



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V27 N30

July 27, 2025

PSALMS: CELEBRATING CHRIST IN GOD'S HYMNBOOK

"Psalm 109"

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Prayer

I pray to God to know him
to lay my request before
him and to find direction
for my daily life.

*"I cried out to him with my
mouth; his praise was on my
tongue. 18 If I had cherished
sin in my heart, the Lord
would not have listened;
19 but God has surely lis-
tened and has heard my
prayer."*

Psalm 66:17-19



Q?

How are Chris-
tians to regard
imprecatory
psalms?



We pray to *lay our requests before God*. Generally speaking, our requests are positive; we ask God to bless someone in need in one way or another. Asking God to curse someone just doesn't seem right, but that's occasionally what the psalmists did. Psalms containing requests for God to curse an enemy of one kind or another are called "imprecatory psalms." Imprecatory psalms are a group of psalms that contain prayers for divine judgment, curses, or calamity upon the psalmist's enemies or the enemies of God. The term "imprecatory" comes from the Latin *imprecari*, meaning "to invoke evil upon" or "to curse."

Examples of imprecatory psalms include Psalm 5, 10, 35, 58, 59, 69, 83, 109, 137, and 140. Among these, Psalms 69, 109, and 137 are often cited as the most severe or troubling, as they call for severe consequences against the wicked, including prayers that their descendants suffer or that they be erased from the book of life.

Interpreting imprecatory psalms poses challenges, particularly for modern readers and especially for Christians who follow Jesus' teachings on love, forgiveness, and enemy reconciliation (e.g., Matthew 5:44). Some scholars and theologians have suggested various interpretive approaches to deal with these difficult texts. One view sees them as expressions of raw human emotion, which are not necessarily prescriptive but descriptive of human suffering and honesty before God. Another sees them as prophetic pronouncements of divine justice, especially in the face of persistent evil. Some view them as ultimately fulfilled in Christ, who bore the curse of sin and defeated evil without retaliating.

In the New Testament, portions of imprecatory psalms are quoted, often in the context of judgment. For example, Psalm 69 and Psalm 109 are quoted in the book of Acts (Ac 1:20) regarding the betrayal and death of Judas Iscariot. This usage suggests that early Christians saw

some imprecatory texts as having messianic or typological significance.

In worship and prayer today, imprecatory psalms can serve as reminders of the reality of evil and injustice, the human desire for vindication, and the ultimate sovereignty of God. When prayed with discernment, they can become cries for God's justice, not personal revenge, aligning the believer's heart with God's righteousness and trusting him to judge rightly in the end.

With regard to their interpretation, two things should be kept in mind. *First*, the psalmists are not being vindictive but are asking for vindication. According to Psalm 103:6, "The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed." Imprecatory psalmists are simply asking God to do this for them, namely, put things right by vindicating them. Regarding the *essence* of imprecatory psalms, one author writes: "We may summarize this as the plea that justice shall be done, and the right be vindicated" (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, TOTC, 40). Then regarding their chief spokesman, David, he goes on to write: "What he asked of God was no more—and could certainly be no less—than the verdict and intervention which a victim of injustice could expect from him, David himself, as king of Israel" (Kidner, 41)—suggesting that David's passion for justice expressed in his imprecatory psalms was genuine, and not a cover for vindictiveness, which would also be true for all the writers of imprecatory psalms. *Second*, *invective* has its own hyperbolic rhetoric "in which horror may be piled on horror more to express the speaker's sense of outrage than to spell out the penalties he *literally* intends . . . Such immoderate language has an air of irresponsibility which cries out for criticism, yet it would be a mistake to wish it away. It has as valid a function in this kind of context as hyperbole has in the realm of description: a vividness of communication which is beyond the reach of cautious literalism" (Kidner, 41-42).

Read Psalm 109:1-31

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

- 1 *My God, whom I praise,
do not remain silent,*
2 *for people who are wicked and deceitful
have opened their mouths against me;
they have spoken against me with lying tongues.*
3 *With words of hatred they surround me;
they attack me without cause.*
4 *In return for my friendship they accuse me,
but I am a man of prayer.*
5 *They repay me evil for good,
and hatred for my friendship.*
- 6 *Appoint someone evil to oppose my enemy;
let an accuser stand at his right hand.*
7 *When he is tried, let him be found guilty,
and may his prayers condemn him.*
8 *May his days be few;
may another take his place of leadership.*
9 *May his children be fatherless
and his wife a widow.*
10 *May his children be wandering beggars;
may they be driven from their ruined homes.*
11 *May a creditor seize all he has;
may strangers plunder the fruits of his labor.*
12 *May no one extend kindness to him
or take pity on his fatherless children.*
13 *May his descendants be cut off,
their names blotted out from the next generation.*
14 *May the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before
the LORD;
may the sin of his mother never be blotted out.*
15 *May their sins always remain before the LORD,
that he may blot out their name from the earth.*
- 16 *For he never thought of doing a kindness,
but hounded to death the poor
and the needy and the brokenhearted.*
17 *He loved to pronounce a curse –
may it come back on him.
He found no pleasure in blessing –
may it be far from him.*
18 *He wore cursing as his garment;
it entered into his body like water,
into his bones like oil.*
19 *May it be like a cloak wrapped about him,
like a belt tied forever around him.*
20 *May this be the LORD's payment to my accusers,
to those who speak evil of me.*
- 21 *But you, Sovereign LORD,
help me for your name's sake;
out of the goodness of your love, deliver me.*

- 22 *For I am poor and needy,
and my heart is wounded within me.*
23 *I fade away like an evening shadow;
I am shaken off like a locust.*
24 *My knees give way from fasting;
my body is thin and gaunt.*
25 *I am an object of scorn to my accusers;
when they see me, they shake their heads.*
- 26 *Help me, LORD my God;
save me according to your unfailing love.*
27 *Let them know that it is your hand,
that you, LORD, have done it.*
28 *While they curse, may you bless;
may those who attack me be put to shame,
but may your servant rejoice.*
29 *May my accusers be clothed with disgrace
and wrapped in shame as in a cloak.*
- 30 *With my mouth I will greatly extol the LORD;
in the great throng of worshipers I will praise him.*
31 *For he stands at the right hand of the needy,
to save their lives from those who would condemn
them.*

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "people," "they," "their" in vv. 1-5.
- Box "for" indicating *reason* in vv. 2, 16, 22, 31.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 4, 16, 21, 28.
- Bracket "man of prayer" in v. 4.
- Circles "someone evil" in v. 6.
- Circle "my enemy" in v. 6.
- Underline "may" in vv. 7-15, 17, 19-20, 28-29.
- Circle "prayers" in v. 7.
- Highlight v. 8b.
- Box "like" indicating *comparison* in vv. 18, 19, 23.
- Circle "love" in vv. 21, 26.
- Bracket "poor and needy" in v. 22.
- Circle "fasting" in v. 24.
- Bracket "shake their heads" in v. 25.
- Highlight v. 31.

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Explain what David is soliciting from God, whom he praises (v. 1).
2. Explain the *reason* behind his appeal (vv. 2-5).
3. It sounds like David is appealing to God for *judicial* redress (vv. 6-7). How so?
4. Explain the *connection* of the imprecations in verses 9-13 to the one in verse 8.
5. Explain the *connection* of the imprecations in verses 14-15 to the one in verse 7.
6. *Summarize* the *reason* behind the imprecations given in verses 6-15 (vv. 16-20).
7. To what does the pronoun “this” refer (v. 20)?
8. *Summarize* what David wants from the LORD and why (vv. 21-29).
9. *Summarize* what David promises to do and why (vv. 30-31).
10. **Discussion:** Talk about the relevance of imprecatory psalms like Psalm 109 for contemporary believers. For example, does it justify praying for judgment on wicked people?

Commentary On The Text

On the type of Psalm 109 and its literary features, one commentator explains: "Psalm 109 is classified as an individual lament, in which the psalmist invokes the wrath of God upon a group of foes. The language and message of the psalm place it within a special category of lament psalms called 'imprecatory psalms.' 'Imprecatory' comes from the Latin word *imprecari*, meaning 'to pray to, to invoke.' Many psalms of lament contain imprecatory language in the psalmists' petitions to God (see Pss. 17:13; 31:17; 35:4; 59:11-13; 70:2-3). But in a few psalms the imprecatory tone is very apparent: Psalms 12, 58, 83, 137, 139. Psalm 109's imprecatory language is vivid and abundant . . . Because of its caustic language, Psalm 109 is virtually ignored by the Christian church. It is not included in lectionary readings; its only reference in the New Testament is in Peter's sermon in Acts 1" (Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf F. Jacobson and Beth Laneel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT, 827).

This psalm of David presents a number of interpretive problems, the *primary* one being the interpretation of the malediction in verses 6-19, and *secondary* ones being the change from the use of plural to singular pronouns in verse 6, a related problem, and of course, the imprecatory language of verses 8-15 itself. Regarding the primary problem, one commentator explains: "There seem to be two main possibilities: either the malediction is a quotation of the curses uttered by the enemies of the Psalmist, or it consists of the words of the Psalmist himself directed against his accusers or against the chief of them" (A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, NCBC, 2:765). Put differently: "Are the imprecatory words recited in vv. 6-19 the words of the pray-er against a group of foes, or are they a direct quotation by the pray-er of the words of the foes?" (deClaissé-Walford, 829). If the curses are those uttered by the psalmist's foes, the problem of the change from plural to singular pronouns goes away, and the use of imprecatory language is blunted. However, this makes Peter's citation of verse 8 in Acts 1:20 "very forced," according to one commentator (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, TOTC, 423). The following interpretation assumes the imprecations are those spoken by David, not his foes—whom David addresses collectively using the singular (contra see Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 412-13). Remember these are not misguided people, that is, careless evildoers. They are malicious evildoers with little regard for God, who are intent on malevolence.

Overall the psalm can be divided into four parts: vv. 1-5, David's lament; vv. 6-20, his imprecations and the reason behind them; vv. 21-29, his two requests for deliverance (vv. 21-25) and salvation (vv. 26-29); vv. 30-31, his promise to praise and why.

In the first part (vv. 1-5), David, who finds himself under an all-out verbal attack, petitions God, whom he praises, to no longer ignore his desperate situation. Assailants, whom he describes as "wicked" and "deceitful" people, have spoken against him with "lying tongues." Former friends have turned against him, returning "evil for good" and "hatred for friendship." All the while they malign him, he prays for them.

In the second part (vv. 6-20), David petitions God to give his enemy a taste of *lex talionis*. God is to appoint a false witness to accuse David's enemy, so that his defense might fail and he might be found guilty (vv. 6-7). The invectives that follow (vv. 8-15) reflect David's desire for God to deal with the enemy in accordance with his malicious intent against him, matching his punishment with his crime. The imprecations are loosely related. The invectives related to family welfare (vv. 9-13) are connected to the enemy's premature death (v. 8). The invectives related to family forgiveness (vv. 14-15) are connected to the enemy being held responsible for the iniquity of his fathers (v. 7; cf. Ex 20:5; Dt 5:9)—"the indictment the accuser lodges against him includes the sins of his parents" (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ps 109:14-15). The despicable character of his enemy described in verses 16-20 is the reason behind the invectives.

In the third part (vv. 21-29), David contrasts how he wants the LORD to treat his enemy (vv. 6-20) with how he wishes to be treated by him (vv. 21-29). *First*, he petitions the LORD for help, i.e., deliverance, because he is "poor and needy," unable to deliver himself and totally dependent on him. What's more, he is in desperate need (vv. 22-25). *Second*, he petitions the LORD for help, i.e., salvation, because the LORD is always ready to rescue given his unfailing love (v. 26). Moreover, he wants God to make obvious what he has done.

In the fourth part (30-31), David pledges to praise the LORD for his deliverance. He writes: "I will thank the LORD profusely, in the middle of a crowd I will praise him, because he stands at the right hand of the needy, to deliver him from those who threaten his life" (NET).

Word Studies/Notes

Superscription of *David* . . . Cf. Ac 1:16, 20.

"Peter sees the Scripture he is about to cite as having come from the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David (*dia stōmatos Dauid*, where the preposition has the idea of means; Moule 1959:56-57)" (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 82).

vv. 1-5 *people, they, their* The "people," to whom the pronouns "they" and "their" refer, are the psalmist's unnamed enemies, those whose verbal attack he laments in verses 1-5. "A wicked mouth, a mouth of a deceiver, and a tongue of falsehood have opened against the psalmist, uttering words of hatred (*śin'ā*), accusation (*śātān*) and maliciousness (*rā'ā*), despite the fact that the psalmist loves and prays for them" (Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf F. Jacobson and Beth Laneel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT, 829).

v. 4 *man of prayer* Lit., "and I, prayer." Cf. "but I give myself to prayer" (ESV); "but I continue to pray" (NET); "even as I make prayer for them" (RSV). "The intent may be: But I have prayed for them (as in 35:13-14; see note there)" (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ps 109:4).

v. 6 *appoint someone evil* Cf. "Appoint an evil man to testify against him. May an accuser stand at his right side" (NET), i.e., someone willing to give false testimony. "He asked God to return what his enemy was doing to him back on himself. He wanted a wicked man to oppose and accuse him" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Psalms," 2025 ed., 399, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/psalms.pdf). Or if verses 6-19 are the words of the psalmist's enemies, "They say, 'Get an evil person to turn against him. Send an accuser to bring him to trial'" (NLT).

v. 6 *my enemy* Cf. "Appoint an evil man to testify against him!" (NET; cf. ESV, NKJV). The NIV understands singular pronoun to refer to the people who have attacked David verbally (vv. 1-5), which assumes verses 6-15 were spoken by David. Cf. "They say, 'Get an evil person to turn against him. Send an accuser to bring him to trial'" (NLT), which assumes verses 6-15 were spoken about David by his enemies.

v. 7 *prayers* "The petitions he offers in his defense" (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ps 109:7). Contra. "His prayer, in this trial scene, might appear to mean 'his plea to the court'; but as Kirkpatrick points out, the word everywhere else implies prayer to God. There are many parallels to God's emphatic rejection of such praying: e.g. Proverb 28:9; Isaiah 1:15" (Derek Kidner, *Psalms* 73-150, TOTC, 424).

v. 8b *may another take* . . . "As is well known, this statement is quoted in Acts 1:20 in reference to Judas Iscariot. The reason for this quotation is that Judas was a character of the same sort as David's opponents. The quo-

tation is apt because nothing more is intended than to show that such a change of fortune would befall thoroughly evil men" (H. C. Leupold, *The Psalms*, 767). Peter's quotation suggests to one commentator that these must be the words of David directed toward his enemy rather than vice versa. "To make the enemy [of David] the speaker of this appalling curse [i.e., vv. 1-15, esp. v. 8] is to rid the psalm of its chief affront to our sensibilities, while accounting quite naturally for the long passage in the singular. But it makes Peter's reference to Judas very forced" (Kidner, 423).

v. 18 *like water, like oil* His love for cursing became so much a part of him, it was as if it entered into his physical body. It marked him *externally* – he wore it like a garment – and it marked him *internally* – it entered his body like water and oil. In other words, he is evil through and through. (See Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, vol. 5, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 756).

vv. 21, 26 *love* Hb. *hesed* is often translated "loyal love," "covenant loyalty," or "faithfulness." "*Hesed*, the commitment of covenant relationship entered into by God with ancient Israel and a recurring theme of Psalms 107 and 108, is crucial in the indictment for the adversary (*śātān*) who is accusing the psalmist in Psalm 109. Rather than reflecting the kindness that is associated with the *hesed* of God, the foe pursues the *oppressed*, the *needy*, and the *grieved of heart in order to kill* them (v. 16). The foe also loves the act of condemnation, clothing the self in it *like a garment* (vv. 17-19)" (deClaissé-Walford, 831).

v. 22 *poor and needy* "Here, as often in the Psalms 'poor' characterizes not necessarily one who has no possessions but one who is (and recognizes that he is) without resources to effect his own deliverance (or secure his own life, safety, or well-being) – and so is dependent on God" (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ps 34:6).

v. 24 *fasting* "The Israelites usually practiced fasting (v. 24) for spiritual reasons, rather than for physical reasons, like losing weight. They went without food and sometimes drink, temporarily, in order to spend that time in a more important activity, specifically, seeking God in prayer. Therefore we should probably understand David's reference to fasting as including praying. He had prayed earnestly about the situation that this psalm reflects (cf. v. 4). His extended praying and fasting had made him physically weak" (Constable, 401).

v. 25 *shake their heads* "they wag their heads in contempt and supposed holy indignation" (A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, NCBC, 2:765).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

After praying for evildoers, put them in God's hands, imploring him to treat the wicked justly and vindicate the righteous.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

Friendship is hard. As an adult, I've been the object of gossip, been purposefully excluded from social events, and felt the pain of a fractured friendship with no apparent rhyme or reason. I have the maturity to navigate the emotion that comes with broken trust or a falling out, though it's still painful. As an adult, we can take all this emotion and multiply it by 100, and that's about what our elementary kids feel fairly regularly when it comes to friendship. They may see a group of kids laughing and assume they are the object of the laughter. They might not get picked to be on a team and assume no one likes them. An invitation for a sleepover might not be sent their way, and they're convinced their world is falling apart. How can we help our kids navigate the ups and downs of friendship? First, show compassion. What seems trivial to an adult is a child's entire world. Listen to their story without discounting it or explaining it away. Acknowledge their feelings as real. Next, gently guide them. Ask questions that help them define the truth of the situation. Don't be so quick to step in and solve their problem, but encourage them to come up with their own steps of resolution before you offer helpful hints or different perspectives. This is a good time to help your child articulate what it means to be and have a good friend. Lastly, always point them to God. In the same David turns to the Lord when friendships fail, we should encourage our kids to run to the Lord. Thankfully, He's our forever friend.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Psalm 109.

1. What is causing heartache for David (verses 2-5)?
2. What does David ask God to do? (verse 21)?
3. How does David conclude this psalm (verses 30-31)?

What Do You Think?

How hard is it to praise God while you're in the middle of difficult circumstance with a friend?

What Do You Do?

School starts in a few weeks. Spend each day this week praying for friendship. Ask God to help you develop lasting friendships that honor Him.

CORE COMPETENCY: Prayer

I talk to God so I can know Him, ask Him for things, and find out what he wants me to do.

MEMORY VERSE: Galatians 5:22-23

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.