

## Psalm 109 | *An imprecatory psalm*

<sup>1</sup> TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID.

Be not silent, O God of my praise!

<sup>2</sup> For wicked and deceitful mouths are opened against me,  
speaking against me with lying tongues.

<sup>3</sup> They encircle me with words of hate,  
and attack me without cause.

<sup>4</sup> In return for my love they accuse me,  
but I give myself to prayer.

<sup>5</sup> So they reward me evil for good,  
and hatred for my love.

<sup>6</sup> Appoint a wicked man against him;  
let an accuser stand at his right hand.

<sup>7</sup> When he is tried, let him come forth guilty;  
let his prayer be counted as sin!

<sup>8</sup> May his days be few;  
may another take his office!

<sup>9</sup> May his children be fatherless  
and his wife a widow!

<sup>10</sup> May his children wander about and beg,  
seeking food far from the ruins they inhabit!

<sup>11</sup> May the creditor seize all that he has;  
may strangers plunder the fruits of his toil!

<sup>12</sup> Let there be none to extend kindness to him,  
nor any to pity his fatherless children!

<sup>13</sup> May his posterity be cut off;  
may his name be blotted out in the second generation!

<sup>14</sup> May the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD,  
and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out!

<sup>15</sup> Let them be before the LORD continually,  
that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth!

<sup>16</sup> For he did not remember to show kindness,  
but pursued the poor and needy and the brokenhearted, to put them to death.

<sup>17</sup> He loved to curse; let curses come upon him!

He did not delight in blessing; may it be far from him!

<sup>18</sup> He clothed himself with cursing as his coat;  
may it soak into his body like water,  
like oil into his bones!

<sup>19</sup> May it be like a garment that he wraps around him,  
like a belt that he puts on every day!

<sup>20</sup> May this be the reward of my accusers from the LORD,  
of those who speak evil against my life!

<sup>21</sup> But you, O GOD my Lord,  
deal on my behalf for your name's sake;  
because your steadfast love is good, deliver me!

<sup>22</sup> For I am poor and needy,  
and my heart is stricken within me.

<sup>23</sup> I am gone like a shadow at evening;  
I am shaken off like a locust.

<sup>24</sup> My knees are weak through fasting;  
my body has become gaunt, with no fat.

<sup>25</sup> I am an object of scorn to my accusers;  
when they see me, they wag their heads.

<sup>26</sup> Help me, O LORD my God!  
Save me according to your steadfast love!

<sup>27</sup> Let them know that this is your hand;  
you, O LORD, have done it!

<sup>28</sup> Let them curse, but you will bless!

They arise and are put to shame, but your servant will be glad!

<sup>29</sup> May my accusers be clothed with dishonor;  
may they be wrapped in their own shame as in a cloak!

<sup>30</sup> With my mouth I will give great thanks to the LORD;  
I will praise him in the midst of the throng.

<sup>31</sup> For he stands at the right hand of the needy,  
to save him from those who condemn his soul to death.

## How do we reconcile this psalm with Christian love?

### Matthew 5:38, 44

<sup>38</sup> You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” <sup>44</sup> But I say to you – Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

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### (1) This is emotional realism

- it is not good to pretend we don't feel negative emotions
- but rather, we are to work out these emotions before God

### (2) Anger at evil is a good thing

- absence of anger in the face of evil is itself evil

### (3) This is a cry for vindication

- we need to read the imprecations in context
- David is under false accusation | he is seeking vindication
- vindication means retribution | principle of proportionality
- therefore, not a personal vendetta, but a measured cry for justice

### This is a cry for salvation

- v. 21, 26 – “steadfast love” / *hesed* – covenant love
- God's covenant love always involves rescue from enemy

### Genesis 12:3

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

### (4) This is ultimately Jesus' song and the accuser/betrayer is Judas

#### Acts 1:15-20

<sup>15</sup> In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, <sup>16</sup> “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. <sup>17</sup> For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in

this ministry. <sup>18</sup> (Now this man bought a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. <sup>19</sup> And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

<sup>20</sup> For it is written in the Book of Psalms,

*May his camp become desolate,  
and let there be no one to dwell in it.* [Psalm 69:25]

and

*Let another take his office.* [Psalm 109:8]

### Jesus is the ultimate innocent victim described in v. 21-25

- therefore, how do we understand Jesus' cry in v. 26?

#### Mark 15:34

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

### (5) Can Christians sing this song?

- No – if we have in mind our personal enemies (no vindictiveness)
- Yes – in terms of injustice, evil and enemies of Christ

#### Matthew 23:23

<sup>23</sup> Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

#### Galatians 1:8-9

<sup>8</sup> But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. <sup>9</sup> As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

#### 1 Corinthians 16:22

If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!

## Notes:

### Imprecations

- v. 6 – false accusations and lies
- v. 7 – heavenly court meaning damnation
- v. 11 – financial ruin
- v. 10 – suffering extended to his family
- v. 12 – no pity for his orphaned kids
- v. 13 – even his family will perish
- v. 14 – punished for parents' sin
- v. 15 – his family cut off from God/salvation

### Concept of generational curse

- your family suffers for your sin
- we are all connected to each other | vs. Individualism

#### Exodus 34:6-7

<sup>6</sup> The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.

### Vindication necessarily means *retribution* | 2 reasons

#### (1) Vindication means accuser put to shame

- v. 28-29

#### (2) Vindication means justice against evil

- v. 16 – justice is reciprocity | let it be done back to him
- v. 17 – this reciprocity is proportional
- judgment is giving someone over to their own evil (v. 18-20)

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#### (3) David's cry for vindication | "be not silent!"

- this is someone within David's inner circle (v. 4, 8, 16)
- this person has betrayed David (v. 4-5)
- this person leveling false accusations (v. 2-3) – seeking death

David is asking for *vindication* – to be proved right