

IMPRECATORY PRAYER PART 2

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We started talking about Imprecatory Prayer last time.

A brief recap.

I opened by saying that a significant number of churches don't like the Old Testament. There is too much law and judgment. Some say its God is legalistic ... harsh ... vindictive ... too much killing and even extermination of cities and tribes. It is much better to focus on the New Testament. It's better to focus on Jesus ... meek and mild and all about love and mercy.

One aspect of the Old Testament that perhaps contributes to their view is the so-called Imprecatory Psalms.

To imprecate:

- to invoke or call down evil or calamity on someone
- to curse or to damn them

Wow! Would that be in the Holy Bible?

Example:

Psalms 137:1-3 (NKJV)

1 By the rivers of Babylon,

There we sat down, yea, we wept

When we remembered Zion. *(The exiles taken captive after the fall of Jerusalem)*

2 We hung our harps

Upon the willows in the midst of it.

3 For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song,
And those who plundered us requested mirth,
Saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

Psalms 137:7-9 (NKJV)

7 Remember, O Lord, against the sons of Edom
The day of Jerusalem,
Who said, "**Raze it, raze it,
To its very foundation!**"

8 **O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed,
Happy the one who repays you as you have served us!**

9 **Happy the one who takes and dashes
Your little ones against the rock!**

Psalms 137:9 (NLT)

9 **Happy is the one who takes your babies
and smashes them against the rocks!**

That's pretty harsh language!

Psalms 139:19-22 (NKJV)

19 **Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God!**

Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men.

20 For they speak against You wickedly;

Your enemies take Your name in vain.

21 **Do I not hate them, O Lord, who hate You?**

And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?

22 **I hate them with perfect hatred;**

I count them my enemies.

Psalms 139:22 (Voice)

22 **Deep hatred boils within me toward them;**

I am Your friend, and they are my enemies.

Psalms 139:22 (God's Word Translation)

22 *I hate then with all my heart*

Strong language. Especially to our "politically-correct" ears? As New Testament Christians ... don't we love our enemies? What's all this about violence and hatred and damnation?

Here's what a couple of commentators have to say:

ALBERT BARNES: "it is difficult to reconcile with a kind and forgiving spirit".

C S LEWIS: "The hatred is there ... festering, gloating, undisguised ... and also we should be wicked if we in any way condoned or approved it" ... "indeed it's devilish". (Excuse me. Are you saying that King David is devilish?)

How should we view scriptural passages like these? Avoid? Be embarrassed?

Remember in 2 Timothy 3:16 says that scripture is profitable for ... reproof ... correction ... instruction in righteousness ... that we can become perfect and mature. (Talking about the Old Testament scriptures here).

Were they just for ancient times ... in the primitive days of ancient Israel ... and not relevant for us ... politically correct ... New Testament believers?

It wouldn't seem like it? Because ...

The Psalms are frequently quoted in the New Testament ... approximately 150 times. The Psalms aren't being ignored by the

Gospel writers or Paul. It's the book that Jesus quoted from the most!

The Imprecatory Psalms ... numbers 35, 69, 109 ... are among the most quoted in the New Testament!

A couple of places where the Psalms are explicitly referenced as being inspired by God Himself.

Acts 4:23-26 (NKJV)

23 And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.

24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "**Lord, You are God,** who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them,

25 **who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:**

'Why did the nations rage,

And the people plot vain things?

26 The kings of the earth took their stand,

And the rulers were gathered together

Against the Lord and against His Christ.'

God said it ... not just David. Psalm 2 originates with God ... and includes: "You shall break them ... You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel". God is going to do that? Yes He is!

Hebrews 3:7-12 (NKJV)

7 **Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:** *(then quotes Psa 95:7-11... inspired by God ... one of David's Psalms)*

"Today, if you will hear His voice,

8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,

In the day of trial in the wilderness,

9 Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,

And saw My works forty years.

10 **Therefore I was angry with that generation,**

And said, 'They always go astray in their heart,
And they have not known My ways.'

11 **So I swore in My wrath,**

'They shall not enter My rest.'"

12 **Beware, brethren,** lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;

Another of David's Psalms ... yet inspired by God.

Many commentators say that Imprecatory Psalms are just carnal thoughts of man ... with unconverted emotions ... men with carnal natures. Not relevant to us New Testament Christians. How can you conclude that?

They are quoted throughout the New Testament ... several identified as inspired by God ... by The Holy Spirit. We'd have to be very cautious trying to decide between "inspired" and "uninspired" or which parts of Psalms ... are inspired or uninspired verses ... within a Psalm?? I wouldn't do that. I would treat them all as God's Word!

And ... in fact ... we can find Imprecatory prayers and statements in the New Testament anyway. For example:

1 Corinthians 16:22 (NKJV)

22 **If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.** (*Anathema*) O Lord, come! (*Imprecations of doom and gloom*)

Lexicon: "A person devoted to destruction or the direst of woes".

Paul: Is saying in the vernacular: "Wipe him out ... erase him ... terminate him ... destroy him".

Galatians 1:6-9 (NKJV)

6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,
7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

8 **But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.**

9 As we have said before, so now I say again, **if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.**

Double curse! Anathema. Paul is indignant. On fire. Angry. God ... destroy such people!

Look at Paul's language in:

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 (NKJV)

6 **since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,**

7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,

8 **in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God,** and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 **These shall be punished with everlasting destruction** from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,
10 when He comes, in that Day, ... (*Imprecatory thoughts*)

Even Jesus Himself used Imprecatory messages ... called down woes on people at times.

Matthew 23:13-17 (NKJV)

13 "But **woe** to you, **scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

14 **Woe** to you, **scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

15 "**Woe** to you, **scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

16 "**Woe** to you, **blind guides**, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.'

17 Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?

Greek: Ouai! Woe! An expression of extreme displeasure and calling for retributive pain on someone.

Jesus' return is with the wrath of The Lamb!

One of the problems that perhaps many modern churches have is that they have little or no balance.

They talk endlessly about how God is Love. God loves everyone. God hates sin ... but He loves the sinner (that's Gandhi ... not the Bible) ... God's love is unconditional ... nothing you can do to make God love you more or nothing you can do that can make Him love you less. God wants you to have a great life now ... "oh please won't you give your heart to the Lord!"

Well... yes ... God most certainly is love. (Real love ... not the sometimes ... rather sentimental love of many evangelists). But the Bible doesn't make much reference to the Love of God ... only 1 verse in 1,000. God is also a Righteous Judge.

God is Righteous. He cannot do wrong. He only does right. He cannot break a promise. Is totally faithful. And ... He will not allow wrongdoing to go unpunished. God must and will deal with all evil. It would be wrong of Him to ignore evil deeds.

God is Righteous ... He is Just. And all wrongdoing will be punished. Nobody gets away with anything ...whether muggers ... druggies ... adulterers ... thieves ... shoplifters ... molesters ... liars ... corrupt businessmen ... politicians ... despots and dictators ... as a Righteous Judge ... God will deal with all evil.

Obviously a good option is to repent. Accept Jesus' Blood ... be forgiven and be reconciled ... justified.

If not ... every such person will be judged and punished. Justice!

One of many scriptures that highlights this balance:

Romans 11:22 (NKJV)

22 **Therefore consider *the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness.*** Otherwise you also will be cut off.

There are some really wicked people on this earth. Serial killers ... rapists ... molesters ... people who enjoy torture ... people who deliberately exploit weak and vulnerable ... who laugh at others' pain ... arrogant and selfish ... cruel. God will deal with everybody. We get a good description of such people in Romans chapter 1.

Romans 1:28-32 (NKJV)

28 **And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;**

29 **being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,**
30 **backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,**
31 **undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;**
32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that ***those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.***

God will destroy such people. He has done it in the past (Sodom and Gomorrah. The Flood). He is a Righteous Judge and will eliminate all evil ... all evil people ... He has promised to do it ... He will do it.

Imprecatory Prayer is merely asking God to do what He has promised and to rid the world of wicked ... arrogant ... hurtful ... destructive people. We don't want them here. They are a blotch on humanity.

Until that happens ... there will be no lasting peace in this world. No joy ... prosperity ... universal well-being. No Utopia!

The Psalmist sees the pain ... suffering ... evil ... and is urging God to take action. The Psalmist cares ... about the weak and needy and vulnerable ... and especially about God.

In a sense ... we all probably pray an Imprecatory Prayer quite regularly ... but it's indirect ... and implied imprecation rather than explicit.

Matthew 6:9-10 (NKJV)

9 In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

10 **Your kingdom come.**

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

To happen ... that requires the total destruction and annihilation of all of the wicked people on the earth. God's Kingdom and God's Will can't operate with rebels ... perverts ... violent ... cruel ... ruthless people doing things their evil way!

Of course ... the language in Imprecatory Psalms is blunter ... much more forthright ... very explicit! But the same sentiment: God ... sort out the wicked!!

The Psalmist abhors the evil and wickedness ... especially the way that wicked people oppose God and His goodness ... the way they blaspheme Him ... reject Him ... reject His kindness and mercy ... thumb their noses at Him.

In Paul's case ... the way that they reject the Blood of Jesus and the invitation to live forever with God in His family. Paul is zealous for God ... His honour ... His majesty. Paul cares! He abhors the evil ... evil-doers ... and so cries out for righteous judgment.

And we all should!!

All of us should desire righteousness to prevail across the earth. We should all desire the eradication of evil ... perpetrated by evil men (and evil women). We should all long for justice. For vindication ... of the poor and vulnerable ... those who suffer at the hands of the wicked ... every single day.

Imprecatory Prayer isn't the only type of prayer we'd pray. But there are times when we should be so affronted by the evil in this world ... the blatant ... arrogant ... "in your face" .. opposition to everything that God holds decent ... that our prayers should from

time to time ... turn to God's promises to punish the evil ... destroy them off the earth ... to bring justice to mankind ... and desire God to show Himself a Righteous Judge.

How often? I guess "as often as is appropriate". However ... out of 150 Psalms ... perhaps 10-15 might be considered Imprecatory Psalms (at least in part) ... and only a handful of those are major Imprecatory Psalms. So ... if that's a guide ... our Imprecatory prayers would be very much a minority.

But there certainly should be some! Unless we don't care about the wickedness of evil men and women ... unless we don't care about the harm and destruction they cause ... unless we don't care that the names of God and Jesus are trashed so often in society and in the media.

Maybe we're too tolerant ... or too self-centred ... too politically-correct?? Perhaps we are only interested in ourselves ... me, me and mine.

Of course ... the ideal outcome is that the wicked stop being wicked ... voluntarily ... on their own. Repent ... washed in Jesus' Blood ... forgiven ... reconciled to God. Turn to God. Live right thereafter.

We can pray for that too. There should be no personal pleasure at the outcome if they persistently refuse God's goodness and patience.

Ezekiel 33:11 (NKJV)

11 Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have *no pleasure in the death of the wicked*, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

Ezekiel 18:30-32 (NKJV)

30 ***“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways,”*** says the Lord God.

“Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin.”

31 Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?

32 For ***“I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,”*** says the Lord God. ***“Therefore turn and live!”***

2 Peter 3:8-9 (NKJV)

8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, ***not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*** (*God doesn't want “to lose” people*)

But ... many won't turn. They are hardened to sin and wickedness. Destructive ... filled with violence ... greed ... corrupt ... walking in the ways of satan. They are arrogant towards God ... despising His kindness and mercy.

It's right for us to occasionally pray for God's righteous judgment and justice to be poured out on such people ... to eradicate these wicked people quickly from under God's heaven.

We would need to be careful of our motives. This is not about personal vengeance. The Psalmist didn't say “Let ME slay the wicked”. The prayer is for God to rise up and deal with the wicked. God is a Righteous Judge ... has all of the facts ... His justice ... His judgment will be perfect.

Like the saints under the altar in Revelation chapter 6 ... we can cry out for God to avenge us. But ... up to Him ... in His time and in His manner. Taking into account all of the facts that we don't know about.

Romans 12:17-21 (NKJV)

17 **Repay no one evil for evil.** Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

18 **If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.**

19 **Beloved, do not avenge yourselves,** but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "**Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,**" **says the Lord.**

20 Therefore

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

If he is thirsty, give him a drink;

For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

21 **Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

God has a perfect memory. No one anywhere ... at anytime ... will escape God's judgment ... unless they repent.

(It's vindication ... not vindictiveness)

God's not our hit-man. This isn't about our personal vendettas!

Imprecatory prayer is normally directed to enemies of the Gospel ... enemies of God ... not just our personal enemies.

Imprecatory prayer also assumes that the wicked remain publicly and persistently the enemies of God. It's conditional on their remaining unrepentant. If they change ... GREAT NEWS!

So we can ardently desire the repentance and the conversion of the wicked ... but equally ... if they refuse ... we can pray for their judgment (as Paul said ... Anathema).

Today's message in so many churches ... is God loves everybody the same. God loves sinners. God's love is unconditional (has no conditions attached ... God just loves and loves).

In part ... this rubs off on many believers thinking that they have to tolerate anything around them in society. God loves all people ... adulterers ... homosexuals ... abortion doctors. Therefore ... as a Christian I have to love them too ... and must never say anything ... or even think anything ... offensive.

Very very unbalanced. The wages of sin is death.

God is a Righteous Judge ... will ensure judgment takes place. The wicked will perish in God's wrath (even The wrath of The Lamb) ... if they haven't taken advantage of Christ's shed blood. Jesus is coming back to destroy the destroyers of the earth.

Let's look at a couple of Imprecatory passages:

Psalms 83:13-18 (NKJV)

13 O my God, make them like the whirling dust,
Like the chaff before the wind!

14 As the fire burns the woods,
And as the flame sets the mountains on fire,

15 So ***pursue them with Your tempest,***
And ***frighten them with Your storm.***

16 Fill their faces with shame,
That they may seek Your name, O Lord.

17 ***Let them be confounded and dismayed forever;***
Yes, let them be put to shame and perish,

18 **That they may know that You, whose name alone is the Lord,
Are the Most High over all the earth.**

So that they may acknowledge you God. So they may come to fear You God.

Psalms 139:19-22 (NKJV)

19 **Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God!**

Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men.

20 **For they speak against You wickedly;**

Your enemies take Your name in vain.

21 **Do I not hate them, O Lord, who hate You?**

And **do I not loathe those who rise up against You?**

22 **I hate them with perfect hatred;**

I count them my enemies.

Psalms 139:23-24 (NKJV)

23 **Search me, O God, and know my heart;**

Try me, and know my anxieties (*thoughts*);

24 And **see if there is any wicked way in me,**

And lead me in the way everlasting.

So. In summary. Imprecatory prayers/statements are found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament ... part of God's Word. We can learn from them.

We should all ... at times ... be affronted and upset by the way God is treated or ignored ... at the way the wicked seem to prosper and carry out their evil ways. So confident they will never have to pay a penalty.

We should ... from time to time ... engage in imprecations for God's Righteous Judgment to fall on the unrepentant and the persistently evil. It is not wrong for us to hate evil!

Ecclesiastes 3:1-3 (NKJV)

1 To everything there is a season,
A time for every purpose under heaven:
2 A time to be born,
And a time to die;
A time to plant,
And a time to pluck what is planted;
3 A time to kill,
And a time to heal;
A time to break down,
And a time to build up;

Ecclesiastes 3:8 (NKJV)

8 A time to love,
And a time to hate;
A time of war,
And a time of peace.

Don't forget the goodness and the severity of God.

On occasions it is right for us to pray Imprecatory prayers!