

Psalm 108-109

Psalm 109 is a prime example of an “imprecatory” psalm; that is, one that calls down curses on the author’s enemies. These psalms seem out of tune with Scripture. We cannot reconcile them with the command to love your neighbor. This one seems particularly jarring coming from the lyre of David, so often a man of grace as we have noted in the last study.

William MacDonald notes some of the explanations that have been given for imprecatory psalms:

- They are not calling for the punishment of the wicked but, rather, predicting it.
- David was speaking as God’s anointed, so was entitled to judge more severely than you or me.
- The psalms record the actual aggrieved feelings of the author without endorsing them. The same can be said of parts of Ecclesiastes.
- The enemies of the psalmist are the enemies of Israel, God’s people. Zeal for Him makes the

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writer desire their downfall, not personal antagonism.

The explanation Mr. MacDonald prefers in the end is that “the imprecatory Psalms express a spirit that was proper for a Jew living under the law, but not proper for a Christian living under grace.” The law commands offenses to be judged and punished, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. But it is our glory to overlook an offense.

All of us at one time were enemies of God (Romans 5:10). We deserved His imprecations. But God did not merely overlook our offenses. He **paid** for them with the blood of His one and only Son. He gave the eye. He lost the tooth. Our Lord satisfied both the harsh demands of the law and the merciful blessings of love. He didn’t just refrain from cursing as we are told to do in Romans 12:14. He became the curse and thus redeemed us from it (Galatians 3:13).

Questions for study and discussion:

1. In Psalm 108, what is the singer vowing to do steadfastly? When? Why?
2. What promise of God is he recounting?
3. What is the lament in verse 11? What is its remedy?
4. What does David implore God to do in Psalm 109?

5. How can verses 3-5 apply to David? To the Lord Jesus?

6. Why doesn't David simply take vengeance himself? Why does he ask God to?

7. Verse 8 is cited in Acts 1:20. About who? Does this tell us anything about the theme of the Psalm?

8. How could verse 17 sometimes apply to us?

9. What does the Psalmist promise to do to repay the Lord for his help?

10. How do you explain the harsh tone of this Psalm in light of the rest of Scripture?