

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Sunday School
Placerita Baptist Church
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Psalm 109 — Praying for Divine Judgment

1.0 Introducing Psalm 109

- Psalm 109 is the next to the last imprecatory psalm in the Psalter.
 - ✓ Previous imprecatory psalms include Psalms 7, 35, 58, 69, and 83. Notes for these psalms are available at www.drbarrick.org/sermons.
 - ✓ The final imprecatory psalm will be Psalm 137.
- David penned five of the seven imprecatory psalms. Asaph wrote Psalm 83; Psalm 137 is anonymous.
- An imprecation is a curse or invocation of judgment that often is based upon covenant (cp. Gen 12:3; Deut 28:1–2, 15).

2.0 Reading Psalm 109 (NAU)

109:1 A Psalm of David.

O God of my praise,
Do not be silent!

109:2 For they have opened the wicked and deceitful mouth against me;
They have spoken against me with a lying tongue.

109:3 They have also surrounded me with words of hatred,
And fought against me without cause.

109:4 In return for my love they act as my accusers;
But I am in prayer.

109:5 Thus they have repaid me evil for good
And hatred for my love.

109:6 Appoint a wicked man over him,
And let an accuser stand at his right hand.

109:7 When he is judged, let him come forth guilty,
And let his prayer become sin.

109:8 Let his days be few;

- Let another take his office.
109:9 Let his children be fatherless
And his wife a widow.
109:10 Let his children wander about and beg;
And let them seek sustenance far from their ruined homes.
109:11 Let the creditor seize all that he has,
And let strangers plunder the product of his labor.
109:12 Let there be none to extend **lovingkindness** to him,
Nor any to be gracious to his fatherless children.
109:13 Let his posterity be cut off;
In a following generation let their name be blotted out.
109:14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD,
And do not let the sin of his mother be blotted out.
109:15 Let them be before the LORD continually,
That He may cut off their memory from the earth;
109:16 Because he did not remember to show **lovingkindness**,
But persecuted the afflicted and needy man,
And the despondent in heart, to put them to death.
109:17 He also loved cursing, so it came to him;
And he did not delight in blessing, so it was far from him.
109:18 But he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment,
And it entered into his body like water
And like oil into his bones.
109:19 Let it be to him as a garment with which he covers himself,
And for a belt with which he constantly girds himself.
109:20 Let this be the reward of my accusers from the LORD,
And of those who speak evil against my soul.
109:21 But You, O GOD, the Lord, deal kindly with me for Your name's sake;
Because **Your lovingkindness** is good, deliver me;
109:22 For I am afflicted and needy,
And my heart is wounded within me.
109:23 I am passing like a shadow when it lengthens;
I am shaken off like the locust.
109:24 My knees are weak from fasting,
And my flesh has grown lean, without fatness.
109:25 I also have become a reproach to them;
When they see me, they wag their head.
109:26 Help me, O LORD my God;
Save me according to **Your lovingkindness**.
109:27 And let them know that this is Your hand;
You, LORD, have done it.
109:28 Let them curse, but You bless;
When they arise, they shall be ashamed,
But Your servant shall be glad.
109:29 Let my accusers be clothed with dishonor,



And let them cover themselves with their own shame as with a robe.

109:30 With my mouth I will give thanks abundantly to the LORD;
And in the midst of many I will praise Him.

109:31 For He stands at the right hand of the needy,
To save him from those who judge his soul.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 109

3.1 Outline

- I.** David's Praise and Prayer (vv. 1–5)
- II.** David's Imprecations (vv. 6–20)
- III.** David's Plea (vv. 21–29)
- IV.** David's Praise and Thanksgiving (vv. 30–31)



3.2 Notes

- **Imprecatory Psalms and the Christian**
 - David penned most of the imprecatory psalms.
 - ✓ As king, he was responsible for the welfare and protection of his people.
 - ✓ As king, he was responsible for the justice system, the prosecution and execution of capital crimes.
 - Imprecatory psalms are prayers taking matters of injustice to the throne of God, not acts of vengeance.
 - ✓ David always recognized the truth of Romans 12:19, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,’ says the Lord.” See Deuteronomy 32:35.
 - ✓ It is our prerogative to pray for God to avenge wrongs, because vengeance belongs to Him (Deut 32:35; Romans 12:19–21).
 - David rightly desired the punishment of the wicked and the vindication of the righteous. It is right to pray for justice on behalf of those who are oppressed.
 - Judgments that imprecatory psalms depict are exactly the judgments that God will eventually bring upon the wicked when Jesus Himself is the judge.
 - Imprecatory psalms are concerned with God's reputation, rather than with the psalmist's reputation and circumstances.
 - The ultimate appeal of the imprecatory psalm is to the love of God for His own people.
 - A biblical view of the value of life depends on divine justice, judgment, and vindication of what is right.
 - Imprecatory psalms are not contrary to the New Testament teaching to love and forgive one's enemies. See Luke 18:7–8; Acts 23:3; Galatians 1:8–9; 2 Timothy 4:14.

- “These prayers are a divinely appointed source of power for believers in their powerlessness. In the face of sustained injustice, hardened enmity, and gross oppression, they are the Christians’ hope that divine justice will indeed be realized—not only in the eschaton (2 Thess. 1:6–10) but also in “the land of the living” (Ps. 27:13). Christians should find in them a God-imbued source of strength and honor, and seek to use them, as appropriate, in their worship of God.”—John N. Day, “The Imprecatory Psalms and Christian Ethics,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159/634 (April 2002): 186.

- v. 1 “O God of my praise”

- Psalm 109 opens with a Godward look, not a selfish mindset. The opening theme is praise, because God is worthy of praise.
- See Deuteronomy 10:21.
- Compare Jeremiah 17:14.

- v. 4 “But I am in prayer”

- Literally, “But I prayer” = “But I am *characterized by* prayer.”
 - ✓ Psalm 120:7 has a similar construction: “I peace.”
- David’s first response to injustice and the attacks of his enemies is not to take matters into his own hands. His first response is prayer.
- *For what do you pray when you come under attack?*
- Compare verse 7: “let his prayer become sin.”



- vv. 6–20 Plural > Singular > Plural

- Verses 1–5 refer to the adversaries in the plural; verses 6–20 refer to them in the singular; and verses 21–31 return to the plural.
 - ✓ Singular references in the middle section of the psalm address the adversaries individually, one by one, each and every one.
 - ✓ “Accuser” is the Hebrew word *satan*, the same term used of the Devil.
- Some commentators and translators (e.g., NRSV, NLT) treat these verses as the words of the adversaries that they speak against David.
 - ✓ Such an approach attempts to make these curses more acceptable to our sensibilities.
 - ✓ No matter who speaks verses 6–19, verse 20 makes it plain that the psalmist desires that all these curses fall upon the heads of his accusers.
 - ✓ Verse 20 might be an appeal to the law regarding false witnesses (Deut 19:15–21).
 - ✓ The citation of this psalm in Acts 1:16–26 argues for the imprecations being the psalmist’s.

- **vv. 6–19** The Imprecations
 - vv. 6–7, Denunciation: Let him be declared guilty here and now.
 - vv. 8–9, Deduction: Let his life be short.
 - vv. 10–13, Destitution/Destruction: Let his prosperity and his posterity be cut off.
 - vv. 14–16, Defamation: Let his ancestry be condemned by the Lord.
 - vv. 17–19, Deflection: Let his curses come back upon him.
- **v. 8** “Let his days be few”
 - “In the brevity of corruption lies hope. When oppression, evil, and godlessness are cut short, the Lord establishes his rule over the earth by a built-in obsolescence of human structures.”—Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Corporation, 1991), 5:691.
- **v. 8** “Let another take his office.”
 - Acts 1:20 cites this statement from Psalm 109 as fulfilled with the death of Judas and the appointment of Matthias to the vacated apostleship.
 - Just as David prayed that his chief enemy might be removed from his position of authority, so also Judas, the enemy of David’s greater Son, must be removed from his position.
- **vv. 9–15** Sin’s Effects on Families
 - Our sin always harms those closest to us. This effect does not mean that God judges the children for the sins of their parents. It means that the sins of the parents have an impact upon the lives of their children. This effect is part of “the natural consequences” of sin.
 - Compare Exodus 20:5–6 and Luke 19:41–44.
 - “The punishment asked for is with strict correspondence to the sins. Verses 16–20 explain the curses of verse 6–15, showing that the evil person will get exactly what he gave others. He cursed them, so he will be accursed.”—James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 3:889.
 - *What are some of the more noticeable effects of sin on families?*
- **v. 20** “But You, O GOD, the Lord”
 - “Once more, as so often in the Psalms, the whole mood changes with the pivot-phrase *But thou* . . . (cf. especially Ps. 22:3, 9, 19).”—Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 391.
- **vv. 26–29** Compare Jeremiah 17:14–18.



- **v. 28** “but You bless”
 - As the wicked are pouring out curses on the head of the psalmist, God is pouring out blessing.
- **vv. 30–31** Compare Romans 8:31–34.
- **v. 31** “He stands at the right hand of the needy”
 - Psalm 109 ends as it began with praise and contrasts the accusers who stand at the right hand with God who also stands at the right hand of His people in their time of need.

4.0 Singing Psalm 109

O God, Whom I Delight to Praise (Tune: “Doxology”)



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| <p>1 O God, whom I delight to praise,
To Thee my cry for help I raise;
Be Thou my Friend and Advocate
When foes assail with bitter hate.</p> <p>3 My good with evil they repay,
My love turns not their hate away;
The part of vengeance, Lord, is Thine;
To pray, and only pray, is mine.</p> <p>8 He cursing loved and blessing loathed:
Unblest, with cursing he is clothed;
For thus the justice of the Lord
My adversaries will reward.</p> <p>11 O Lord, my God, Thy help I crave,
In Thy great lovingkindness save;
Before my foes Thy mercy show;
That Thou dost help me, make them know.</p> | <p>2 Against me slanderous words are
flung
From many a false and lying tongue;
Without a cause men hurl at me
The shafts of deadly enmity.</p> <p>5 Let sudden death upon him break,
His office let another take,
His children and his widowed wife
Pursue the homeless beggar’s life.</p> <p>9 O God, the Lord, for Thy Name’s sake
Let me of Thy good grace partake;
My need is great, and great Thou art
To heal my wounded, stricken heart.</p> <p>13 Thanksgiving to the Lord I raise,
The multitude shall hear my praise,
For by the needy God will stand
To save them from oppression’s hand.</p> |
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— Author unknown

5.0 Praying Psalm 109

- O Lord, be my praise at all times and in all circumstances. [v. 1]
- Father, help me to do good to my enemies and to love them. [v. 5]
- Cause me to delight in blessing. [v. 17]
- Save me from the evil deeds of those who falsely accuse me. [v. 31]
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6.0 Applying Psalm 109

- When attacked, be a prayer first responder.
- When tempted to sin, look to God and consider the impact upon your family.
- Be characterized by prayer and praise regardless of circumstances.