly are like the chaff driven with the wind,” absolutely worthless, dry stubble. They will not be able to stand in the day of judgment. Therefore, they shall perish from the earth.

This covenantal understanding that David had is absolutely necessary for us today. If we are going to comprehend, embrace, and emulate David’s imprecatory war psalms and recapture our lawless

society, there are grounds in the Bible for using imprecatory prayers, and the Bible makes those prayers exceedingly clear.

Psalm 112 gives another illustration of a positive sanction and a negative sanction. It has only ten verses: the first nine are positive sanctions, or blessings, and the last verse is a negative sanction, or a curse. David says, “Praise ye the Lord. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments,” the same man he described in Psalm 1.

"His seed shall be mighty upon the earth. The generation of the upright shall be blessed. Wealth and riches shall be in his house, and his righteousness endureth forever. Unto the upright there riseth light in the darkness. He is gracious, full of compassion, and righteous. A good man showeth favor and lendeth. He will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he shall not be moved forever. The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He," that is the righteous man, "shall not be afraid of evil tidings. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established. He shall not be afraid until he see his desire upon his enemies. He, the righteous man, hath dispersed. He hath given to the poor, his righteousness endureth forever, his horn shall be exalted with honor."

Now watch the contrast: "The wicked shall see it and be grieved. He shall gnash with his teeth and melt away. The desire of the wicked shall perish." Here is a clear picture. Those who obey God, those who are covenant keepers, will have positive sanctions. The covenant breakers are going to have negative sanctions.

The Background of Psalm 104:35

Psalm 104, our text, verse 35, says, "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. Praise ye the Lord." In this psalm, David is praising God for His creation, His providence, and His redemption. He sees the beauty of God's creation, and at the same time he sees that which is polluting, perverting, and destroying the beauty, harmony, and glory of that creation. What he sees is sin, and he understands that sin is wreaking havoc everywhere in God's earth.

Sin is not some abstraction floating around somewhere in the universe. Sin is in man. It is sinners that sin. If there were no sinners, there would not be any sin. Man is the sinner. When David realizes what is really messing up God's creation, what is dishonoring and vilifying God, he prays, "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth and let the wicked be no more."

“Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. Yes, praise ye the Lord.” Some will read that and say, “Oh, how horrible. How cold, how uncharitable, how uncompassionate.” Very obviously, David is condemning someone to hell when he says, “Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth and let the wicked be no more.” If you raise that objection, let me ask you a question. Do not answer it out loud, but answer it in your mind: Is every single individual that has lived, is living, and shall ever live going to be saved? The answer is no, unless you are a universalist. The Bible teaches very clearly that a great many people are lost. Many have died unconverted in the past, many are dying unconverted today, and many will die unconverted in the future.

Our Lord Himself, in Matthew 25:46, said, “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” Our Lord said there would be a division: some would go to everlasting punishment, and some to life eternal. In Matthew 7:13–14, He also said, “Enter ye at the strait gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat. Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Obviously, He taught that not everyone is saved and not everyone will be saved.

What about these people? Did we pray against them if we pray like David, “Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth and let the wicked be no more”? Let me give you two quotes before showing you some Scriptures. Martin Luther, the reformer, said: “We should pray that our enemies be converted and become our friends. And if not, that their doing and designing be bound to fail and have no success and that their persons perish rather than the gospel and the kingdom of Christ.”

Let us be honest: Could you rather see perish the kingdom of Christ or the humanistic, wicked, satanic kingdom of man? Who would you rather see perish, the wicked or the righteous?

The Puritan David Dickson said: "If any of the enemies of God's people belong to God's election, the church's prayer against them giveth way to their conversion and seeketh no more than that the judgment should follow them only until they acknowledge their sin and turn and seek God." Thus, if you are praying against a sinner attacking God and God's people, and seeking to pervert and destroy His kingdom, and that man happens to be one of God's elect, the curse will follow him only until God gives him repentance and faith, and he turns from his sin.

Theological Justification: The Security of the Elect

When you pray these imprecatory prayers as David did—"Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth and let the wicked be no more"—I can assure you, based upon Scripture, that not one for whom our Lord died will perish. How can I say that? Look in your Bibles to Isaiah 53. Everyone knows that Isaiah 53 speaks of our Lord, the Messiah, and it is a wonderful passage.

Beginning with verse 10: "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him. He has put him to grief when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." Watch carefully: "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands." Verse 11 says, "He shall see the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities."

Now go back to verse 10: "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him." That is, it pleased the Father to bruise the Son. "He," the Father, "hath put him," Christ, "to grief, when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." Look at what the Bible says: "He shall see his seed." Not maybe. Not hopefully. "He shall see his seed." Verse 11 says, "He shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied."

Do you realize that everyone for whom our Lord died shall be saved? Our Lord shall see his seed; he shall see the travail of his soul,

and he shall be satisfied. Not one for whom our Lord died is going to be lost.

Look in your Bibles to John 17, the high priestly prayer of our Lord. In verses 11 and 12, our Lord, praying to his Father, says: "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world. And I come to thee, Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name. Those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost."

"But the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled." Judas was never His to begin with. Judas worked with Him, and Jesus knew Judas, but Judas was never His in a covenantal relationship.

There are two Greek words for friend. One is philos, which literally refers to a loved one, a dear or intimate friend. The other refers to an acquaintance, someone you might know and with whom you work. When Judas came to betray our Lord with a kiss, our Lord did not use the word philos. He used the other word, hetairos—friend, acquaintance: "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" What was He saying? "You're not Mine. You're not My friend. You never have been."

But notice what the Scripture says: "Those that thou have given me, I have lost" how many? None. He has never lost one of His, and He will never lose one of His. You remember that passage in John chapter 10? He said that we are in His hand and He is in the Father's hand: "No man can pluck them out of my Father's hand."

Many years ago, I was driving home late at night through Atlanta, Georgia. It was probably midnight or after, and I still had three hours to drive. I turned the radio on to stay awake, and an old black preacher happened to be preaching on John 10. He read that passage and said, "You know that we're in Christ's hand, and He is in the Father's hand. 'No man can pluck you out of my Father's hand.'" Then he said, "Now let me get this straight, Sharon. If you belong to Christ, you're in His hand, and He is in the Father's hand. God the Father won't pluck you out of His hand. God the Son won't pluck you out of His hand. God the Spirit won't pluck you out of His hand."

Then he paused and said, “And come to think of it, them’s the only three that can do any plucking anyhow.” That is the fact. But note what our Lord prayed in John 17:24: “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world.” What did our Lord pray? “I will, that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.” Do you think God the Father is going to deny the request of God the Son? Do you think God the Son can pray a prayer and that prayer not be answered? If you think that, you have no understanding of the eternal covenant.

Hebrews 13:20–21 says: “Now, the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” Notice verse 20: “The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.”

If an everlasting covenant exists, that means it had no beginning and has no ending. What is the everlasting covenant? Before the world was ever framed, before a star was ever slung into space, there was a covenant entered into between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. God the Father gave to God the Son a people. God the Son undertook to be our substitute and our sacrifice and to die for us. God the Spirit then agreed covenantally to convict and convert those for whom the Son died and whom the Father gave to the Son.

That's referred to as the eternal covenant. Let me show you again the utter impossibility of one of our Lord's own being lost. Each of us knows that the Scripture says we have been buried with Christ. We died with Christ and were buried with Christ. But the Bible also teaches that we have been raised from the dead in Christ. Ephesians 2, beginning with verse 5, says, "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace are you saved, and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the

exceeding riches of His grace and His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Note that the Bible says in verse 6, "that He hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

What does that mean? It means that we have been raised with Christ and are seated with Christ. Where is Christ now? He is seated at the right hand of God the Father in heavenly places. We have been raised with Him and are seated with Him. You have to remember something: the Bible teaches that He is our head, and we are His body. Is it possible for the head to be in heaven and the body to be lost? No. We are going to be where Christ is going to be.

Imprecatory praying does not doom or damn anyone to hell who is not already doomed or damned to hell. Every man by nature is lost; he is already condemned and sentenced to death. Our Lord said in John 3 and verse 36, "He that believeth on the Son has everlasting life. He that believeth not on the Son of God shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Every man outside of Christ is already lost, already condemned, and the wrath of God abides on him. Therefore, when David prayed in Psalm 104, verse 35, "Let the wicked be consumed out of the earth,

When David prayed, “Let sinners be no more,” he was not praying anything that was unchristian or unbiblical. Imprecatory prayers are not contrary to the gospel. They are not unbiblical, and they are not unchristian. In fact, this is plainly taught by our Lord Himself.

Consider Matthew 13 and the parable of the tares. Our Lord gives this interpretation: “The Son of man shall send forth his angels and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity.”

You remember the parable. The servants came in and said, “Master, did you not sow good seed in your field, whence then cometh these tares?” They asked, “Shall we go out and root them up?” He said, “No, no. Don’t do that, lest you root up wheat with it. Let them both grow together until the harvest.” Then he said, “You gather the tares together and bundle them to burn them. And then you get the wheat into my barn.”

Here is our Lord's interpretation: "Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And his disciples came unto him, saying, 'Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.' And he answered and said unto them, 'He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man, the field is the world. The good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one.'" That is, they are the wicked, the evil, and the ungodly.

"The enemy that sowed them is the devil." "The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be at the end of the world."

"The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire, and there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Based upon our Lord's teaching and our Lord's interpretation of His own parable, when will the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father? Look at what He said in verse 41: "The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend," that is, sinners, sin, and wickedness, "and them which do iniquity, and they shall cast them into a furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Then, when the wicked are consumed, shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. When David prayed, "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth and let the wicked be no more," it was no different from his prayer in Psalm 7:9: "O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish thou the just."

What was he praying for in Psalm 104:35 and Psalm 7:9? He was praying for the fullness of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Each of these prayers is a prayer for the fulfillment of Christ's kingdom. That is why he said, "Let the wicked be no more and that sinners be consumed." He was saying, "I want the fullness of the kingdom of my Father."

Now turn to Matthew 5, because inevitably someone will raise this objection. Read verses 44 and 45. You will say, "Now, wait a minute, Brother Weaver. You are talking about imprecatory praying, praying down a curse upon the wicked and the ungodly, and praying for their destruction."

Reconciling Imprecation with Love for Enemies

And yet we know Paul did so, we know our Lord taught it, and we know David prayed that way. But you say, “Now wait a minute. There is a passage in the Bible that puzzles me. How do you explain Matthew 5:44–45 in light of imprecatory prayers?” Our Lord said, “But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you. And pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

How in the world can you explain imprecatory praying with this passage? Let me remind you of something. First of all, there is absolutely no contradiction between the law of God and grace. You find grace in the Old Testament—Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. You find law in the New Testament: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor thy father and thy mother.” That is a law.

Look very quickly in Romans chapter 3. The Apostle Paul is the preeminent expounder of justification by faith alone. Notice what he says as he is talking about faith. Romans 3:31: “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law.” Mark it down, folks: there is no contradiction between law and grace. I will explain this further tomorrow night. What I am trying to tell you is that there is no tension between imprecatory praying and what our Lord taught in Matthew chapter 5.

How do I reconcile those two things? I like what Spurgeon answered a lady one time. She said, “How do you reconcile the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man?” Spurgeon said, “I don't. They're not enemies. They don't need reconciling. They're twin truths.” Grace and law do not need reconciling.

How do we understand Matthew chapter 5, verses 44 and 45, in light of imprecatory prayer? First of all, if you look at Matthew chapter 5, verses 17 through 19, I want to make something exceedingly clear: in Matthew chapter 5, what our Lord is doing is establishing the law of God. He's establishing it. He's not nullifying it, abrogating it, or doing away with it. Our Lord says, "Think not that I'm come to destroy the law of the prophets. I'm not come to destroy, but to fulfill."

When our Lord says, "Think not," the impact of that statement is this: Don't even let it enter into your mind. Don't even let a thought pass through your mind. Don't even begin to think that I'm coming to destroy the law of the prophets. I'm not coming to destroy but to fulfill. "For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Very obviously, our Lord is not abrogating the law or doing away with it.

That is right in line with Matthew chapter 5, right where we have Matthew 5, verses 44 and 45. You have to understand the impetus of Matthew 5. What is our Lord doing in Matthew chapter 5? He is correcting the misinterpretation and misapplication of the law of God as it was perverted by the Pharisees. For instance, let me give you an illustration.

Here we have it in Matthew 5. In verse 21, He said, "You have heard that it was said by them of old time"; verse 22, "But I say unto you." Verse 27: "You've heard that it was said by them of old time"; verse 28: "But I say unto you." Verse 31: "It hath been said"; verse 32: "But I say unto you." Verse 33: "Again, you've heard that it hath been said by them of old time"; verse 34: "But I say unto you." Verse 38: "You've heard that it hath been said"; verse 39: "But I say unto you." Isn't that interesting? Verse 43: "You have heard that it hath been said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy.' But I say unto you."

What is our Lord doing? He is showing how God's law has been perverted, misinterpreted, and misapplied by the Pharisees. They

were teaching heresy, wickedness, and error. Here is what they teach, but here is what I say; this is what God's law really teaches.

He said in verse 43, "You have heard that it hath been said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy.'" The Pharisees basically taught that it was all right to hate your enemies. They were saying, If your enemy cussed you, cuss him back; if your enemy stole from you, steal back from him. Our Lord says, "No, no, no, no."

"Let me tell you what you do. You love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."

How do you love your enemy? Is our Lord demanding a gushy, sentimental, emotional, humanistic feeling? The answer is no—a thousand times no. How do we love our enemies and do good toward those who hate us? We may know how to pray for them, but most of us really do not know how to love them or do good to those who hate us.

Let me answer that. Romans 13:10 says, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." What is love? It is not sentimentalism, feelings, gushiness, or emotions. Love is the fulfilling of the law.

First John 5:2 says, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." Verse 3 states, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." What is the love of God? Is it feeling? No. Is it gushiness? No. Is it sentimental? No. What is love? It is obedience.

To illustrate it, suppose after service I walked over to Brother Bill, put my arms around him, and began weeping on his shoulder. I said, "Oh, Brother Bill, I love you. I love you. I love you. I appreciate you so much." Everybody looks around and says, "Oh, look how Brother Weaver loves Brother Bill. Isn't that wonderful?" But while I am crying on his shoulder and telling him how much I love him, I have my hand in his pocket, stealing a hundred-dollar bill. According to God's law, do I love him? No, because love is the fulfilling of the law.

Our Lord said, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." Suppose I never get sentimental, teary-eyed, or

hug his neck. Suppose I never say to him, "I love you," but always treat him biblically—according to God's law, honoring him and his family. Do I love him? Yes, for love is the fulfilling of the law. Therefore, when our Lord says, "Love your enemies," I love them by acting biblically toward them.

I do not render evil for evil or hatred for hatred. I obey God's law and do what is right toward them, even though they do what is wrong toward me. Romans 12:17 says, "Recompense no man evil for evil." Recompense means payback: "Do not pay back to any man evil for evil." It continues, "Provide things honest in the sight of all men, if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." There are some men you cannot live peaceably with, and the Lord knows that. That is why He said, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. For it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirst, give him drink. For in doing so, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

What is God telling us here? First of all, you do not pay back evil for evil. If Kevin stands up and cusses me out in front of everybody, I do not cuss him back. I control my spirit, and I still act biblically and right. It does not matter what he does; I have a responsibility to obey God. He says, "Avenge not yourself, but rather give place to wrath." In other words, let God work him over.

If someone is really doing you wrong, who can clean his plow quicker and better, you or God? The answer is God. If you want God to take over, step back and do not try to avenge yourself. If you try to avenge yourself, God says He will not interfere. God is just. He is not going to execute vengeance twice. "Vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord."

Therefore, here is the application: "If your enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirst, give him drink." God is not telling us to fawn over our enemy, spend lavish amounts of money upon him, praise his wickedness, invite him into our house for a meal, or act as though everything is fine. He is saying that you do right toward him

regardless of how he acts toward you. You obey His law and His word. If he is hungry and all I have is peas, he can eat peas too. If he is thirsty, I do not have to buy him a milkshake; I will give him water.

Why is God asking me to do that? To show that I am not eaten up with bitterness and revenge. I am not overcome with evil. I am willing to do what is right, biblical, and godly. “Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirst, give him drink. For in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.”

If you really want to mess with your enemy’s mind when he is cussing you out and acting ugly toward you, just smile and graciously walk away. He did not cuss me back. No, I did not cuss him back. God said, “In so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.”

This phrase refers to returning good for evil. In other words, it messes with his mind; it tears him up. He cannot understand it.

I heard about a pastor counseling a woman who was belittling her husband, saying all kinds of things about what he did and did not do. Finally, the pastor smiled, folded his arms, and said, “Well, have you tried heaping coals of fire upon his head?”—rendering good for evil. She said, “No, but I’ve tried hot water, and that don’t work either.”

That is not what God had in mind by using hot water. He is saying that you render good for evil. Our lives are based upon the Word of God.

How do I love my enemy? By acting biblically toward him. How do I do good to him? By acting biblically toward him. How do I pray for him? I can pray for God either to convert him or to remove him. It is up to God. But there is no contradiction between our Lord's command in Matthew 5:44 and all these imprecatory prayers.

Remember, we are given these imprecatory prayers under divine inspiration. Do you remember what the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3, verses 16 and 17? All Scripture, including the imprecatory prayers, is given by inspiration; that is, it is God-breathed. All Scripture is given by divine inspiration and is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. We are to have doctrine, correction, instruction, and

reproof even from the imprecatory prayers. Why did God give these imprecatory prayers? Why are they divinely revealed in His Word?

I believe one answer is that we may learn to use them to establish true and biblical justice. There are so many injustices in our day and age. There have always been injustices because men are depraved and sinful, but it seems that the more we allow such things, the more open, wicked, vile, and unjust our enemies become.

The Call to Pray for Justice and Live Godly

How in the world can we rectify these things? I was in a church in Mississippi a number of years ago. The pastor was being arrested for having a children's home without a state license. He had about ten or twelve children of his own and had taken in about twenty other children whom the state did not want and no one else would take. When he refused to obtain a license because it was a ministry of the church, they came to arrest him. I saw the pastor standing there with his hands handcuffed behind his back. When his little daughter, about four or five years old, realized they were about to take her daddy away, she ran screaming and crying to him to hug him one last time. The pastor bent down so his daughter could hug his neck.

And as he did so, he brushed against an officer. Then he was charged with assaulting an officer as well. What are we going to do? Stop and think about this. All of these injustices—how can we rectify them? We are so weak, powerless, and impotent in and of ourselves. There is no way in the world that you and I as individuals can overturn court decisions, legal precedents, or executive orders on our own. I wish I could, but I cannot. We may be unable to do that on our own, but, dear friend, let me tell you something.

The Bible teaches that there is indeed a judge in all the earth. Abram said to God in Genesis 18:25, “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” He recognized God as the judge of all the earth. And you know what this imprecatory praying is doing? It is when the saints, when God’s children, bring a covenantal lawsuit against the wicked who are violating God’s law, trampling the church under their feet, despising the saints of God, and despising that which is right and holy. We bring a covenantal lawsuit to our Heavenly

Father and say, “O Lord, we plead with Thee, we beg of Thee to intervene.”

You have to remember that Psalm 89:14 tells us that justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne. We are told that one of the reasons the Lord Jesus Christ came, in Jeremiah 23:5, is stated this way: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise up unto David a righteous Branch; and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.” Why did our Lord come? Yes, to save His people, but more than that, to execute justice and judgment in the earth.

Remember Isaiah 42:3, which speaks of Christ: “A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench? He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.” That passage is applied to Christ in Matthew 12:20. In both passages, the word refers to justice. In other words, God is telling us that we have a biblical right to cry out for justice.

Now turn to one last passage, Isaiah 59. See how God condemned Israel for failing to cry for justice. In Isaiah 59:4, God says, “None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth. They trust in vanity and speak lies.”

They conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity. “None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for the truth.” The people of God, the saints of God, have a biblical mandate and a biblical right to ask God, the Judge of all the earth, to send forth justice and bring forth His righteousness in time and in history.

Let me make a couple of applications. First, it is time we learn to pray these imprecatory prayers. When you read Psalm 58, Psalm 59, and some of these other passages, you may think, “These are rough.” They are not rough; they are biblical. But if we want victory in time and history, we must understand that we are God's people, the sheep of His pasture. When we are injured, harmed, or treated unjustly, our Heavenly Father is not only concerned; He is involved. There is not a father in this room who, if I went to his child and began to beat him viciously, would not intervene and say, “You're not going to do my child like that.” Our heavenly Father is not going to allow His

people to be beaten up by the wicked. He said, “He that touches you touches the apple of my eye.”

The second application is this: if we wish to be blessed and to have standing with God to prosecute a covenantal lawsuit, we must be obedient and godly ourselves. There is a doctrine known in the Bible and in our law as the doctrine of clean hands. It means that we must be innocent of the charges we press against others. A person who has acted wrongly, morally or legally—one who has unclean hands—will not be helped by a court when complaining about someone else who is doing the same thing.

If this is true in the lower courts of our land, how much truer is it in the divine court of our Heavenly Father? If we are going to prosecute a covenantal lawsuit, we must have clean hands. We cannot be guilty of the same crimes and sins for which we cry to Him, asking Him to rectify and avenge them. Let me give you an example.

You remember Jezebel and her wicked king husband, Ahab, wanted Naboth's vineyard. Naboth said, "God forbid it me. I can't sell it. This is not just my inheritance; this is God's land. I can't sell it or trade it. God forbids me." Ahab turned his face to the wall and cried like a little baby. Jezebel said, "Are you king in Israel? I'll get it for you."

She sent a letter to the elders in Naboth's village: "You proclaim a feast and set Naboth on high. Then get sons of Belial to come in and say, 'We have heard Naboth blaspheme God and the king.' Then take him out and stone him to death." If you blaspheme God, you deserve to die. If you blaspheme the king, you deserve to have your property confiscated. Jezebel not only murdered Naboth, but his sons as well. She was bringing a lawsuit against Naboth and his sons, who were totally and completely innocent, while she was guilty of the very things for which she was trying to have Naboth put to death.

If we want God to hear our prayers, send justice, and deal with the wicked, we must have clean hands. We must be as biblical, godly, and obedient as we can. When we pray that the wicked be wiped off the face of the earth and that sinners be no more, if we are wicked

and sinful, that would include us. Imprecatory praying will make you really want to live holily and godly.

Let's pray. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ tonight, teach us to pray these prayers, and teach us to live godly—in a holy, righteous manner. Give us victory in time and in history. Teach us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We commit ourselves unto Thee and ask for Thy blessings in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

The Imprecatory Prayer-2

We at Reedy River Presbyterian Church want to welcome all of you who are here tonight. We are glad that some of you are able to come back, and it is good to see some new faces. You are in for a treat if you have not heard Reverend Weaver before. Those who were here last night and know him know to have their seat belts buckled. He will take us through a rapid, thorough, and lightning exposition as he talks about imprecatory prayers.

Pastor Weaver is a native of Georgia and a graduate of Bob Jones University, with degrees in arts and theology and also study in the graduate school. He has been in Christian ministry for forty years, has preached in many places, and his tapes have gone even further around the world. He was telling us last night of being asked about a church in Western Australia, right? We are glad to have him here this evening and look forward to what else he might teach us on imprecatory prayers.

Our Heavenly Father, we do thank You for this opportunity. We pray that You have already prepared Pastor Weaver the words that You want us to hear. We are all individuals; we hear things

differently, and we are in different places in our walk. You can talk to each of us, and we pray that You will.

We thank You for Your Word, for it reveals Yourself to us. We pray that we will take it and apply it to our lives, not just on the first day of the week, but in all of our walk, wherever You may have us go—in our work, in our recreation, our neighborhoods, and in our family. O Lord, as we are taught specifically on this topic of imprecatory prayers, we pray that You would instruct us so that we can do this more properly, with good understanding, thoroughly, and for the sake of Your kingdom here on earth. It is in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Well, it is a joy to be back tonight. I am thankful that you are here, and we are going to continue where we left off last night. I am going to take just a few moments to review.

Introduction and Review

Our text tonight is Psalm 104, verse 35: “Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. Praise ye the Lord.”

So last night we began this study on imprecatory praying. I tried to give you an explanation of what imprecatory praying really was, because an imprecation is an invocation of judgment. It is asking for calamity or curse upon one's enemy or upon God's enemies. We saw how imprecatory praying certainly is not contrary to the gospel. I gave you a quote from David Dixon, the Puritan pastor, who said this: “If any of the enemies of God's people belong to God's election, the church's prayer against them gives it the weight of their conversion and seeks it no more than the judgment should follow them only until they acknowledge their sin and turn and seek God.”

We also saw how imprecatory prayers were actually an appeal for the fullness of the kingdom of Christ. In fact, I shared with you that verse of Matthew 13, and I asked the question, when will the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of the Father as bright as the sun? The answer is when the Son of Man shall send forth his angels and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and

which do iniquity. And the Bible says, “And then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun.”

So very obviously, when David prayed in Psalm 104 and verse 35, “Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth and let the wicked be no more,” that is essentially the same as praying, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” To pray, then, “Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth and let the wicked be no more” is no different from David's prayer request in Psalm 7 and verse 9: “Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish thou the just.”

Each one of these requests, then, is a prayer for the fullness of the kingdom of Christ. Last night we observed that there is certainly no contradiction between imprecatory praying and Christ’s command to love our enemies and do good to those that hate us. I took you through the Bible and showed you how love, according to the Bible, is obedience. It is not feeling or sentimentality; it is obedience. Our Lord said, "If you love me, keep my commandments," and the Bible tells us that love is the fulfilling of the law. We love our enemies by acting biblically and scripturally toward them, and we do good toward them by acting biblically and scripturally toward them.

Tonight, we must lay down certain broad and general principles dealing with imprecatory praying, and then look primarily at some of the imprecatory prayers in the Bible and consider their specific purposes: why we are to use them, why we are to pray them, and what we should expect from them. On Wednesday and Thursday night, Lord willing, we will consider what I am going to call the most difficult imprecatory prayer in the Bible, Psalm 109, and expound that psalm so that we can see the application of imprecatory praying.

General Principle 1: Unity of Scripture

Whatever problems one may have with the imprecations of the Old Testament—the tension between justice and mercy, love and hate—it is not a matter of law versus grace or the Old Testament versus the New Testament. The truth of the matter is this: we have one Bible, not two Bibles. The Old Testament is just as much the Word of God as the New Testament, and both teach exactly the same truth. For instance, if you read through the New Testament, you will find that it

has a great deal to say about judgment, justice, and condemnation. Likewise, the Old Testament has a great deal to say about brotherly love, loving and helping one's neighbor, and not seeking vengeance. There is therefore no contradiction between the Old Testament and the New Testament, nor between law and grace. Hold Psalm 104, but turn first to Romans chapter 12.

We read this passage last night, but I did not show you where Paul got this truth. In Romans chapter 12, beginning with verse 17, the Apostle Paul writes: "Recompense to no man evil for evil, provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. For it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. For in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Now examine this passage. In Romans 12, turn back to Deuteronomy chapter 32 and look at verse 35. You will find an amazing truth here, and this is the exact same truth that the Apostle Paul quotes in Romans chapter 12. In Deuteronomy 32 and verse 35, God speaks and says, "To me belongeth vengeance and recompense. Their foot shall slide in due time. For the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste."

Look what He said: "To me belongeth vengeance and recompense." Then go back to Romans chapter 12 and look at verse 19. Paul writes, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." The Apostle Paul takes the truth from Deuteronomy 32 and verse 35 and applies it here in the New Testament.

You say, "Oh, but look down at verse 20. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." Why? You do not find truth like that in the Old Testament, do you? Sure you do. Look back in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 25, verse 21: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat."

"And if he be thirsty, give him water to drink. For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee." Isn't that interesting? The Apostle Paul took that verse right out of the Old Testament. Romans chapter 12 and verse 20, which we would call New Testament doctrine and New Testament teaching, is nothing more than a reiteration of the truth of God given in the Old Testament. Law and grace teach the same truth.

You'll remember that from Matthew chapter 5, where our Lord said in verses 17 through 18, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." Our Lord is saying, "I did not come to abrogate, nullify, or do away with the law. I came to fulfill it."

Have you ever noticed, as you read through the New Testament, that the Jews were always after our Lord Jesus Christ? Have you ever wondered why? In Matthew 15, our Lord clearly sets the record straight. He accuses them not only of violating God's law, but very clearly of following their own traditions rather than the law of God. The Bible says: "Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread."

This was not some sanitary exercise. It was a religious ritual. They had come from a marketplace, lest some germ of some Gentile dog, so to speak, had gotten upon their hands. They had to go through this ritualistic ceremonial cleansing. So they were asking our Lord, "Why is it that your disciples"—now look closely at verse 2.

"Why do they transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread." But he answered and said unto them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and thy mother, and he that curseth father and mother, let him die the death. But you say, Whosoever shall say to his father and mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free." Thus have you made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. "You

hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

"But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." No wonder they were upset with our Lord Jesus Christ, because he was constantly validating and establishing the law of God while exposing their traditions, ceremonies, and rituals that violated it. In light of the imprecatory prayers, there can be no contradiction between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Certainly, there is no contradiction between law and grace. They are not enemies; they are friends.

Secondly, when David or any other biblical character prays an imprecation—asking God to curse or smite his enemies—the matter is always left entirely with God. We may pray against the enemies of Christ, but the result is completely in the hands of the sovereign God, who is the judge of all the earth. God may judge, or God may act as He pleases.

General Principle 2: Leaving Results to God

You remember that passage in Romans 12. It is also in Hebrews chapter 10, and other passages as well, where God says, “Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay.” Since vengeance belongs to God, it also belongs to God's prerogative to determine how He is going to act out or carry out His vengeance. You might remember this little idiom, this maxim, given to us by Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson: “Duty is ours. The consequences belong to God.” Whenever any biblical character prayed an imprecatory prayer, it was understood that the answer and the result were left entirely to God.

David prayed against Saul, Doeg, Ahithophel, and yet many others. But David never personally did them any harm, nor did he send a hit squad after them. Doeg was an exceedingly wicked man. Doeg deserved to die. Doeg was a murderer. The Bible tells us that Doeg, in 1 Samuel chapters 21 and 22, murdered 85 of the Lord's priests. Eighty-five. David was not king at that time; Saul was king. Since David was not king, David did not have authority to do anything about it. David was not even there, so he could not have

defended them. This happened after David was gone. What David did was pray an imprecatory prayer against Doeg. He could not stop Doeg or defend the priests, and he had no ability to correct the situation except through prayer.

Psalm 52 is an imprecatory prayer. Its head note says, "To the chief musician, Maschil, a psalm of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech." David prayed against Doeg: "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God endureth continually." Then he says, "Thy tongue deviseth mischief like a sharp razor working deceitfully. Thou lovest evil more than good, and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue. God shall likewise destroy thee forever. He shall take thee away and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place and root thee out of the land of the living."

"The righteous also shall see and fear and shall laugh at him. Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches and strengthened himself in his wickedness. But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever. I will praise thee forever because thou hast done it. I will wait on thy name, for it is good before thy saints."

Does anybody know what happened to Doeg? Remember, Doeg was the chief herdsman of King Saul. When Saul commanded his army to fall upon the priests of the Lord, the army refused: "We're not going to do that. We're not going to kill the Lord's priests." Doeg, who was an Edomite, said, "I'll do it," and murdered eighty-five.

David was not there. He could not stop it or defend them. He was not king and had no authority at that time, so he prayed this prayer. What happened to Doeg? I do not really know; the Bible does not say. But if you look at verse 5, I can assure you that I would not want to be in Doeg's place: "God shall likewise destroy thee forever. He shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living." Very obviously, God did indeed destroy Doeg in some particular way.

There is a principle here that you and I can apply: we may lawfully pray against those who are violating the law of God, abusing His people, trampling our Lord and His Word under their feet, and persecuting and prosecuting the righteous. We may ask God to stop them and to destroy them, but we must leave it totally in God's hands. Why? God may be pleased to take that vile, blasphemous persecutor, convert him, and make him our friend.

You say, "God would never do something like that." He did it to Saul of Tarsus. Saul was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the Lord and His people. He went to Damascus so that, if he found any of this way—that is, Christians—he might bring them back, men and women, and cast them into dungeons. If a vote had been taken in the first century for the man most likely to bust hell wide open, Saul of Tarsus would have won it hands down.

But what did God do? God saved him. God made him the friend of Christians and used him mightily to write a great portion of the New Testament. You see, when you leave things in God's hands, God may, in his own prerogative, restrain them, convert them, or remove them either temporarily or permanently. It is up to him. Vengeance belongs to him. He will repay. That's why we need to learn what Hebrews 10 and verse 31 teaches us: "It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God." Wow! It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God. You and I better understand, once we ask God to plead our cause and to undertake for us, when the wicked fall into His hands, it is indeed a fearful thing.

General Principle 3: Gracious Personal Actions

So in the Bible, when you find that men like David prayed these imprecatory prayers, they always left the result in God's hands.

Thirdly, here's another very broad principle. As a whole, however severe David's imprecatory prayers were, his personal actions toward his enemies were always gracious and kind. David prayed against Saul. Saul was seeking to kill David. He tried on numerous occasions, and twice God delivered Saul into David's hands. And David refused to kill him. The last time, Abishai looked at David and said, "Let me smite him to the earth this once. I promise you, David, I won't have to smite him a second time." Here's what he said

literally: "David, I'll kill him so quickly he'll never know what hit him. Let me just smite him this one time." David said, "No. Don't smite him. Let him live."

And Saul was out seeking David. David prayed against Saul, but he was kind and gracious to Saul. You remember in 2 Samuel, chapter 16, a Benjamite by the name of Shimei cursed David violently. And Abishai again said to David, "Why should this dead dog curse my king?" Now, David was king at that time. And he said, "Let me go over and take his head off. I'll teach him a lesson. He'll never curse you again." David said, "Abishai, Abishai, you sons of Zeruiah, you're too hard for me. No," he said in 2 Samuel 16 and verse 12, "it may be that the Lord will look upon my affliction and the Lord will requite me good for the cursing this day."

So he said, “Let him live.” Shimei was an enemy of David, but David was still gracious and kind to him. In appealing to the Lord for help against his enemies, David always proclaimed his clean hands. If you are going to ask God to do something to your enemies or to God’s enemies, your hands must be clean of the very charges that you are leveling against them. You cannot be guilty of those charges, or else you literally indict yourself.

Psalm 35 is another imprecatory prayer. Notice how David again appeals to this clean-hands doctrine. David said, “False witnesses did rise up. They laid to my charge things I knew not. They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul.” They are doing evil, wickedness, and wrong, but David is still doing good toward them. He continues, “But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth. I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned into my own bosom.”

“I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or my brother. I bowed down heavily as one that mourneth for his mother.” David prayed for them and tried to do right by them. Yet he says, “But in my adversity, they rejoiced and gathered themselves together. Yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not. They did tear me and cease not.” That is, they lied, slandered, and mocked with hypocritical mockers at feasts; they gnashed upon him with their teeth.

Then David prayed, “Lord, how long wilt thou look on? Rescue my soul from their destruction, my darling from the lions. I will give thee thanks in the great congregation. I will praise thee among much people. Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me, neither let them wink with the eye that hateth me without a cause.”

"For they speak not peace, but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land." Now notice what David is saying: "Lord, I've tried to do what's right toward them. And yet, Lord, look how they're treating me." David is not fabricating his attitude or lying concerning his actions. He is saying, "I was genuinely concerned about them. I really wanted to help them. I really prayed for them. I tried to treat them as a brother. I tried to treat them kindly. And look what they have done to me." David appeals in verse 22: "This thou hast seen, O Lord, keep not silence. O Lord, be not far from me." In other words, "Lord, you're omniscient. You know everything. You've seen this. You know this is the truth." David is saying, "Lord, my hands are clean in this."

Look in your Bibles to Psalm 7, another imprecatory prayer. Notice how David appeals to the clean-hands doctrine. Beginning with verse 3, David says: "O Lord, my God, if I have done this—if there be iniquity in my hands, if I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me, yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy. Let the enemy persecute my soul and take it. Yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth and lay mine honor in the dust."

Would you be willing to go to God in prayer and say, "Now, Lord, if I have acted wrongly, if I have acted evilly and sinfully, then Lord, let my enemy persecute me. Let him take my life. Let him tread me down in the dust"? If my hands were not clean, if David's hands were not clean, I do not think I would be praying that prayer, and I do not think David would be praying that prayer. David was saying, "Look, I may pray viciously against my enemies, but I'm still going to be kind to them. I'm still going to act graciously toward them." Let me put it like this: he is going to act biblically toward them.

One of the most difficult exercises for the child of God is keeping the heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence for

out of it are the issues of life." I preach that message every day to myself. One of the most difficult things for the child of God is to keep his heart right when God does indeed vindicate us and when God does indeed judge us.

I remember years ago preaching in a church in a far-off state a number of times. I was friends with the pastor. I honestly tried to help him in any and every way I could. Then one day I found out that he was spreading very vicious rumors about me and lying concerning me. I immediately thought, “What in the world is going on?” He not only attacked me, but did so publicly before a number of my pastor friends. So I went to one of my dearest friends, whom I think is one of the greatest counselors in America. I said, “What in the world is going on? I’ve never done one thing to this brother except try to help him and bless him.”

He simply looked at me and said, "John, sit still. Be quiet. When the smoke clears, there's going to be a morality problem." Within a month, the smoke cleared. He had been having an affair with two or three women in the church, and he was attacking me to throw the onus off himself. In other words, "Look over here; don't look at me. Look over there."

Modern-day politicians do the same thing. When all the smoke cleared, I knelt down and prayed for him. I asked God to deal in his heart, convict him, and grant him repentance. Although I was vindicated, I was not exalting in the vindication.

Let me show you what I mean. Look in your Bibles to Proverbs 24, and note verse 17. I am talking about keeping your heart, even when God does indeed vindicate you. God says, "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth."

Now, wait a minute. When God says, "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth," He is not saying, “Don't be thankful that you're vindicated.” He is not saying, “Don't be thankful that wickedness is brought down.” That's not what He is saying at all. Don't you remember in Revelation 19, when the judgment of God fell, what did the people of God do? They said, "Hallelujah!" as the smoke of their torment arose forever and

ever. They were praising God. They were thankful that they were vindicated.

No, this is not talking about not being thankful. It is not talking about not rejoicing in the fact that God's Word has been vindicated and God has been honored. Proverbs 24:17 continues, "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth, lest the Lord see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from his enemy."

Here is what he is saying: Don't get bent out of shape with pride and arrogance and think, "Aha, I've got a special connection with God. He's my guard dog." God said you had better not do that. A principle enunciated over and over in Scripture is that God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. David may have prayed fiercely, but his attitude and actions were always gracious and kind.

Church Discipline and Imprecatory Prayer

You and I cannot be overcome with bitterness, resentful ill will, hatred, and unkindness. We cannot be filled with that. As the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 7:1, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” It is not enough that we are not murderers, whoremongers, liars, or drunkards. God said we need to cleanse ourselves not only from all filthiness of the flesh, but also of the spirit: pride, arrogance, ill will, bitterness, resentfulness, hatred, and hot scowl with animosity.

That is what he is talking about. The only way you can keep pride and arrogance from coming up in your life is to learn to be truly gracious and truly kind. David and all of these other men may have prayed fiercely, but their actions and attitudes were usually gracious and kind, even toward their enemies.

General Principle 4: New Testament Parallels

Here is the fourth general principle: church discipline and church denunciations in the New Testament are really not that much different from the imprecatory prayers in the Old Testament. The New Testament contains many curses and denunciations. The

Apostle Paul cursed Elymas and smote him with blindness for resisting the gospel in Acts 13:6–11. He pronounced an anathema—a curse, an imprecation—upon anyone who would pervert the gospel of Jesus Christ in Galatians 1:8–9. The Apostle Peter, in Acts 5:1–11, pronounced the death sentence upon Ananias and Sapphira because they had blasphemed the Holy Spirit. Paul turned Alexander and Hymenaeus over to Satan in 1 Timothy 1:20, that they may learn not to blaspheme. In 1 Corinthians 5, he told concerning a man living with his stepmother that he was to be delivered over to Satan to be put to death. According to the Bible, the final step in church discipline involves turning the sinner over to Satan.

The Purpose of Imprecatory Prayer

Under God's sovereign control, a person may be severely chastised, even to the destruction of the flesh. When you talk about church discipline, you have got to remember, first and foremost, that the first goal is God's honor and God's glory. The second goal is the warning of others, and the third goal is hopefully the repentance and restoration of the one who is disciplined. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5:4–5: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

As you read through the Bible, stop and think about this: you will find all of these imprecations over and over. We are going to look at one of the most difficult ones in the next two nights. You will find that David prayed fiercely, and he prayed against his enemies. You will find that the Apostle Paul acted upon these principles as well. If you and I really understood imprecatory praying, and if we really understood what it was to be against God and against His Word; if we really understood the awfulness, the depravity, and the wickedness of our sins, we would not be nearly as comfortable with our lives as we are, I can assure you. We would understand what sin is all about.

I have given you four general principles. What I want to do now is take you through some of these imprecatory prayers and show you the purpose of these prayers. Why should you pray these

imprecatory prayers? I will show you from the Bible why you should pray them. First, in the imprecatory prayers, there is a concern for righteousness and the establishment of righteousness. God knows we need all the righteousness we can get in this country today. We need all the righteousness we can get in our churches, in our families, and in our personal lives.

Purpose 1: Concern for Righteousness

Psalm 7 is another imprecatory psalm. In verses 8 and 9 we read: "The Lord shall judge the people. Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me. O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish thou the just, for the righteous God trieth the hearts and the reins."

But let us go back to verse 6 and begin reading this prayer: "Arise, O Lord, in thine anger. Lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies, and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded. So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about. For their sakes, therefore, return thou on high. The Lord shall judge the people. Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and according to mine integrity that is in me. O, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the just. For the righteous God trieth the hearts and the reins. My defense is of God, who saveth the upright in heart. God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day."

In this prayer, David is seeking for righteousness to be established. He wants the wickedness of the wicked to come to an end. He says, "but establish thou the just." Do you understand that righteousness is foundational to this prayer in Psalm 7? Righteousness is foundational in imprecatory prayers. Are we concerned with righteousness? Do we want to see God's righteousness established in the earth? David prayed in Psalm 118 and verse 19, "Open to me the gates of righteousness, and I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord."

Our Lord, according to Jeremiah 33 and verse 15, came to establish righteousness: "In those days, and at that time, I will cause the branch of righteousness to grow up unto David, and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land." All through the

Old Testament, you read about righteousness. It is mentioned in the New Testament as well. But let me tell you something that I think is extremely painful. When you look at the prayers of David and the prayers of Daniel and the prayers of Ezra and Nehemiah.

But the only conclusion that you can come to is this: many of these Old Testament saints were more concerned about righteousness than are the New Testament saints. In Luke 18, our Lord spoke a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint. He said, “There was in a city a judge, who feared not God, neither regarded man.” If there is no fear of God, there will never be any regard for man.

There was a widow in that city, and she came to him, saying, “Avenge me of mine adversary.” He would not for a while, but afterward said within himself, “Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.”

Here was an unjust judge. He had no concern for justice, righteousness, principle, truth, liberty, or freedom. This little widow woman just kept coming, saying, “Avenge me of mine adversary, avenge me of mine adversary.” Finally, he decided to give her what she wanted simply to get her off his back. He did not care for God, had no fear of God, and had no regard for man. She was in his hair, bothering and upsetting him, and he had other things he would rather do than listen to her. He would give her what she wanted just to get rid of her.

Now see the application that our Lord Himself makes. “And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.” Are you listening? “Hear what the unjust judge saith.” Do you think God is like this unjust judge? No. “And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.”

Why is God not doing something? I will tell you why: because we are not crying. We are not praying. We are not asking God for justice. We are not asking God for righteousness. The Bible says that God is not like that unjust judge. God is concerned about righteousness. God is concerned about justice.

But evidently, His people are not. They are not crying out; they are not praying these imprecatory prayers. One of the purposes of imprecatory praying is to see that righteousness and justice are established. In Hebrew, the word for righteousness and the word for justice are one and the same. If something is right, it is just; if something is just, it is right. You cannot have righteousness without justice, and you cannot have justice without righteousness. God says we should learn to pray these prayers so that righteousness may be established.

Purpose 2: Desire for God's Praise

Secondly, in imprecatory prayers, there is a desire to see God praised and honored when the prayers are answered and the righteous are delivered. In Psalm 7:17, after praying this imprecatory prayer, David says, "I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high." In other words, when God hears his prayer and answers him, he will praise God and give Him the honor and glory.

In Psalm 35:18, David says, "I will give thee thanks in the great congregation. I will praise thee among much people." Then, in verse 28, he says, "And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long." One purpose of these imprecatory prayers is a desire to see God honored and glorified and to receive the praise and worship that is due His name when these prayers are answered.

Do you realize that, if we took testimonies, there would be a multitude of times in your life when God delivered you, preserved you, protected you, and answered your prayers, and you still have not given Him the praise, honor, and glory due His name? God does this for us so often and so much that most of the time we are not even aware of what He is doing for us.

I hate trains. I really do. I tell people laughingly and jokingly, “If there’s ever another revolution, I want to be the one who blows up train tracks.” The reason I hate trains is that I hate to come to a long train and just sit there and wait. If I have my Bible or a book, I do not mind; I can sit there all day long. But if I do not have something to read, I do not like sitting there at the train waiting.

There have been times, probably without my knowledge, when I had to wait on a train, and God's sovereign providence detained me to keep me out of a wreck somewhere down the road. I am just saying that we do not even know how many times God has protected us. But there is a purpose in these prayers: when it is known, we are to give Him the honor and the glory.

Purpose 3: Making God Known

Thirdly, in imprecatory prayers there is a purpose and design, so that men may know indeed that there is a God in the earth, that He is just, and that He rewards the righteous and punishes the evildoers.

I want you to look at Psalm 58 and notice how David prays these imprecatory prayers. He says in verse 6, "Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth." That is painful, folks. "Break their teeth in their mouth. Break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord," that is, those princes, those in authority.

"Let them melt away as waters which run continually, when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows. Let them be as cut in pieces. Let them be as a snail which melteth. Let every one of them pass away, like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun. Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living and in his wrath."

"The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance. He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked." Then David explains why he prayed those imprecations: "Break their teeth, O God. Break out their teeth in their mouth. Let them melt away. Let them be cut in pieces. Let them be like a snail that melts before the sun. Let them be like a woman in an untimely birth. Let them be burned. Let them be taken away as with a whirlwind." Why did he pray all that? "So that a man shall say, Verily, there is a reward for the righteous. Verily, he is a God that judgeth in the earth."

That purpose is confirmed by general truths in the Bible. Psalm 9:16 says, "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth. The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." God will either be known in salvation or condemnation, but He will be made known

to the world in one of those two ways. Therefore, both the righteous and the wicked shall know that there is a God in all the earth: the righteous in salvation, and the wicked in condemnation. David said, "I'm praying this prayer for the purpose that men will know that there is a God who rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked."

Purpose 4: Demonstrating God's Sovereignty

Fourthly, imprecatory prayers have the purpose that all may know that God is absolutely sovereign and that He is the governor of the universe; that is, He rules over all. In Psalm 59:13, another imprecatory prayer, he prays, "Consume them by wrath. Consume them that they may not be. And let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth."

It is not enough to ask God to send His righteous judgment. We should ask Him to send it in such a way that everyone knows it is God who does this. I get upset when I hear weather people talk about Mother Nature. It is not Mother Nature; it is Father God. Hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, droughts, and floods all come from God. God controls the weather, not Mother Nature.

Look at Psalm 83, verses 17 and 18: "Let them be confounded and troubled forever. Yea, let them be put to shame and perish." Why is he praying that the wicked will be confounded and troubled forever? Why is he praying that they will be put to shame and perish? Here is why: "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth."

There is a truth that when God judges the wicked and rebellion for their sins, some learn the hard way that God is sovereign. Ask Pharaoh; ask Nebuchadnezzar. They found out who God is. Nebuchadnezzar, in his ignorance and arrogance, said, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" God showed him, and he found out who that God was. So there is a purpose in these imprecatory prayers: that men will find out that God is sovereign.

Purpose 5: Causing the Wicked to Seek God

Fifthly, in imprecatory prayers there is also a purpose of causing the wicked to seek God. Some who experience the righteous judgment of

God do indeed learn a lesson—not all of them. All you have to do is read Revelation 6 and many other passages. God sends His judgment, yet they still continue in their sins and rebellion. But some do learn.

Look again at Psalm 83, verse 15: “So persecute them with thy tempest and make them afraid with thy storm. Fill their faces with shame that they may seek thy name.” Some, in seeing God’s righteous judgment, do indeed seek Him. In Isaiah 51:4, the Word of God says, “Hearken to me, my people, and give ear unto me, O my nation, for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people.” Notice that God said, “I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people.” Some will see it. Some will acknowledge it. Some will repent, bow, and seek His grace and mercy.

Multitudes probably will not, but some shall. The sixth purpose of these imprecatory prayers is to keep the wicked from enjoying the same blessings as the righteous.

Purpose 6: Withholding Blessings from the Wicked

Turn back, if you would, to Psalm 69, another imprecatory prayer. David prays, “Pour out thine indignation upon them and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their habitation be desolate and let none dwell in their tents, for they persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. Add iniquity unto their iniquity and let them not come into thy righteousness.” Now watch verse 28: “Let them be blotted out of the book of the living and not be written with the righteous.”

Let them be blotted out of the book of the living. What’s he saying? We’ll find out more tomorrow night, but here’s what he’s saying: “Kill them. Take their lives. Cut them off, do not allow them to live.” May I remind you that one of the promises of long life in the Bible is to the righteous?

What is the fifth commandment? “Honor thy father and thy mother.” Why? “That thy days may be long upon the earth which the Lord thy God hath promised thee.” In other words, longness or longevity of life is to the righteous for their obedience to God. That’s

one of the blessings. What's one of the curses? Psalm 55 verse 23 says, "But thou, O God, shalt bring them down to the pit of destruction. Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days. But I will trust in thee," said David. Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days. In other words, God will cut them down in the prime of life. One of the purposes of these imprecatory prayers is to make sure that the wicked do not enjoy the same privileges as do the righteous.

In imprecatory prayers, we learn to have an abhorrence for sin and disobedience. Think of it this way: if you and I were to get down on our knees tonight, covenant together, and pray that God would destroy the wicked and blot them out, we might put some of these prayers together. We might pray that God would break their teeth in their mouth, cast them down so that they rise not up again, let them melt as a snail before the fire, cut them in pieces, take them away in His wrath in a whirlwind, shoot His arrows into their soul, and blot them out of the land of the living.

Purpose 7: Cultivating Hatred of Sin

If you and I are praying those prayers, I think we would tend to think, "We don't want to be in that group. And if I'm not wicked, that means I have to be righteous." If I'm not disobedient, that means I have to be obedient. If I'm not ungodly, that means I must be godly. When we learn to pray these prayers, it teaches us to hate sin and wickedness. We realize that judgment is the just and righteous punishment for sin and rebellion.

Notice how David ends Psalm 139. Beginning with verse 21, David says: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? And am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred."

"I count them mine enemies." What has David just said? "Do not I hate them that hate thee, O Lord? And am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies." In the very next breath, he prays, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, and try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting."

When David prays against the wicked, he comes back to himself and says, "Oh God, I don't want to be like them. I don't want to act or talk like them. I just don't want to be one of them. Lord, search me. Try me. Make me holy. Make me godly." When you understand these prayers, you will be grieved with sin, disobedience, and rebellion. You will understand that your sin dishonors God, violates His law, repudiates His work, and mocks His graciousness, kindness, and goodness.

Then you hear Him in Jeremiah 44:4 speaking about sin: "Oh, do not that abominable thing which I hate!" As you pray these prayers, you will see how God hates sin and how you ought to hate sin. You will begin saying, "Oh God, make me holy as thou art holy. Thou hast commanded me, be ye holy for I am holy. You have commanded me, Lord, to present my body a living sacrifice. You've commanded me not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of my mind. You've commanded me to love you with all my heart, soul, mind, body, being, spirit, all. God, help me!" You will learn that there is a purpose in praying these prayers.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 says: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” These imprecatory prayers are for our doctrine, for our correction, for our reproof, for our instruction in righteousness. We need to pray, “Lord, make me holy, make me godly, teach me to pray these imprecatory prayers that the purposes shown us in your word may be established.”

Not only in my life, in my house, in my church, in my state, but in my nation and in the world. For God is the sovereign of all the earth. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. We’re thankful that you’ve given us your word and the truth in your word. We are the victors and not the victims.

We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Teach us to pray. Teach us to be holy. Teach us to be godly. Teach us to cry out to Thee for justice and righteousness. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

The Imprecatory Prayer-3

My grandson said the other night that we had a sermon on imprecatory prayer. Welcome to Reedy River Presbyterian Church. This is part three of imprecatory prayer, presented by Reverend Pastor John Weaver. Since most of you have already heard his biography twice, I will give an abbreviated account. Pastor Weaver pastors and preaches weekly in Waycross, Georgia, and Live Oak, Florida. He is a Reformed Baptist graduate of Bob Jones University and has been in the ministry for forty years. He lectures nationally and has been a church planter and a school planter throughout the country. He lectures and preaches in churches, colleges, and conferences. He has written three books: The Christian and Civil Government, The Sovereignty of God and Civil Government, and Biblical Truth About God's Righteous Vengeance.

His sermons are recorded and sent throughout the world, including Europe, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, and Wales. They consist of biblical expositions, theology, economics, history, Southern history, constitutionalism, civil government, and practical Christian obedience. He is married to Alice, and they have four children and six grandchildren.

Please silence your cell phones. There is a basket behind the pews for a freewill offering for Pastor John Weaver; my understanding is that he is doing this at his own expense, so feel free to help him. The first two sermons have been fantastic. I was unable to attend last night because we moved yesterday, but I know the first night was great, and I heard the second night was great. We expect the third night to be great as well.

It is a joy to be here tonight. Since some have not been here previously, I will take a few minutes to review tonight. The church is making CDs, which you may obtain from the church. We are thankful that you are here, and I am thankful for the opportunity to be here. Let us open our Bibles to Psalm 109.

Many of you have probably never heard of imprecatory prayers, but they are throughout the Bible. I trust that you will listen to the two previous messages, because I think they will prove very beneficial to you. Let us begin reading Psalm 109 with verse one and read through verse eight, as far as we will get tonight. Psalm 109, verse one. Let us pray, shall we?

Father, thank you for your love and your grace and for the truth of God. We pray for liberty and freedom in preaching, that the Holy Spirit of God would illuminate our minds. Grant us understanding and help us to live for thee. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Psalm 109, verse one: “Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise. For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are open against me. They have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They compass me about also with words of hatred and fought against me without a cause. For my love they are my adversaries, but I give myself unto prayer. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love. Set thou a wicked man over him, and let Satan stand at his right hand. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned, and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few, and let another take his office.”

Introduction and Review of Imprecatory Prayer

Imprecatory praying is when you actually call down a curse, a malediction, upon the enemies of God and upon your enemies.

There are numerous imprecatory prayers in the Bible. Many of them are in the Psalms, but they occur throughout Scripture as well. These imprecatory prayers are not contrary to the gospel. They are certainly not unbiblical or un-Christian. Very obviously, David, a man after God's own heart, prayed many of these prayers, as did Moses, the man of God, and numerous others in Scripture.

There are general thoughts concerning imprecatory prayers, as well as specific purposes for which God gave them to us. Whatever problem anyone has with the imprecatory prayers in the Old Testament—the tension between justice and mercy, or love and hate—it is not a matter of Old Testament versus New Testament or of law versus grace. We have one Bible, not two Bibles. The same God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. There is no change in God, nor is there a change of gods. Whatever problem anyone may have, very obviously, it cannot be Old Testament versus New Testament or law versus grace.

When David or any other biblical character prays an imprecatory prayer, the matter is left entirely with God. In other words, David did the praying; whether God wants to answer that prayer is totally and completely up to God. Although those imprecatory prayers were severe against the enemies of God and against David's enemies, David himself, in his personal actions, was always gracious and kind toward his enemies. Church discipline in the New Testament is not very much different from the imprecatory prayers in the Old Testament, because the New Testament, of course, contains many curses and many denunciations as well. The imprecatory prayers also teach us that God has not appointed His people unto defeat, but unto victory. We are not to be considered victims, but rather victorious.

The specific purposes of these prayers become clear as we examine some of these imprecatory prayers. First of all, one purpose is the establishment of God's righteousness. The imprecatory prayers are very clearly and obviously concerned with righteousness. Happily, there are not very many even New Testament saints today who are concerned with righteousness and justice. But these imprecatory prayers are.

Purposes of Imprecatory Prayers

Secondly, in these imprecatory prayers there is a desire to see God praised and honored when these prayers are answered. David said, "I will praise thee, I will honor thee, I'll give thee all the glory." Thirdly, there is a purpose and design that men may know indeed that there is indeed a God in the earth, that He is just, that He rewards the righteous, and that He punishes the wicked. We saw that particularly in Psalm 58 and verse 11.

Fourthly, all may learn that God is the absolute sovereign in heaven and earth. He rules over everything. Nebuchadnezzar found that out, Pharaoh found that out, and many others as well. Fifthly, the imprecatory prayers may cause the wicked to seek the Lord, because oftentimes in judgment some indeed do seek the Lord. Some learn a lesson. Sixthly, they serve the purpose of keeping the wicked from enjoying the same blessings as the righteous. Finally, we learn to have an abhorrence for sin, disobedience, and rebellion, and to bring our lives into conformity to His Word.

Overall, we could say that in imprecatory prayers, there is a purpose to see the justice of God vindicated, His word honored, His kingdom established, His righteousness prevailed, His people delivered, and His name honored and glorified. What I want to do is take the most talked-about imprecatory psalm and analyze it, to see if there is anything in this psalm that cannot be understood or explained in light of the rest of Scripture. The psalm that receives the most vehement denunciation of all the imprecatory psalms is Psalm 109.

Psalm 109 as the Most Attacked Imprecatory Psalm

You will find that liberals, sinners, sentimentalists, and humanists attack this psalm viciously. Granted, it is tough, but we have to ask one question: Does the teaching of Psalm 109 fit within the overall teaching of Scripture? The problem we face in Psalm 109 is far broader than just this one passage, this one psalm, or even this one book, because imprecations are taught throughout the entirety of the Word of God.

For instance, Moses, who is known as the meekest man on earth, Numbers 12 and verse 3, is the same one who prayed, "Rise up, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered. Let those that hate thee flee before thee." He prayed that in Numbers 10 in verse 35. It was still Moses, the meekest man on earth, who in Numbers 16 prayed, "O Lord, I pray that a new thing will happen. I pray that the earth will open up and these rebels will go down alive into the pit of hell." Here is Moses, the meekest man on earth, praying an imprecation against those who had rebelled and revolted against God Himself.

If you look at Psalm 109, many of you will have headings in your Bibles, and the heading simply says, "To the chief musician, a psalm of David." The word "musician" can also be "to the presenter." When David says "to the chief musician," or "to the presenter," it proves that this psalm was designed to be sung in tabernacle or temple worship. Obviously, there was nothing in this psalm that would prevent it from being sung in a worship service when it was written.

We have to understand that political correctness had not been invented at that time in history. You also have to remember this: when men begin to condemn this psalm, as well as the other imprecations of the Bible, what they are doing is setting themselves above God and demanding that God and His word come to the bar of human reasoning and to the bar of their judgment. Once they do that, they are indeed blaspheming the one true and living God, arrogantly assuming to themselves a right above God; thus, they are guilty of idolatry.

Now, this psalm is an exceedingly intense psalm. In fact, look down in verse 8. Notice what he said, talking about this wicked man: “Let his days be few and let another his office take. Let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow.” And he goes on. How in the world can you explain the intensity of these imprecations? Well, let me give you a very clear explanation.

David, of course, wrote this psalm under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. David was writing it against one or more of his enemies. However, this psalm is applied to the main enemy of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, that is, Judas Iscariot. How do we know that? Acts chapter 1 gives the explanation. Luke is writing, and he says: “Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled,

which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus."

Psalm 109 Applied to Judas Iscariot

Notice, first of all, that he is claiming direct inspiration for Psalm 109. He is also saying that David wrote Psalm 109. Verse 17 says: "For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry."

"Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, that is Psalm 109, 'Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.'" Very obviously, historically speaking, Psalm 109 has been called the Iscariotic Psalm since it refers to Judas Iscariot. However, David, when he wrote this psalm, was not necessarily praying against Judas Iscariot. He was probably praying against Ahithophel, or Saul, or Doeg, or many other of his mortal enemies. Yet this psalm tells us that, whoever David was praying against, it finds its accomplishment in Judas Iscariot, the enemy of the greater Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first five verses literally set the stage for this psalm. Verse one is a cry for help, vindication, and justice. David begins, "Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise." At the very beginning, David declares that he could find, nor would he desire, any other to stand forward in the vindication of his integrity and heart than the one true and living God Himself. "Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise" is almost the same as saying, "Arise, O God. Do something. Show forth your arm. Help me. I need you. Please stand up for me." He refers to God as the God of his praise and entrusts Him with the vindication of his innocence in the face of all the charges and persecution with which he is assailed.

David's Cry for Help and Description of Enemies (Psalm 109:1-5)

It is a cry and a plea for God to do something. It is almost the same as what David wrote in Psalm 68: “Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Him flee before Him.” David is crying to God for help.

In verses 2 through 5, David gives us a description of his enemies, their attitudes, and their actions. He says, “For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are open against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.” He describes them as lying and deceitful in verse 2, using words of hatred and fighting against him without cause in verse 3, wrongly and wickedly refusing his overtures of love and peace in verse 4, and returning evil for good and hatred for love in verse 5. David now begins his imprecations in verse 6.

Let me make this exceedingly clear: imprecatory prayers do not have their roots in a vengeful heart. Rather, they stem from a theology that reflects the holiness of God, the righteousness of God, the justice of God, and the faithfulness of God to His covenant. There is a pattern of divine judgment through curses throughout the Word of God. Deuteronomy chapter 27 is a very clear demonstration of this truth, and curses are pronounced upon all who violate God’s Word. Curses always rest upon the disobedient and the rebellious. This clearly indicates that sin is primarily against God.

David prayed in Psalm 51 while confessing and acknowledging his sin: “Against thee, and against thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight.” Did David sin against Bathsheba? Yes, he did. Did he sin against her husband? Yes, he did. Did he sin against his own family? Yes, he did. Did he sin against his own people? Yes, he did. Did he sin against his own government? Yes, he did. He sinned against all of these people, but he looked at God and said, “Against thee and against thee only have I sinned.” What does he mean? His primary sin, primary rebellion, and primary wickedness were against God.

Do you understand that you cannot violate any of the Ten Commandments until you violate the first one? “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” If you begin to steal, lie, fornicate, or murder, you cannot do those things until you first deny the one true and living God, who is the sovereign God of heaven and earth. When you deny him and begin to violate the others, you are setting yourself up above God. Thus, you are an idolater.

David is saying, “Against thee and thee only have I sinned.” In the Psalms, especially these imprecatory Psalms, this theology motivates the psalmist to plead for God to fulfill his word by executing judgment upon those whom he said he would judge. Imprecatory prayers illustrate, exemplify, and demonstrate the lex talionis of Scripture. The two words lex talionis are Latin and simply refer to the law of retribution.

The Law of Retribution (Lex Talionis) in Scripture

The lex talionis, or law of retribution, of Scripture is very simple: God always makes the punishment fit the crime. Hold Psalm 109, but go back in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 21. The lex talionis is plainly stated three times in Scripture. Exodus 21, beginning with verse 22: “If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.” Note, in the latter part of verse 22, that “he shall pay as the judges determine.”

Now turn to Leviticus chapter 24, beginning with verse 19. Here is the same lex talionis, the law of retribution: “And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again.”

"And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it: and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death. Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I am the Lord your God." Lastly, in Deuteronomy chapter 19, beginning with

verse 16, we find the third occurrence of this lex talionis, the law of retribution: "If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; and the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother."

"So shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

If we examine these passages carefully, we find that in each one God is speaking about the judges. According to biblical civil law, it does not matter who we are talking about: the judge's responsibility is to make the punishment fit the crime.

Now look very quickly in your Bibles to Matthew 5. We discussed this the other night, and I want to show it to you again. Imprecatory prayers are certainly not against the teaching of our Lord when He tells us to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and to do good to them that hate us. But beginning with verse 38, notice what our Lord says: Matthew 5, verse 38.

Jesus Corrects Misuse of Lex Talionis (Matthew 5:38-39)

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." What in the world is our Lord talking about when he says, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye"? In Matthew 5, our Lord is correcting the Pharisees' misinterpretation and misapplication of God's law. The Pharisees taught that if a man cursed them, they could curse him back; if a man slapped them, they could slap him back; and if a man insulted them, they could insult him back. They had taken the lex talionis, the law of retribution, and taught it to mean personal vengeance. Our Lord says that is not why the law was

given. God does not sanction personal vengeance proceeding from a bitter, resentful, hate-filled heart.

No, this law was given to the judges so that they might execute real justice. The Pharisees had perverted it and taught personal revenge. Our Lord says that vengeance belongs to him; he will repay. Very obviously, God has given us the civil magistrate and has given him the sword. In Romans chapter 13, he tells us, "for he beareth not the sword in vain."

Look back at Psalm 109, because David does not ask anything in this psalm that is contrary to the gospel or to the Christian faith. He does not ask anything unbiblical. He merely asks God to do what his Word already declares that he is going to do. Many of us may never have heard of the lex talionis, and we may not understand all the implications of the law of retribution as it is plainly taught in the Bible. But all of us understand a similar principle clearly taught in the New Testament: the law of sowing and reaping.

Galatians 6:7-8 says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." We have the law of sowing and reaping, and it is commensurate with the law of retribution, or the lex talionis, in Scripture.

In Psalm 109, verse 6, David makes this imprecatory prayer against an evil, wicked man. We should see how every one of these verses fits with the law of retribution, or the law of sowing and reaping: “Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand.” The first thing David asks is that his foe might be subjected to having an evil man placed over him like himself. He wants a man placed over his enemy who has absolutely no regard for justice, truth, or right; a man who has no character, no propriety, and no concern for anyone or anything but himself. “Set thou a wicked man over him.”

Exposition of Psalm 109:6-8: Prayers Aligned with Retribution

What is David asking? “Lord, let his punishment fit the crime. Lord, let him reap what he sows.” In other words, let this man be punished in the line of his offenses. As he has done this to me, let someone else do this to him. “Set thou a wicked man over him.”

It cannot be wrong that a man should be treated as he treats others. It cannot be wrong in itself to desire that a man should be treated as his character deserves. For this is the object of all law. This is what the magistrates are all about, or should be about. They should be interested in giving forth true justice. This is the principle that God deals with us concerning.

For instance, go back to Psalm 18, and begin with verse 25: “With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; with the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.” What is God saying? He acts upon this principle toward us. If you are merciful to others, He will be merciful to you. If you act purely, He will act purely with you. If you are upright, He will be upright with you. If you are froward—that is, disobedient and rebellious—He will treat you accordingly. In other words, God says, “I will treat you according to your character. I will treat you according to that which you deserve.”

I will make the punishment fit the crime. If you want to do what is right, God says you are going to be blessed and rewarded. If you want to do what is wrong, then God says, “I’m going to curse you,” and you are going to understand that, if you want to be disobedient, He can hand down curses as easily as He can hand down blessings.

Everyone understands the golden rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. That is exactly what our Lord is saying here. There cannot be anything more just than being treated exactly the way you treat other people.

If you go back to Psalm 109 and look at verse 6 again, he says, “Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand.” David now asks that Satan stand as at right hand as his counselor and advisor. The language David uses would properly apply to a

counselor or advisor to a king or someone in the administration of government. Undoubtedly, David had many. We know one who was exceedingly wicked and treacherous: Ahithophel.

But probably there were others as well. What David is saying is this: as this man was a malignant counselor, concerned only with himself and willing to forego his master's good that he might serve himself at his master's expense, David says, now let such a counselor be over him. Let such one counsel and advise him. Let there be a wicked counselor.

The word "Satan" is oftentimes translated as "adversary." So you could read verse six: "Set thou a wicked man over him: and let the adversary or Satan stand at his right hand." In other words, David is saying, let this man begin to reap exactly what he had sown. Charles Haddon Spurgeon quoted Hugo, who said: "The devil is on the left hand of those whom he persecutes in temporal things, on the right hand of those whom he rules in spiritual things, before the face of those who are on their guard against his wiles, behind those who are not foreseeing and prudent, above those whom he treads down, below and beneath the feet of those who tread him down."

Certainly that is true. But David begins to pray, "Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand." What is more right or more just than to have a man treated exactly the way he treats everyone else? What is more just than to have a man receive counsel just as wicked, vile, and malignant as the counsel that he gave others? Surely it is the law of retribution, the law of sowing and reaping.

Now look in verse seven. He says, "When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin." Remember, David is praying against the man who judged and condemned others in the vilest manner. He suffered not the innocent to escape, and it would be a great shame in the time of his trial, since he really and truly is guilty, should he be allowed to go free. David is simply asking that this man be punished according to justice. That is all he is asking: "When he shall be judged, let him be condemned." And then he makes this statement: "and let his prayer become sin."

The Wicked Man's Prayer as Sin

I do not have time tonight to preach two messages I would love to share sometime. One is entitled “When Prayer Is Sin,” and the Bible clearly teaches that. The other is entitled “When Prayer Is Useless,” and there is indeed a time when prayer is useless. But David is praying here that this man’s prayer might become sin.

Albert Barnes, commenting on the words, “Let his prayer become sin,” says: “Evidently, his prayer is in reference to his trial, that is, for his crime. His prayer is that he might be acquitted and discharged, that it be seen in the result that such a prayer was wrong, that it was, in fact, a prayer for the discharge of a bad man, a man who ought to be punished. Let it be seen to be what a prayer would be if offered for a murderer or a violator of the law—a prayer that he might escape or not be punished. All must see that such a prayer would be wrong or would be a sin. And so, in his own case, it would be equally true that a prayer for his own escape would be sin. The psalmist asks that, by the result of the trial, such a prayer might be seen to be, in fact, a prayer for the protection and escape of a wicked man. A just sentence in this case would demonstrate this, and this is what the psalmist prays for.”

I find it interesting that he said, “Let his prayer be seen.” Has it ever dawned upon you that the prayer of the wicked is already sin? Hold Psalm 109, but look in your Bibles at Proverbs 21:4: “An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.”

The wicked are in a bad state. Men have been commanded to pray, and yet if a wicked man prays, it is sin. If a wicked man does not pray, it is still sin. How can that be? “An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.” Think about that.

Let us think this thing through. Do you remember in Genesis 3, when Adam sinned and rebelled against God? What did God tell him? "By the sweat of thy brow thou shalt work and produce your bread." God has commanded man to work and to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. Here is a wicked man out plowing his field, trying to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. And God says his plowing is sin.

Here are two farmers, one a Christian and one not a Christian, plowing fields that adjoin each other. One man's plowing honors and glorifies God; the other man's plowing is sin against God. How can that be? Let me give you the answer. Romans 14:23 gives the answer: the Apostle Paul wrote, "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Why in the world is a wicked man's plowing sin? Because he does not plow in faith. He does not plow for God's honor and God's glory. He plows only for himself, and God therefore says that his plowing is sin.

If his plowing is sin, if his work is sin, how about his prayer? Look in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 15 and verse 8. Proverbs 15:8 says, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight." The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. The word "abomination" literally means a stench in God's nostrils. Thus the wicked man who gives to God finds that even his sacrifice is a stench in God's nostrils. But the prayer of the upright is his delight.

The opposite is also true. The prayer of a man who is not upright is still an abomination to God. It is only the prayer of the upright that is his delight. If there is no uprightness, no righteousness, it does not please God. Proverbs 21:27 explains it further: "The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?" The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination; how much more when he brings it with a wicked mind? In other words, when the wicked man brings a sacrifice without intending anything for God's honor and glory, or any benefit to God, but only a benefit for himself, God says that his sacrifice is already an abomination. How much more is it an abomination when he brings it with a wicked heart?

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said on this: "And let his prayer become sin. It is sin already, so let it be treated to the injured. It must seem terrible that the black-hearted villain should nonetheless pretend to pray. And very naturally, do they beg that he may not be heard, but that his pleadings may be regarded as an addition to his guilt. He has devoured the widow's house, and yet he prays. He has put Naboth to death by false accusation and taken possession of his vineyard, and then he presents his prayers to the Almighty. He has given up villages to slaughter, and his hands are red with the blood

of babes and maidens, and then he pays his vows unto Allah. He must surely be accursed himself who does not wish that such abominable prayers may be loathed of heaven and written down as new sins.

"He who makes it a sin for others to pray will find his own praying become sin. When he at last sees his need of mercy, mercy herself shall resent his appeal as an insult. Because that he remembered not to show mercy, he shall himself be forgotten by the God of grace, and his bitter cries for deliverance shall be regarded as mockeries of heaven." His prayer is already sin. What David is saying is, let that prayer become new sin, an additional sin.

Do not let him escape. Joseph Carl, an old Puritan who preached on the book of Job for forty years, wrote: "The prayer of the hypocrite is sin formally and it is sin in the effect; that is, instead of getting any good by it, he gets hurt. And the Lord, instead of helping him because he prays, punishes him because of the sinfulness of his prayer. Thus, his prayer becomes sin to him because he receives no more respect from God when he prays than when he sins. And sin doesn't only mingle with his prayer, as it does with the prayers of the holiest, but his prayer is nothing else but a mixture or mingle-mangle, as we speak, of many sins."

So David, in Psalm 109, says this concerning his enemy: "When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin." Has it ever dawned upon you that when the wicked pray, it is sin? God regards it as sin. Unless there is genuine repentance and faith in their hearts, their prayer is sin. So David said, "let it become sin."

Now, let us look at verse eight. He is praying against his enemy. In verse six he says, "Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand." Verse seven says, "When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin." Now, verse eight: "Let his days be few; and let another take his office."

Many are aghast at such a prayer request. How could anyone pray that, much less David, who was a man after God's own heart? Here is the unvarnished truth: verse eight means that David wants his enemy dead. "Let his days be few"; that is, let him die, and let

another take his office. You say, How awful that David, a man after God's own heart, could pray such a request of God.

Let me turn it around and ask you a question. How many of you would pray for longevity of life for a murderer, a pervert, a wicked, vile, fraudulent, corrupt, unjust, and ungodly man who delights in hurting others? Who would want to pray for a long life for him? I would not. David certainly would not want to. I would not want such a man to continue in office. That is exactly what David is saying; evidently, this man held some post of authority. Maybe he is talking about Saul. I do not know. I am simply saying that here is a prayer request that the man literally be taken out of the land of the living.

Now, is this prayer request in line with the general tenor of Scripture? The answer is yes. Long life is promised to the obedient and the faithful; it is not promised to the wicked. Psalm 91:16 and Proverbs 3:2 speak of long life being given to the obedient, and Psalm 34 does also. Go to Psalm 34. The Bible shows that long life is indeed promised to the righteous, the obedient, and the godly. Notice verse 12: "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?" How many of you would really love to live a long life and, at the same time, have quality of life and enjoy life?

This is what this question is about: "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?" God says, if you want long life, if you want to see good, and if you want to enjoy life, here is what you need to do: "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it."

"For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry." Watch verse 16: "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth."

God says that if you want to have long life, then learn to do good, do right, be obedient, keep your tongue, depart from evil, seek peace, and pursue it. In other words, long life is given in obeying the Word of God.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased." If we want long life, it is through obedience. Length of days is never, ever promised to the wicked. In fact, Psalm 55:23 says, "bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." Proverbs 10:27 teaches the same principle: "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." The years of the wicked shall be shortened, and the fear of the Lord prolongeth days. If we want to live a long life with quality, see good days, and enjoy life, we will do that only through obedience to God.

If we want our days shortened, if we want to be cut off in the prime of life, then God says simply, Do evil, do wicked, and I will cut you off. That is the general principle. Now notice what David says in Psalm 109:8: "Let his days be few; and let another take his office." How can David say that? How can that be a prayer request? David already knows that the wicked are going to be cut off. He already knows their days are going to be shortened because of their wickedness. He is praying against the man, simply asking God to fulfill His Word. Obviously, if a man dies, someone else has to take his office. Judas died, and Matthias was elected to take his office. David is simply praying something very common sense: "Let his days be few, let him die, and let someone else take his office."

This application can be made very lawfully and legitimately to the corrupt and deceitful politicians that we have in our land today. Would it not be a blessing—listen carefully—if the days of the wicked rulers were few, and another took their office, and that other happened to be a godly, righteous man who feared God, wanted to obey God, and obeyed His law?

Look in your Bibles to Proverbs 28:28: "When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase." When do the righteous increase? When the wicked perish. When the wicked rise to power and authority, what do men do? They hide themselves. They have to, or they are going to be stolen from left and right, because that is what wicked men do.

They could care less about you, your property, or anything else. Remember that unjust judge who feared not God, nor had regard for

man. If you do not fear God, you have no regard for man, his property, or anything else. So the Bible says, "When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase."

Now look at Proverbs 29:2. Here is the opposite: "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." What would you rather be doing—rejoicing or mourning? That is exactly what David is saying in Psalm 109:8: "Let his days be few; and let another take his office." In other words, God, get rid of the wicked man and put a godly man in his place. I would rather rejoice than mourn. That is exactly what this imprecatory prayer is all about.

Albert Barnes said, "Let another take his office. So every man acts and practically prays who seeks to remove a bad and corrupt man from office. And such an office must be filled by someone. All the efforts which he puts forth to remove a wicked tend to bring it about that another should take his office, and for this it is right to labor and to pray. The act does not of itself imply malignity or bad feeling, but is consistent with the purest benevolence, the kindest feelings, the strictest integrity, the sternest patriotism, and the highest form of piety."

What did Albert Barnes just say? If you are a true patriot, a true Christian, and have the kindest feelings, the purest benevolence, the strictest integrity, you will pray that the wicked might be taken from office and that the righteous might be exalted to office. That is exactly what David is praying for: "Let his days be few; and let another take his office."

Application: Crying to God for Justice and Deliverance

Now let me make some applications. When men will not grant justice, it is perfectly acceptable to cry to the Judge of all the earth for justice. It is amazing, as you read through the Bible, how many passages show that God encourages us and commands us to cry for justice.

God charged Israel with this high crime in Isaiah 59:4: "none calleth for justice." God is the lover of justice. Justice and judgment

are the habitation of His throne. God wants justice, demands justice, and demands that we be just. In Job 37:23, the Bible says, "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict." In Isaiah 45:23, God declares that He is a just God and Savior, and beside Him there is no other. The Bible says in Deuteronomy that He is the just God, and His way is perfect. Certainly God is a God of justice, and we have to learn to cry to God for justice. When you and I cannot correct situations, God can.

God is far more interested in justice than you and I are. Psalm 109:1 reminds us by way of application that God is for His people when the wicked are against them. We are living in very dangerous and interesting times. It is permissible in this day and age to attack Christians in any way that you can. If you attack any other religion or ethnic group, you are condemned and looked down upon, regardless of whether they deserve to be condemned or judged. Immediately, the world calls you a bigot, a racist, or anything and everything under the sun. But let anyone attack Christians, and it is fine.

The whole news media backs them. I found it interesting that, concerning the militia that was just attacked up in Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio, the news media kept saying that it was a Christian militia. I know nothing about them, but what do they call Christian? Christianity is defined by the Word of God, not by the news media or the political pundits of the day.

Lord, just because you call something a Christian does not mean it is a Christian. You can call yourself a car just because you are in a garage; that does not mean you are a car. We have to remember that God is for His people when the wicked are against them.

Therefore, in Psalm 109, verse 1, David prays, "Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise." Here is what he is saying: all of my enemies may be against me. They are encircling me, encompassing me, and looking to destroy me. But, Lord, You are for me. Help me. I cry out to Thee.

Thirdly, the opposite is also true: when the wicked are against God's people, God is for them. That is exactly what we find in verses

2 through 5 of this psalm, as well as in many other passages in the Bible.

These imprecatory prayers give us a door of hope. If I were to ask you tonight how many of you can correct all the unconstitutional, unbiblical, and ungodly rulings that the Supreme Court has issued, how many could correct them? None. How many can stop Congress from passing unconstitutional laws? No one in this room. How many can correct the president and his executive orders? Nobody.

You are helpless and hopeless in that sense of the word. You do not have the power. But there is a God in heaven, the Judge of all the earth, and He is absolutely sovereign. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 21, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." We have the absolute right to cry out to God and ask Him for grace and mercy. He is our hope.

Let me show you one passage. Turn, if you would, to Exodus chapter 5. This is a wonderful and constantly amazing passage. I want you to see where you and I will really have to be in order to cry out to God. God had sent Moses down into Egypt to deliver the children of Israel. Moses went to Pharaoh and said, "Let my people go." Pharaoh responded, "I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."

Moses and Aaron had gone to Pharaoh several times, and his answer remained, "I know not the Lord." He did not recognize the Lord or acknowledge His power or authority over him. He would not let Israel go. Moses and Aaron had tried and failed; now the elders had gone to Pharaoh.

SCRIPTURE READING - Exodus 5:15-22 (KJV)

> "Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick: and, behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault is in thine own people. But he said, Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord. Go therefore now, and work; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks. And the officers of the children of Israel did see that they were in evil case, after it was

> said, Ye shall not minish ought from your bricks of your daily task."
>
> "And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh: And they said unto them, The Lord look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us." They came and looked at Moses and Aaron and said, "Who do you think you are? You came down here and you told us that you were going to deliver us and get us out of here. The only thing you've done is made it worse. There's been no deliverance. You put a sword in their hand to slay us."
>
> "And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all."

Consider carefully this truth. Moses and Aaron have tried to deliver the people, but cannot. The elders have pleaded with Pharaoh, but failed. Upset, they accuse Moses and Aaron of creating a sword to slay them. Finally Moses says, "Oh God, why did you even send me?"

I want you to note that God has Moses helpless, Aaron helpless, and all the officers and elders of Israel helpless. Look in chapter six, verse one. When everyone was helpless and realized they could not do it, the Lord said unto Moses, "Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land."

Now shalt thou see what I will do. When will God deliver us? When we reach the end of our rope and realize we cannot do pea doodly squat—when we are absolutely helpless and hopeless, recognizing that it is up to God to sovereignly and powerfully deliver us.

And He will. Our responsibility is to cry to Him and pray these imprecatory prayers. The Bible says in Psalm 66:9 concerning God, "Who holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be

moved." It is God who preserves us, protects us, and delivers us. We must realize how helpless and powerless we are, cry to Him, and pray these prayers. We must ask Him to make bare His arm, demonstrate the power of His hand, save His people, and heal His land.

Let us pray.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray for Your blessing, Your help, and Your grace. Lord, we are so thankful that we serve an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, sovereign, immutable, infinite, eternal God. Thou dost not change. Thou art the same today, yesterday, and forever. Thou hast delivered Thy people in times past; Thou wilt deliver them now. I pray, Father, that Thou wouldst do so in a mighty hand. Teach us to pray. Teach us to cry to Thee, and give us victory in time and in history. In Thy blessed and holy name we pray. Amen. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Imprecatory Prayer-4

Introduction and Review

Good evening, and welcome back to the spring Bible conference here at Reedy River Presbyterian Church with Reverend John Weaver. We very much appreciate the messages you have brought us. We were asked to provide a facility for this, but I think everybody in our church feels that we have been blessed at least equally as much. We thank you very much. This is the last in a four-part series, and we appreciate everybody being here. We will have refreshments afterward and fellowship, so that we can get to know one another a little better.

Let me say that I am so thankful for the opportunity to be here, and I am also thankful to the elders and the people of Reedy River Presbyterian Church for letting us not only meet here, but for being here and giving us all kinds of support. I trust the Word of God has blessed each one of you. Please check your cell phones and make sure they are on silent. There are free-will offering boxes or baskets, one in the back here and one in the fellowship hall, if you feel so moved to contribute to the expenses and the ministry of Reverend Weaver.

There is so much in the Scripture. I have preached for forty-five years, and one thing I learn every time I read the Scripture is that I do not know it all. There is no way in the world anyone, I do not guess, could ever know it all. There is just so much in that Bible that it absolutely amazes me. I read a passage and read a passage, and I preach on the passage; then the next thing I know, I turn and see something I have just never seen before. The Word of God is so full of truth.

I want you tonight to open your Bibles to Psalm 109. We are going to take up our fourth installment on imprecatory praying. A few of you, of course, are here for the first time, and I would encourage you to get the three previous CDs and listen to them. There is no way in the world I can review everything. I will take just a few moments to review and then get started. Notice, if you would, Psalm 109. Let us begin reading with verse 9, Psalm 109, verse 9. I will take a few moments and go back over the first eight verses. But look in verse 9.

God says, "Let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds and beg, let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath and let the stranger spoil his labor. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him, neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be before the Lord continually that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth, because that he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor needy man that he might even slay the broken in heart. As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him. As he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with a garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, like oil into his bones. Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually."

An imprecation was a malediction; it was a curse. There are many imprecatory Psalms, in which David curses the enemies of God and asks God to send a curse upon them. You will find this in Psalm 7, Psalm 9, Psalm 35, Psalm 57, Psalm 58, Psalm 59, Psalm 69, and

Psalm 140, as well as in many other Old Testament and New Testament passages where curses are placed upon individuals because of their rebellion against God.

These imprecatory psalms and prayers are not contrary to the gospel. They are not unbiblical, un-Christian, or uncharitable. They are divinely inspired, as the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16–17: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

He was speaking primarily of the Old Testament because the New Testament had not been completed at that particular time. Of course, it would indeed apply to the New Testament books that had already been written, but he had in view primarily the Old Testament. Very obviously, there are imprecatory prayers that are just as applicable today as they were back then. On the second night, I tried to give you some very general principles concerning these imprecatory prayers. First of all, there is no contradiction between the Old Testament and the New Testament. There is no contradiction between law and grace.

We have one Bible and one God. The God of the New Testament is the same God as the God of the Old Testament. There is no change in God. In fact, He said in Malachi 3:6, "I, the Lord, change not," referring there to His immutability.

Secondly, when David or any other biblical character prayed an imprecation, the result was left in the hands of God. We do not tell God how to exercise His vengeance. That is totally, completely up to Him. Thirdly, as a whole, we found that even though David’s imprecatory prayers were very severe against his enemies, David always treated his enemies very kindly and very graciously. Many times he had the opportunity to kill Saul, but he refused to do so. You will find that this is personally true in most of the biblical characters.

Fourthly, church discipline is not very much different from the imprecatory prayers of the Old Testament, because the New Testament contains many curses and enunciations as well. Fifthly,

the imprecatory prayers teach us that God has appointed us to victory and not to defeat. I then gave you at least seven different purposes of these imprecatory prayers, as we looked at each individual prayer and saw exactly why David said he was praying that particular prayer. We came last night to show overall how the imprecatory prayers evidence a purpose to see God's justice vindicated, His Word honored, His kingdom established, His righteousness prevailed, His people delivered, and, of course, His name honored and glorified. We began looking at Psalm 109 last night, and I pointed out that there are two very general principles in the Bible that we need to be aware of as we look at Psalm 109.

The Lex Talionis and Family Sins

The first one is known as the Lex Talionis. That is Latin for the law of retribution. You find it in Exodus 21, Leviticus 24, and Deuteronomy chapter 19, where God talks about an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, stripe for stripe, burning for burning, and life for life. All God is saying there is that the punishment must fit the crime, and that is exactly what God does when He exercises divine retribution. He always makes the punishment fit the crime.

The New Testament part of the lex talionis is the law of sowing and reaping. For in Galatians 6:7 and 8, he said, "Be not deceived. God is not mocked. Whatsoever man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. And he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Our Lord, in Matthew chapter 5, verses 38 through 42, was correcting the pharisaical misinterpretation and misapplication of His law, because they took that to teach personal vengeance. He says, no, it is not personal vengeance.

Psalm 109, verses 1 through 8, begins with a cry for God to vindicate David: "Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise." That is, Lord, step up and do something. Lord, say something. Lord, do exactly what needs to be done. Psalm 109, verse 1, in this imprecatory prayer, is indeed a cry for God to intercede for him.

In verses 2 through 5, David describes his enemies and how wicked they really are. They speak deceitfully against him and lie against him. They compass him about with words of hatred. They

fight against him without a cause. Although he loved them, they were still his adversaries. They rewarded him evil for good, and gave him hatred for his love.

When you get to verse 6, you begin with this imprecatory prayer: "Set thou a wicked man over him, and let Satan stand at his right hand. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned. Let his prayer become sin." Then verse 8: "Let his days be few, and let another take his office." David prays, "Let his days be few and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds and beg."

David continues his imprecatory prayer: “Let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath and let the stranger spoil his labor. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him, neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off in the generation following. Let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be before the Lord continually that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.”

David’s prayer against his enemy was extended to his wife and children as well. Is there a conflict between this imprecatory prayer in Psalm 109 and what Scripture teaches in Deuteronomy 24:16? God said, “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers. Every man shall be put to death for his own sin.”

When King Joash put to death the men who murdered his father, in 2 Kings 14:6, he did not put their children to death. We read, “But the children of the murderers he slew not, according to that which is written in the book of the law of Moses, where the Lord commanded, saying, The father shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the father, but every man shall be put to death for his own sin.” When Joash apprehended his father’s murderers, he merely put them to death; he did not trouble their family.

Yet David’s prayer in Psalm 109 does not stop with his enemy; it extends to the enemy’s family. Psalm 109 is known as the Iscariotic

Psalm because, whoever David is praying against, its fulfillment is found in Judas Iscariot. In Acts chapter 1, this passage is applied to Judas Iscariot. Here, then, is a very malignant individual against whom David is praying. If David's enemies are cursed, think about this.

Does the curse extend to the families? If it does extend to the families, why does it extend to them? And then you also have to ask this question: Are there biblical principles that are involved? And the answer very definitely is yes. What I'm trying to show you tonight is this: everything that David prays in Psalm 109 is in agreement with the analogy of faith. There is nothing in Psalm 109 that is contrary to the rest of Scripture. There is nothing in Psalm 109 that would be contrary to New Testament or Old Testament. We have one Bible, not two.

Let me begin, because David is praying against even the family of his enemies. Let us consider some of the principles involved. Hold Psalm 109, but look in your Bibles, if you would, please, to Proverbs chapter 3 and verse 33. I want you to note the word "house" in these verses. The Bible says, "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked."

"But he blesseth the habitation of the just." Here you have the curse of God that is in the house of the wicked. That is, the whole family is under the curse of God. But God blesses the habitation of the just.

There are sins that extend to entire households. There are family sins. Proverbs 15:27 says, "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house, but he that hateth gifts shall live." Notice again: he that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house. This is a statement that requires careful attention, because the sin of one person may bring trouble upon the entire household.

In times past, and not too distant past, I preached two messages entitled "Family Sins." I took great pains to go through the Bible in the book of Genesis, and I demonstrated from the Bible how Jacob's sin affected his daughter, Dinah; how Dinah's sin affected her two brothers, Simeon and Levi; and how Simeon and Levi's sins affected

the entire family. The Bible says in Romans chapter 14 that no man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself.

Whatever we do always affects someone else, and it always affects someone else first in our own families. No man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself. Our conduct does not end with us; it reaches those nearest to us.

Biblical Examples of Household Judgment

Consider this principle: God usually places His elect in households. He also usually places His enemies in households. Psalm 68:6 says, “God setteth the solitary in families. He bringeth out those that are bound with chains, but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.” God setteth the solitary in families. Usually you find the godly in families, and usually you find the ungodly in families. I understand that there are some exceptions to that rule. Occasionally, you will find a fool in a godly household, and occasionally, a godly individual in a wicked household. I know there are exceptions, but I am speaking generally. Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

“Train up a child in the way that he should go.” It is godly people who train their children in godly ways. Therefore, you usually have the godly in families. It is ungodly people who could care less about God's law, God's Word, and God's truth. Therefore, they fail to train their children, and their children are usually wicked and ungodly. Usually, God places His elect in households, and God places His enemies in households.

It is possible to curse one's own family. In Proverbs 11:17, God says, “The merciful man doeth good to his own soul, but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.” He that is cruel troubles not just his physical body, but that which would be his family as well. Proverbs 12:7 says, “The wicked are overthrown and are not, but the house of the righteous shall stand.” Here you have a contrast between the house of the wicked and the house of the righteous: the house of the wicked is overthrown and they are not, but the house of the righteous shall stand.

Proverbs 13:13 says, “Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed, but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.” That would be the ungodly. If you despise the Word, inevitably you are going to be destroyed. If you have a family, if you have a husband and wife who despise the Word, inevitably their children will end up despising it as well, usually speaking.

Proverbs 14:11 says, “The house of the wicked shall be overthrown, but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.” The entire house of the wicked is to be overthrown. Proverbs 15:25 says, “The Lord will destroy the house of the proud, but he will establish the border of the widow.” In all of these passages, God is talking about houses and houses being destroyed. He is talking about entire families.

I have already made the statement that it is possible to curse your own family. You have to remember that usually entire families are involved in the same sins, and therefore they receive the same punishment. It is not that the children necessarily are being cursed because of the sins of the father. No, those sins are being passed down. The children are being cursed for their own sins, but they are indeed family sins. Since they are equally guilty, they also share equally in the judgment and in the punishment of those sins.

Let me give you some illustrations. I am going to give you just one to begin with, and I am going to quote the Scripture and then ask you to turn to some passages. Do you remember wicked Haman? Surely you remember Haman, the man in the book of Esther who tried to have all the Jews killed. Of course, you remember how Esther, the queen, got Ahasuerus, her husband, to overthrow that. But what you might have missed in your reading was that it was not just Haman who was wiped out, but his sons as well. Even Haman’s wife was one who gave him counsel. In the book of Esther, chapter 8 and verse 7, we read: “Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman.” Note: “I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him upon the gallows. Because he laid his hand upon the Jews.”

Now you say that verse just says they hanged Haman. Yes, it does. But Esther 9 and verse 14 says: “And the king commanded it so to be

done, and the decree was given at Shushan, and they hanged Haman's ten sons." So it was not just Haman who was hanged; his ten sons were hanged as well. Why were his ten sons hanged? The answer is that they were complicit in their father's sin and wickedness. They did not die because of their father's sin. They died for their own sin in participating in his wickedness.

The same thing is true when you look at the Old Testament concerning Dathan, Abiram, and Korah. Turn in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 11 and verse 6. Then we will go to Numbers, chapter 16. In Deuteronomy chapter 11 and verse 6, we read this. Watch carefully.

I am trying to prove a point from Scripture: you can curse your own family, and therefore your entire family is under the judgment and punishment of God. In Deuteronomy, chapter 11, verse 6, we read: "And what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben, how the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel."

The Bible says that it swallowed up their households. When you think about a household, you do indeed think of wife and children. If you look in your Bibles to the book of Numbers, chapter 16, you will find exactly what happened. Dathan and Abiram and Korah rebelled against God and against Moses and Aaron. Numbers 16, beginning with verse 27, says: "So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, on every side. And Dathan and Abiram came out and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children." All of them were standing with these rebellious men.

Moses said, "Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, that is, wives and children, and they go down quick into the pit, then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord."

It came to pass, as he made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder under them, and the earth opened her mouth, swallowed them up, their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed up upon them, and they perished from among the congregation.

Here were Dathan, Abiram, and Korah's entire households. They were all consumed and destroyed because they were all complicit in the rebellion. Moses had already told the people to get away from these wicked men, but the wives and children stayed with them; therefore, they perished in their sins.

SCRIPTURE READING - Joshua 7:19-26 (KJV)

Joshua 7:19-26: "And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel and make confession unto him and tell me now what thou hast done. Hide it not from me. And Achan answered Joshua and said, Indeed, I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done. When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonian garment and two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them and took them. And behold, they were hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. So Joshua sent messengers and they ran into the tent, and behold, it was hid in the tent and the silver under it. And they took them out of the midst of the tent and brought them unto Joshua and all the children of Israel and laid them out before the Lord. And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zerah and the silver and the garment and the wedge of gold and his sons and his daughters and his oxen and his asses and his sheep and his tent and all that he had. And they brought them into the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore, the name of that place was called the Valley of Achor unto this day."

> Someone is going to say, “But wait a minute, Brother Weaver. It was Achan who did the coveting. It was Achan who did the stealing.” Yes, that is true. But may I ask you, where in the world did Achan hide all of those stolen goods? In his tent. That means his family had to know about it. They had to have seen it. They had to be complicit with it.

They knew about it and said absolutely nothing; therefore, they were equally guilty, and God judged the entire family. It is possible to curse your entire family, and family sins can exist.

For instance, God sent the children of Israel into Egypt. In Genesis 15, He told Abraham, “you're going to go down there 400 years,” but in the fourth generation He would bring them out. Why? “Because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” After 400 years, God brought Israel out and put a sword in their hand. He said, “Kill everyone: man, woman, child, ox. Kill them all.” Why? Because all were equally sinful and guilty. So do not think Psalm 109 presents one guilty man while everyone else is innocent.

No, it is not like that because of such a thing as family sins. Whenever you find a family sin, especially in the father or mother, it is usually passed down to the children, and they engage in the same sins themselves.

Exposition of Psalm 109:9–15

With this understanding in mind, let us go back to Psalm 109 and see exactly what is happening. Notice, please, how verse 8 begins with the word “let.” Then, through verse 15, the word “let” is used at the beginning of every verse. That simply means that each verse contains a specific prayer request in light of the wickedness revealed in verses 2 through 5.

David says in verse 9, “Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.” Looking back at verse 8, David said, “Let his days be few; and let another take his office.” In reality, verse 9 is a repetition of verse 8. If the man’s days are few, that means he dies. If another takes his office, he is no longer there to perform it. This is emphasized in verse 9: “Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.” You cannot have a widow without a dead husband, and you

cannot have fatherless children without a dead father. Basically, David is praying very clearly and obviously for the death of this wicked man.

It is permissible, lawful, and legitimate to pray for the deaths of wicked men. I have covered the arguments against that the other night, and I am not going into them tonight. I am simply saying that this is a very specific prayer request.

David says, "Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow." Then, in verse 10: "Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg; and let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places." That is a very hard request. David says, not only let the man die, lose his office, and let his wife be a widow and his children fatherless, but go even further: let his children be vagabonds. Let them beg. Let them seek their bread in desolate places. You say, now that is harsh.

That was the same curse that God placed upon Cain in Genesis 4 and verse 12. Psalm 59 is another imprecatory prayer, and David basically says the same thing. Concerning the wicked, David says, "Slay them not, lest my people forget, but rather scatter them by thy power and bring them down, O Lord our shield. For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips, let them even be taken in their pride, and for cursing and lying which they speak. Consume them in thy wrath. Consume them that they may not be. And let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth."

Then notice verse 14: "And at evening let them return, and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. Let them wander up and down for meat and grudge if they be not satisfied." Here David says, let them be like a stray dog. Nobody is going to feed them. Nobody wants them. No one cares for them. They go up and down and grudge like a stray dog trying to find whatever they can find.

You say, "Wow, David was really serious. That cannot be very compassionate or kind." Since you are going to say that about David, would you say the same thing about God? In 1 Samuel chapter 2 and verse 36, God Himself said the same thing concerning Eli's household, after He placed the curse upon Eli and his household: "And it shall come to pass that everyone that is left in thine house

shall come and crouch down for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread and say, Put me, I pray thee, in one of the priest's offices that I may eat a piece of bread." In other words, they are begging. They have absolutely nothing. That is the curse that God placed upon Eli and his family.

These things actually work together. It is cause and effect: step one, step two, step three. Very clearly, if the father lost his life, he lost his office. If he lost his office, the wife was a widow. The children were fatherless. Since there was no way for them to make a living, they became destitute. They became vagabonds. They became beggars.

It is exceedingly hard upon the wicked for an individual to be born in what you and I would call the lap of luxury, living lavishly and getting what they want, when they want it, and then, all of a sudden, have everything cut off. They have lost everything. They have nothing. Now they turn to begging. If you will study history, you will find that God has often done that to a race of tyrants.

He has turned them into a generation of beggars. They misused and abused authority and power, and their name has become a universal detestation, securing to the family nothing but absolute contempt. I could name powerful family names in this country and in the world that anyone who knows anything about biblical truth and biblical principles would hold in absolute contempt. I do not care how many multimillions they possess. They were wicked. They were thieves. They were ungodly. They defrauded. They beat other people. They still continue to do that.

This is exactly what David is saying: Let them lose it all; let them turn into beggars. I want to give you several quotes, not merely to fortify what I am telling you, but so that you can see historically that Bible scholars have interpreted these verses exactly the same way.

John Gill said it like this: "Wander from place to place, begging for their bread. This is denied of the children of good men in David's time." Then he quotes Psalm 37:25, one of my favorite verses. David said, "I've been young, now I'm old, yet I've not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Gill continues: "Wander from place to place, begging for their bread. This is denied to the children

of good men in David's time, yet was threatened to the children of Eli, 1 Samuel 2:36, and was very likely true of the children of Judas, and was certainly the case of multitudes of the children of Jews, the posterity of them that crucified Christ, at the time of their destruction by the Romans, when great numbers were dispersed and wandered about in various countries, as vagabonds, begging their bread from door to door, which is reckoned by them a great affliction and very distressing." No language could be more awful than that of Psalm 109:6–19.

It embraces almost every misery that we can think of. But could any man be in a more wretched condition than Judas? Could any words be too severe to express the depth of his misery? For three whole years he had been the constant attendant of the Savior of mankind, had witnessed His miracles, shared His miraculous powers, and enjoyed all the warnings and reproofs of His love; then he betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver. Can we conceive a condition more miserable than that of Judas?

This psalm is a prophecy of the punishment that should overtake him for his sin. Peter, in the Acts of the Apostles, quotes part of this psalm and applies it to Judas as a prophecy of the punishment that he should suffer for the betrayal of the Son of God. Whoever David is praying against in Psalm 109, it finds its fulfillment in Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus Christ. So David prays in verse 8, "Let his days be few, let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds. Let them beg, let them have nothing."

Look in verse 11: "Let the extortioner catch all that he hath, and let strangers spoil his goods." The extortioner here is the usurer; he is the creditor. What happens when a woman loses her husband and has no money coming in to support herself or her children?

For a little while, she has some property and mortgages it, hoping somehow to hold on and eat for just a little while. But the next thing you know, that mortgage money is gone, and the man holding the mortgage is knocking on the door, saying, "I want this property. You need to get out, and you need to get out right now." Actually, verse 11 is a consequence of verses 9 and 10. The prayer is that the

extortioner or usurer will catch all that this man ever had, and strangers will spoil his labor.

Adam Clarke, in his commentary on Psalm 109, quotes the Roman poet Juvenal, who died in 140 A.D., as saying this: "Many of these execrations were literally fulfilled in the case of the miserable Jews after the death of our Lord. They were not only expelled from their own country after the destruction of Jerusalem, but they were prohibited from returning and so taxed by the Roman government that they were reduced to the lowest degree of poverty. Domitian expelled them from Rome.

"And they were obliged to take up their habitation without the gate Capena, in a wood contiguous to the city, for which they were obliged to pay a rent, and where the whole of their property was only a basket and a little hay." Juvenal, who died in 140, says this literally took place concerning those Jews who said, "Let him be crucified, let him be crucified. His blood be upon us and upon our children." They cursed their own families.

Look in verse 12. He continues this imprecatory prayer: "Let there be none to extend mercy unto him, neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children." Let no one feel sorry for him. He is dead and gone, but more than that, let no one show mercy, favor, or kindness to his fatherless children. In other words, let absolutely no one be sympathetic toward him or toward them. No mercy or kindness is to be shown to them.

You say, "Now that's hard." Listen to what Calvin said on this verse: "David, however, includes also the wicked man himself, along with his children, as if he should say, Though he visibly pine away under such calamities and these descend to his children, yet let no one show pity towards them."

We are aware that it not infrequently happens that the long-continued misfortune of an enemy either excites the sympathy of men of savage dispositions or makes them forget all their hatred and malice. But in this part of the psalm, David expresses a desire that his enemy and all his posterity may be so hated and detested that people may never grow weary of beholding the calamities they endure, but may become so familiarized with the spectacle as if their

hearts were of iron. At the same time, let it be remarked that David is not rashly excited by personal anguish to speak in this matter, but, as God's messenger, declares the punishment impending over the ungodly.

The law counts it as one of the judgments of God, His hardening men's hearts, so that those who have been passionately and unmercifully cruel should find no sympathy. Deuteronomy 2:30: it is just that the same measure which they have used toward others should also be meted out to themselves.

Calvin said it like this: It is the natural tendency, when a wicked man dies, for everybody to forget how wicked he was, along with his sins and ungodliness. Then they begin to speak well of him, and soon they become sympathetic toward his children. Although his children are reaping the rewards of their father's wickedness, David is praying that men will never forget the wickedness of this wicked man, which descended upon the children, and therefore that no one will be sympathetic or kind even to them. Spurgeon said it like this: "We are staggered to find the children included in the father's sentence. And yet as a matter of fact, children do suffer for their father's sins."

As long as the affairs of this life are ordered as they are, it must be so. So involved are the interests of the race that it is quite impossible in all respects to view the father and the child apart. No man among us could desire to see the fatherless suffer for their deceased father's fault. Yet so it happens, and there is no injustice in that fact.

They share the parent's ill-gotten gain or rank, and their aggrandizement is part of the object at which he aimed in the perpetuation of his crimes. To allow them to prosper would be an encouragement and a reward of his iniquity. Therefore, for these and other reasons, a man perishes not alone in his iniquity. The ban is on his race or his family. If the man were innocent, this would be a crime. If he were but commonly guilty, it would be excessive retribution. But when the offense reeks before high heaven, it is an unutterable abomination. It is little marvel that men devote the man's whole house to perpetual infamy.

Here are commentators saying that they understand exactly what David is praying. Here is a wicked, ungodly, reprobate man who has done wrong, amassed a great fortune through sin, wickedness, and crime, and now lost it all. Would you bless his children who participated and were involved in that sin and crime? No; it should not be.

Notice David's position, which is once again the biblical position. In Psalm 109:13, after praying that no one will extend mercy to these children or to this man, he says: "Let his posterity be cut off, and in the generation following let their name be blotted out." Let his posterity be cut off, and in the generation following let his name be blotted out. If this man's name happened to be Iscariot—and I am using it only as an illustration—David is saying, Let there be no more Iscariots, period. Let his posterity be cut off, and in the next generation let the name be blotted out, so that no one would even remember the name.

Now let me show you what a curse this is. This may not sound like so great a curse to you, but you have to remember a numerous posterity. To have the family name perpetuated was regarded among the Hebrews as one of the greatest and most desirable blessings. To have the family name cut off and the memory destroyed was a severe malediction, a severe curse that could fall upon anyone. David is asking exactly this: that in the generation following, the very next generation, his family not be perpetuated at all, but that the name be blotted out completely.

You have to remember that in deeds of wickedness there are always individuals who are prime movers, the ringleaders, so to speak. Then there are others who follow and participate. What David is saying in this verse is, “Lord, I do not want just the ringleaders or prime movers taken care of. I want all of those who follow him to be taken care of as well.” Charles Haddon Spurgeon said it like this: “Both from existence and from memory, let them pass away, till none shall know that such a vile brood ever existed. Who wishes to see the family of Domitian or Julian continued upon earth? Who would mourn if the race of Tom Paine or Voltaire should come to an utter end? It would be undesirable that the sons of the utterly villainous and bloodthirsty should rise to honor, and if they did,

would only revive the memory of their father's name." So he said it is only just, only the lex talionis, only the law of retribution, and only the law of sowing and reaping.

Look at verses 14 and 15. After he prays, "Let their posterity be cut off in the generation following. Let their name be blotted out," verse 14 says, "Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be before the Lord continually," that he may "cut off the memory of them from the earth."

May I remind you of Exodus 20 and verse 5, where the Bible teaches us that God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him. God visits the iniquities of the father unto the children, unto the third and fourth generation of those that hate Him. The children are not necessarily just suffering for the sin of the father. The children also hate God. The father taught them to hate God as well.

And so David is praying here, let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the Lord. In other words, everything that his father and his grandfather and his great-grandfather did, whoever they were, however wicked they were, let God not forget one sin, but hold every sin accountable. And then he says, "And let not the sin of the mother be blotted out."

Some would argue that this is just Hebrew parallelism: he mentioned the fathers, and now he has to mention the mother. But it could be more than that. David said in Psalm 51 and verse 5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." He is not only pointing out the fact that his mother was a sinner, as all of us are, but he could also be pointing out that this mother of this wicked man might be an especially wicked sinner. Therefore, she has sins of her own as well, and he wants those sins remembered before the Lord.

Look at verse 15 and this prayer request: "Let them be before the Lord continually," that is, all these sins, "that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth." Turn to Psalm 34:16. The Bible says, "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." The Bible also says in

Proverbs that the memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.

I could call out the names of wicked men. You may have heard some of those names or read about them, but you know nothing about those men or their families anymore. For all practical purposes, their memory has been wiped out. Their name literally has rotted.

The Reason for the Imprecation (Psalm 109:16–20)

Spurgeon said it like this: "This verse," speaking of verse 15, "is perhaps the most terrible of all. But yet, as a matter of fact, children do procure punishment upon their parents' sin and are often themselves the means of such punishment."

You can hear this today. Spurgeon writes: "A bad son brings to mind his father's bad points of character. And people say, 'Ah, he's just like his old man. He takes after his father.' A mother's sins also will be sure to be called to mind if her daughter becomes grossly wicked. Oh, they will say, 'There's little wonder when you consider what her mother was.' These are matters of everyday occurrence."

"We cannot, however, pretend to explain the righteousness of this malediction, though we fully believe in it. We leave it to our heavenly Father until He is pleased to give us further instruction. Yet as a man's faults are often learned from his parents, it is not unjust that his consequent crimes should recoil upon them."

When you look at Psalm 109, at each one of these prayer requests, you see David praying not just for his enemy's death, but that his children be fatherless, his children be vagabonds and beggars, and that the children go around like dogs, grudging for food.

David prays that the extortioner, the usurer, gets all that they have; that no one extends them mercy; that their posterity is cut off; that their name is blotted out; and that God will constantly remember the sins of their fathers, even the sins of the mother, and hold them against them. You have to ask this question: Was David simply vindictive, vengeful, and vicious? And the answer is no. A thousand times no.

What David is praying is the lex talionis, the law of retribution, the law of sowing and reaping. He is asking God to do that which God has already said that He would do. Where did God say something like that? Look at Psalm 7:14-16. Here is what God says concerning the wicked: "Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made."

Now look what God does: "His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate." And then He says, "I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the Lord." The Bible tells us that God is known by the judgment which He executeth. God lets the wicked fall into the ditch that they dig. God brings down their violent dealings on top of their own head. Whatever they plan for someone else, that is exactly what God will do for them as well.

Go back to Psalm 109 and begin with verse 16. Think of the lex talionis and the law of sowing and reaping as we read the next four verses. Why did David pray all these imprecatory prayer requests? Because—not because David is vindictive.

Not because he is vicious and vengeful, nor because he is uncompassionate and unkind. Here is why he prays it: "Because that he," the wicked, "remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor needy man that he might even slay the broken in heart. As he," the wicked man, "loved cursing, so let it come unto him. As he," the wicked man, "delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he," the wicked man, "clothed himself with cursing like as with a garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him."

"And for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually. Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord and of them that speak evil against my soul." David says, Here is why I am praying this: I want God to give him that which he has dished out. I want God to make the punishment fit the crime. I want the law of retribution, the law of sowing and reaping.

That is exactly what Psalm 109 is about. That is what the imprecatory prayers are about: that the wicked reap exactly that which they sow. Do you remember that we read this from Deuteronomy chapter 19? God spoke about the man who was a false witness against his brother. What did God say? "As he thought to have done to his brother, so shall it be done to him." That is the law of retribution, making the punishment fit the crime, the law of sowing and reaping. There is nothing in these imprecatory prayers that is unbiblical, ungodly, un-Christian, or contrary to the gospel. They fit right in with the analogy of faith.

David's Three Godly Desires

Now let me make some applications, and I want you to think with me. Note in the rest of this psalm that David desired three main things in these imprecatory prayers. Each of these prayers and desires was upright and godly. We are told in Psalm 37:4, "Delight thyself in the Lord and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart." What were David's three desires in Psalm 109?

First of all, he desired to be delivered from his enemies. Look in Psalm 109, verse 21: "But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake, because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me. Deliver thou me, for I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. I am gone like a shadow when it declines."

"I am tossed up and down as the locusts. My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh faileth," he says, "for fatness. I became also a reproach unto them. When they looked upon me, they shake their heads. Help me, O Lord my God. O save me according to thy mercy."

Is there anything unbiblical, ungodly, or unchristian about wanting to be delivered from your enemies? No. Is there anything unbiblical, ungodly, or unchristian in wanting to be delivered from the enemies of God? The answer is no. That is what David is praying: "Lord, look at these wicked men. Here is what they have been doing to me. Lord, I want to be delivered."

Here is the second one. David not only wanted to be delivered from his enemies; he wanted to be delivered in such a way that

everyone would know it was God who delivered him. Look in verse 27. He says, “Help me, O Lord my God, O save me according to thy mercy, that they may know that this is thy hand, and that thou, Lord, hast done it.” Lord, You deliver me, but deliver me in such a way that everyone will know You did it. Is there anything wrong with that? Over and over in the Bible, the Bible says, “Rise, O Lord.”

“Show thyself, O Lord. Make bare thy arm, O Lord. Lord, deliver thy people.” These prayer requests recur repeatedly. There is nothing wrong with wanting to be delivered from your enemies, or with wanting to be delivered in such a way that everyone would know God did it. David’s third desire was that, when he was delivered and everyone knew God had done it, God would receive all the honor and glory.

In verse 28 he says, “Let them curse, but bless thou. When they arise, let them be ashamed, but let thy servant rejoice. Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame and let them cover themselves with their own confusion as with a mantle. I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth. Yea, I will praise him among the multitude, for he shall stand at the right hand of the poor to save him from those that condemn his soul.”

David wanted God to receive all the honor and all the glory. We need to come to the realization that we do have enemies. The Bible is replete with that. We ought not to have enemies of our own making because of our own cussedness, unkindness, or ungraciousness. But we will have enemies by virtue of the fact that we are Christians, that we belong to our Lord. Our Lord has enemies. God has enemies. The Bible says in Psalm 110 that He shall strike through His enemies. We do have enemies.

Application for Today

Unhappily, in this day and time, they have the upper hand and the power. There should be in every one of us a desire to say, “Oh God, rectify this situation, Lord. Rectify this situation. Destroy Thou them. Bring them down. Elevate Thy law. Elevate Thy righteousness. Elevate Thy Son. Elevate Thy people.” We need to learn to pray, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” That is what our Lord taught us to pray.

Turn to Psalm 140. There are so many imprecatory Psalms and so many implications in the Old Testament, as well as some of the New. I want to show you how applicable and apropos they are for today. Look at what David prays in Psalm 140, and consider whether these verses would be an appropriate prayer for you and I to learn to pray on a daily basis. Notice verse 8.

"Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked. Further not his wicked device, lest they exalt themselves. As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them. Let burning coals fall upon them. Let them be cast in the fire into deep pits that they rise not up again. Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth. Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him. I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted and the right of the poor. Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name. The upright shall dwell in thy presence."

All you have to do is look at the political scene today. Look in any branch of government, and I think you could come to the realization that we need to pray, "Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked, further not his wicked device, lest they exalt themselves." We can pray these prayers and ask God to give us victory in time and history, delivering us in such a way that everyone will know that He did it and that He will receive all the honor and all the glory.

I want to close in prayer. Look at Psalm 140. Pray silently as I pray, and if God has moved upon your heart to learn to pray these prayers, join me silently.

Closing Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we do bow to Thee this day. We acknowledge that Thou art the sovereign God of heaven and earth. Besides Thee, there is none other. We pray, Heavenly Father, today for the defeat and the overthrow of the wicked and the ungodly. Lord, they abound on every hand. There are the atheists, the humanists, the one-worlders, and those luminaries; there are those who hate Thee, Lord, left and right.

Lord, we pray with David, grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked. Further not his wicked devices, lest they exalt themselves.

We pray, Heavenly Father, that Thou wouldst indeed cast them down, that they rise not up again. We pray, Heavenly Father, as Thou didst say in the book of Psalms, break their teeth, O Lord. Break their teeth in their mouth. We pray, Father, that Thou wouldst indeed break their power and bring them to their knees. We pray, Father, that You would either do that in salvation or in condemnation, whatever way You please.

But, Lord, Thou art God, the Sovereign of the universe. We pray as Thou hast taught us: Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.

O God, establish the Lord Jesus Christ, establish His kingdom, His righteousness, His Word, His gospel, and His people. Let everyone know that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods. We pray for the overthrow of all that opposes Thee and Thy kingdom, and for the establishment of all those who submit to Thee and bow to Thee, as Thou didst tell the kings in Psalm 2: "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry with thee, and thou perish in the way when His wrath is kindled but a little." Give us victory, O Lord, today, in time and in history. We ask and pray in Thy most holy and blessed name. Amen and amen.

Source Notes

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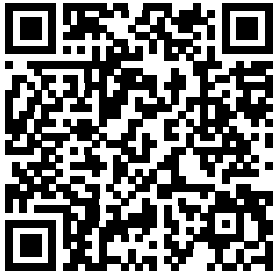
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