**Exploring the Imprecatory Psalms**

All Saints Anglican Church

Sunday, May 22, 2016

*“The Psalms become like a mirror to the person singing them, such that each singer perceives herself and the emotions of her soul in the singing.”*

*--St. Athanasius,* The Life of Antony

1. **What do we mean when we refer to the “Imprecatory Psalms”?**
   1. **Imprecatory**—to invoke or call down (esp. evil or curses), as upon a person.

In other words, the Imprecatory Psalms are those Psalms wherein the Psalmist asks God to curse or bring judgment upon his or her enemies.

* 1. **Psalms 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 17, 35, 37, 40, 52, 54, 55, 56, 58, 59, 69, 70, 79, 83, 94, 109, 129, 137, 139, 140, and 143** all contain imprecatory passages
  2. **Imprecatory Psalms ask that:**
     1. God would visit shame/guilt upon one’s enemies for their sins
     2. The enemy would finally be caught/found out in their evil
     3. One’s enemies would feel fear and terror
     4. God would rise up against enemies and reign judgment upon them (in the form of fire, coals, vengeance, eye for an eye, etc.)
     5. One’s enemies would no longer prosper—in other words, a request that they would be cut off from the mercy and blessings of God
     6. Physical harm would be visited upon an enemy, particularly of a kind that would leave the enemy unarmed and unable to commit further evil (e.g., God should cut out the tongue, break the teeth, break the arm, etc.)
     7. One’s enemies (and often their progeny) would fall, perish, die, be wiped out, etc.
     8. The righteous would stand in triumph over their former oppressors

1. **In what ways do imprecatory passages pose problems for Christians?**
   1. **Juxtaposing the Desire for Human Vengeance with the Gospel of Christ**
      1. “An eye for an eye” vs. “turn the other cheek”
      2. In apparent opposition to the spirit of the Imprecatory Psalms, Jesus said, “1 Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. 2For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. 3Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? 4Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye? 5You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’seye.” Matthew 7:1-5
      3. James said, “For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.” James 2:13
   2. **The Severity of Certain Imprecatory Passages is OFFENSIVE!!!**
      1. “The righteous will rejoice when they see vengeance done; they will bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked.” Psalm 58:10
      2. “Add guilt to their guilt; may they have no acquittal from you. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous.” Psalm 69: 27-28
      3. “O daughter Babylon, you devastator! Happy shall they be who pay you back what you have done to us! Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock!” Psalm 137:8-9
   3. **Some have Embraced a Misleading Stance on the Infallibility/Inerrancy of Scripture**
      1. We need to understand the Imprecatory Psalms as human beings’ words to God rather than as God’s words to us.
         1. This way of looking at the Biblical text, though 100% true, may make some people uncomfortable because they embrace a misleading stance on the inerrancy of scripture.
         2. Though we believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, to be trustworthy, and to contain all things necessary to salvation, we must not forget that there is critical difference between the words of human beings recorded in the Bible and the very Words of God which give us normative rules for life.
      2. Understanding the Imprecatory Psalms in light of this critical distinction allows us to acknowledge that the Psalmists may be asking for things which do not align with the Father’s will for His world
         1. Human beings saying, “Oh God, judge mine enemies,” IS NOT THE SAME AS God saying, “When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless; plead the widow's cause.” (God speaking in Isaiah 1:15-17)
         2. In the case of imprecatory passages, the words of the Psalmists communicate the thoughts and emotions of human beings. This is the fundamental way to understand these passages! These are not promises of God, judgments of God, prophecies of God, etc.
      3. The Father’s ultimate desire is that His will would be done, such that human beings would come to love their Father with all of their heart, and soul, and mind, and strength and that they would come to love their neighbors as themselves. This is the flourishing of the Kingdom!
         1. The Father’s view of justice may not (probably will not) include revenge on our enemies. Thank goodness! Otherwise, we, who were once enemies of Christ, who have often wronged our neighbors in grievous ways, would be deserving of hellacious punishment!
            1. Remember, the same David who wrote Psalm 139 was the man who committed adultery with Bathsheba and who murdered Uriah. He is deserving of the very punishment he prays down on others!
         2. When God speaks about visiting judgment on a people, He offers multiple opportunities for repentance. He often extends unwarranted mercy.
      4. Once again, the imprecatory Psalms communicate emotional states that human beings may experience in times of distress.
         1. The Imprecatory Psalms show us that God, who has created us to experience the world according to our emotional states, is strong enough to handle our anger, our indignation, our feelings of revenge, and our sense of having been wronged.
         2. The Imprecatory Psalms reveal that God allows us to approach him exactly as we are, in whatever emotional state we may find ourselves.
   4. **Nonetheless, Many Object to the Nature of the Imprecatory Psalms because of their Internal Discomfort with Negative Emotional States**
      1. God has created a host of human emotions: Love, Anger, Joy, Fear, Benevolence, Sadness, Friendship, Frustration, Surprise, Shame, Hope, Envy, Trust, Confusion, Doubt, etc.
      2. In some contexts, we may feel more or less safe to express or even live in these emotions.
         1. Family of Origin
            1. Circle of Security Exercise
         2. Church
         3. Workplace
         4. Present Family
      3. In the Psalms, we are allowed to feel as we feel, without the need for a filter. We feel the spectrum of human emotion with the Psalmist, through his or her words.
         1. We can be completely HONEST with God through the words of the Imprecatory Psalms and through other emotionally charged scriptural passages
         2. This is important to remember, especially with regard to negative emotions. God has created us in such a way that we may HEALTHILY feel
            1. Anger
            2. Fear
            3. Sadness
            4. Frustration
            5. Shame
            6. Envy
            7. Confusion
            8. Doubt
            9. Etc.
2. **The Imprecatory Psalms as a form of curse or swearing**
   1. God in the Sermon on the Mount and in other passages places **special prohibitions** on certain expressions of anger and fear.
      1. The Bible CONDEMNS in several places the human pursuit of revenge: Leviticus 19:18, Proverbs 24:29, Romans 12, 1 Peter 3:9, etc.
   2. However, **we can express our negative emotions in a Biblically-sanctioned way** by praying the Imprecatory Psalms alongside the Psalmists.
      1. In so doing, we acknowledge that judgement and vengeance belong to the Lord.
      2. There are appropriate times for these prayers, as when we are confronted with:
         1. Injustice
         2. Slavery
         3. Abandonment
         4. Poverty
         5. Wickedness
         6. Betrayal
         7. Martyrdom
         8. Suffering or Death of Innocents
         9. Evil
         10. Etc.
      3. But we must be careful with these Psalms! While there are appropriate times for their use, it is very easy to misuse them and, in so doing, to do violence to ourselves or others.
         1. Scripture is not safe and sterile.
         2. It is ugly. It is honest. It is transformative. As such, it can be dangerous.
         3. We must treat Scripture, especially the Imprecatory Psalms with respect—similar to handling a loaded firearm. More often than not, they should cause us to repent of our own violent thoughts and actions.
         4. Thoughts on the use of Imprecatory Psalms in the Divine Office.
3. **Final Thoughts**
   1. “The [imprecatory psalms] are unrelenting in their realism about the human psyche. They ask us to be honest about ourselves and admit that we, too, harbor the capacity for vengeance. [They] function as a cautionary tale: such desires, left unchecked, whether buried under ‘niceness’ or violently acted out, can lead to a bitterness so consuming that even the innocent are not spared.” Kathleen Norris, *The Cloister Walk,* (New York, New York: Riverhead Press, 1996), 104.
   2. Video of Eugene Peterson and Bono
      1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-l40S5e90KY> 12:32-19:32
4. **Psalm 5 Imprecatory Verses**

8Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness  
    because of my enemies;  
    make your way straight before me.

**9**For there is no truth in their mouths;  
    their hearts are destruction;  
their throats are open graves;  
    they flatter with their tongues.  
**10**Make them bear their guilt, O God;  
    let them fall by their own counsels;  
because of their many transgressions cast them out,  
    for they have rebelled against you.

1. **Psalm 6 Imprecatory Verses**

**8**Depart from me, all you workers of evil,  
    for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping.  
**9**The Lord has heard my supplication;  
    the Lord accepts my prayer.  
**10**All my enemies shall be ashamed and struck with terror;  
    they shall turn back, and in a moment be put to shame.

1. **Psalm 7 Imprecatory Verses**

**6**Rise up, O Lord, in your anger;  
    lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies;

9 O let the evil of the wicked come to an end,  
    but establish the righteous,  
you who test the minds and hearts,  
    O righteous God.  
**10**God is my shield,  
    who saves the upright in heart.  
**11**God is a righteous judge,  
    and a God who has indignation every day.

**12**If one does not repent, God will whet his sword;  
    he has bent and strung his bow;  
**13**he has prepared his deadly weapons,  
    making his arrows fiery shafts.  
**14**See how they conceive evil,  
    and are pregnant with mischief,  
    and bring forth lies.  
**15**They make a pit, digging it out,  
    and fall into the hole that they have made.  
**16**Their mischief returns upon their own heads,  
    and on their own heads their violence descends.

1. **Psalm 10 Imprecatory Verses**

1Why, O Lord, do you stand far off?  
    Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?  
2In arrogance the wicked persecute the poor—  
    let them be caught in the schemes they have devised.

12Rise up, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand;  
    do not forget the oppressed.  
13Why do the wicked renounce God,  
    and say in their hearts, “You will not call us to account”?

14But you do see! Indeed you note trouble and grief,  
    that you may take it into your hands;  
the helpless commit themselves to you;  
    you have been the helper of the orphan.

15Break the arm of the wicked and evildoers;  
    seek out their wickedness until you find none.

17 O Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek;  
    you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear  
18to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed,  
    so that those from earth may strike terror no more.

1. **Psalm 11 Imprecatory Verses**

**4**The Lord is in his holy temple;  
    the Lord’s throne is in heaven.  
    His eyes behold, his gaze examines humankind.  
**5**The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked,  
    and his soul hates the lover of violence.  
**6**On the wicked he will rain coals of fire and sulfur;  
    a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.

1. **Psalm 12 Imprecatory Verses**

**1**Help, O Lord, for there is no longer anyone who is godly;  
    the faithful have disappeared from humankind.  
**2**They utter lies to each other;  
    with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.

**3**May the Lord cut off all flattering lips,  
    the tongue that makes great boasts,  
**4**those who say, “With our tongues we will prevail;  
    our lips are our own—who is our master?”

**5**“Because the poor are despoiled, because the needy groan,  
    I will now rise up,” says the Lord;  
    “I will place them in the safety for which they long.”

1. **Psalm 17 Imprecatory Verses**

**1**Hear a just cause, O Lord; attend to my cry;  
    give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit.  
**2**From you let my vindication come;  
    let your eyes see the right.

**8**Guard me as the apple of the eye;  
    hide me in the shadow of your wings,  
**9**from the wicked who despoil me,  
    my deadly enemies who surround me.  
**10**They close their hearts to pity;  
    with their mouths they speak arrogantly.  
**11**They track me down;[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+17&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-14115a)] now they surround me;  
    they set their eyes to cast me to the ground.  
**12**They are like a lion eager to tear,  
    like a young lion lurking in ambush.

**13**Rise up, O Lord, confront them, overthrow them!  
    By your sword deliver my life from the wicked,  
**14**from mortals—by your hand, O Lord—  
    from mortals whose portion in life is in this world.

1. **Psalm 35 Imprecatory Verses**

**1**Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me;  
    fight against those who fight against me!  
**2**Take hold of shield and buckler,  
    and rise up to help me!  
**3**Draw the spear and javelin  
    against my pursuers;  
say to my soul,  
    “I am your salvation.”

**4**Let them be put to shame and dishonor  
    who seek after my life.  
Let them be turned back and confounded  
    who devise evil against me.  
**5**Let them be like chaff before the wind,  
    with the angel of the Lord driving them on.  
**6**Let their way be dark and slippery,  
    with the angel of the Lord pursuing them.

**7**For without cause they hid their net for me;  
    without cause they dug a pit for my life.  
**8**Let ruin come on them unawares.  
And let the net that they hid ensnare them;  
    let them fall in it—to their ruin.

**9**Then my soul shall rejoice in the Lord,  
    exulting in his deliverance.  
**10**All my bones shall say,  
    “O Lord, who is like you?  
You deliver the weak  
    from those too strong for them,  
    the weak and needy from those who despoil them.”

**11**Malicious witnesses rise up;  
    they ask me about things I do not know.  
**12**They repay me evil for good;  
    my soul is forlorn.  
**13**But as for me, when they were sick,  
    I wore sackcloth;  
    I afflicted myself with fasting.  
I prayed with head bowed on my bosom,  
**14**as though I grieved for a friend or a brother;  
I went about as one who laments for a mother,  
    bowed down and in mourning.

**15**But at my stumbling they gathered in glee,  
    they gathered together against me;  
ruffians whom I did not know  
    tore at me without ceasing;  
**16**they impiously mocked more and more,  
    gnashing at me with their teeth.

**17**How long, O Lord, will you look on?  
    Rescue me from their ravages,  
    my life from the lions!  
**18**Then I will thank you in the great congregation;  
    in the mighty throng I will praise you.

**19**Do not let my treacherous enemies rejoice over me,  
    or those who hate me without cause wink the eye.  
**20**For they do not speak peace,  
    but they conceive deceitful words  
    against those who are quiet in the land.  
**21**They open wide their mouths against me;  
    they say, “Aha, Aha,  
    our eyes have seen it.”

**22**You have seen, O Lord; do not be silent!  
    O Lord, do not be far from me!  
**23**Wake up! Bestir yourself for my defense,  
    for my cause, my God and my Lord!  
**24**Vindicate me, O Lord, my God,  
    according to your righteousness,  
    and do not let them rejoice over me.  
**25**Do not let them say to themselves,  
    “Aha, we have our heart’s desire.”  
Do not let them say, “We have swallowed you up.”

**26**Let all those who rejoice at my calamity  
    be put to shame and confusion;  
let those who exalt themselves against me  
    be clothed with shame and dishonor.

**27**Let those who desire my vindication  
    shout for joy and be glad,  
    and say evermore,  
“Great is the Lord,  
    who delights in the welfare of his servant.”  
**28**Then my tongue shall tell of your righteousness  
    and of your praise all day long.

1. **Psalm 37 Imprecatory Verses**

**1**Do not fret because of the wicked;  
    do not be envious of wrongdoers,  
**2**for they will soon fade like the grass,  
    and wither like the green herb.

**3**Trust in the Lord, and do good;  
    so you will live in the land, and enjoy security.  
**4**Take delight in the Lord,  
    and he will give you the desires of your heart.

**5**Commit your way to the Lord;  
    trust in him, and he will act.  
**6**He will make your vindication shine like the light,  
    and the justice of your cause like the noonday.

**7**Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him;  
    do not fret over those who prosper in their way,  
    over those who carry out evil devices.

**8**Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath.  
    Do not fret—it leads only to evil. **9**For the wicked shall be cut off,  
    but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.

**10**Yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more;  
    though you look diligently for their place, they will not be there.  
**11**But the meek shall inherit the land,  
    and delight themselves in abundant prosperity.

**12**The wicked plot against the righteous,  
    and gnash their teeth at them;  
**13**but the Lord laughs at the wicked,  
    for he sees that their day is coming.

**14**The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows  
    to bring down the poor and needy,  
    to kill those who walk uprightly;  
**15**their sword shall enter their own heart,  
    and their bows shall be broken.

**16**Better is a little that the righteous person has  
    than the abundance of many wicked.  
**17**For the arms of the wicked shall be broken,  
    but the Lord upholds the righteous.

**18**The Lord knows the days of the blameless,  
    and their heritage will abide forever;  
**19**they are not put to shame in evil times,  
    in the days of famine they have abundance.

**20**But the wicked perish,  
    and the enemies of the Lord are like the glory of the pastures;  
    they vanish—like smoke they vanish away.

**21**The wicked borrow, and do not pay back,  
    but the righteous are generous and keep giving;  
**22**for those blessed by the Lord shall inherit the land,  
    but those cursed by him shall be cut off.

**23**Our steps are made firm by the Lord,  
    when he delights in our way;  
**24**though we stumble, we shall not fall headlong,  
    for the Lord holds us by the hand.

**25**I have been young, and now am old,  
    yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken  
    or their children begging bread.  
**26**They are ever giving liberally and lending,  
    and their children become a blessing.

**27**Depart from evil, and do good;  
    so you shall abide forever.  
**28**For the Lord loves justice;  
    he will not forsake his faithful ones.

The righteous shall be kept safe forever,  
    but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.  
**29**The righteous shall inherit the land,  
    and live in it forever.

**30**The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom,  
    and their tongues speak justice.  
**31**The law of their God is in their hearts;  
    their steps do not slip.

**32**The wicked watch for the righteous,  
    and seek to kill them.  
**33**The Lord will not abandon them to their power,  
    or let them be condemned when they are brought to trial.

**34**Wait for the Lord, and keep to his way,  
    and he will exalt you to inherit the land;  
    you will look on the destruction of the wicked.

**35**I have seen the wicked oppressing,  
    and towering like a cedar of Lebanon.  
**36**Again I passed by, and they were no more;  
    though I sought them, they could not be found.

**37**Mark the blameless, and behold the upright,  
    for there is posterity for the peaceable.  
**38**But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed;  
    the posterity of the wicked shall be cut off.

**39**The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord;  
    he is their refuge in the time of trouble.  
**40**The Lord helps them and rescues them;  
    he rescues them from the wicked, and saves them,  
    because they take refuge in him.

1. **Psalm 40 Imprecatory Verses**

**11**Do not, O Lord, withhold  
    your mercy from me;  
let your steadfast love and your faithfulness  
    keep me safe forever.  
**12**For evils have encompassed me  
    without number;  
my iniquities have overtaken me,  
    until I cannot see;  
they are more than the hairs of my head,  
    and my heart fails me.

**13**Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me;  
    O Lord, make haste to help me.  
**14**Let all those be put to shame and confusion  
    who seek to snatch away my life;  
let those be turned back and brought to dishonor  
    who desire my hurt.  
**15**Let those be appalled because of their shame  
    who say to me, “Aha, Aha!”

1. **Psalm 52 Imprecatory Verses**

**1**Why do you boast, O mighty one,  
    of mischief done against the godly?  
    All day long **2**you are plotting destruction.  
Your tongue is like a sharp razor,  
    you worker of treachery.  
**3**You love evil more than good,  
    and lying more than speaking the truth. *Selah*  
**4**You love all words that devour,  
    O deceitful tongue.

**5**But God will break you down forever;  
    he will snatch and tear you from your tent;  
    he will uproot you from the land of the living. *Selah*  
**6**The righteous will see, and fear,  
    and will laugh at the evildoer,saying,  
**7**“See the one who would not take  
    refuge in God,  
but trusted in abundant riches,  
    and sought refuge in wealth!”

1. **Psalm 54 Imprecatory Psalms**

**1**Save me, O God, by your name,  
    and vindicate me by your might.  
**2**Hear my prayer, O God;  
    give ear to the words of my mouth.

**3**For the insolent have risen against me,  
    the ruthless seek my life;  
    they do not set God before them. *Selah*

**4**But surely, God is my helper;  
    the Lord is the upholder of my life.  
**5**He will repay my enemies for their evil.  
    In your faithfulness, put an end to them.

**6**With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you;  
    I will give thanks to your name, O Lord, for it is good.  
**7**For he has delivered me from every trouble,  
    and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.

1. **Psalm 55 Imprecatory Verses**

**12**It is not enemies who taunt me—  
    I could bear that;  
it is not adversaries who deal insolently with me—  
    I could hide from them.  
**13**But it is you, my equal,  
    my companion, my familiar friend,  
**14**with whom I kept pleasant company;  
    we walked in the house of God with the throng.  
**15**Let death come upon them;  
    let them go down alive to Sheol;  
    for evil is in their homes and in their hearts.

**19**God, who is enthroned from of old, *Selah*  
    will hear, and will humble them—  
because they do not change,  
    and do not fear God.

**23**But you, O God, will cast them down  
    into the lowest pit;  
the bloodthirsty and treacherous  
    shall not live out half their days.  
But I will trust in you.

1. **Psalm 56 Imprecatory Verses**

**1**Be gracious to me, O God, for people trample on me;  
    all day long foes oppress me;  
**2**my enemies trample on me all day long,  
    for many fight against me.  
O Most High, **3**when I am afraid,  
    I put my trust in you.  
**4**In God, whose word I praise,  
    in God I trust; I am not afraid;  
    what can flesh do to me?

**5**All day long they seek to injure my cause;  
    all their thoughts are against me for evil.  
**6**They stir up strife, they lurk,  
    they watch my steps.  
As they hoped to have my life,  
**7** so repay them for their crime;  
    in wrath cast down the peoples, O God!

**8**You have kept count of my tossings;  
    put my tears in your bottle.  
    Are they not in your record?  
**9**Then my enemies will retreat  
    in the day when I call.  
    This I know, that God is for me.

1. **Psalm 58 Imprecatory Verses**

**3**The wicked go astray from the womb;  
    they err from their birth, speaking lies. **4**They have venom like the venom of a serpent,  
    like the deaf adder that stops its ear,  
**5**so that it does not hear the voice of charmers  
    or of the cunning enchanter.

**6**O God, break the teeth in their mouths;  
    tear out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord!  
**7**Let them vanish like water that runs away;  
    like grass let them be trodden down and wither.  
**8**Let them be like the snail that dissolves into slime;  
    like the untimely birth that never sees the sun.  
**9**Sooner than your pots can feel the heat of thorns,  
    whether green or ablaze, may he sweep them away!

**10**The righteous will rejoice when they see vengeance done;  
    they will bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked.  
**11**People will say, “Surely there is a reward for the righteous;  
    surely there is a God who judges on earth.”

1. **Psalm 59 Imprecatory Verses**

1Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;  
    protect me from those who rise up against me.  
2Deliver me from those who work evil;  
    from the bloodthirsty save me.

5You, Lord God of hosts, are God of Israel.  
Awake to punish all the nations;  
    spare none of those who treacherously plot evil. *Selah*

7 There they are, bellowing with their mouths,  
    with sharp words on their lips—  
    for “Who,” they think, “will hear us?”

8But you laugh at them, O Lord;  
    you hold all the nations in derision.  
9O my strength, I will watch for you;  
    for you, O God, are my fortress.  
10My God in his steadfast love will meet me;  
    my God will let me look in triumph on my enemies.

11Do not kill them, or my people may forget;  
    make them totter by your power, and bring them down,  
    O Lord, our shield.  
12For the sin of their mouths, the words of their lips,  
    let them be trapped in their pride.  
For the cursing and lies that they utter,  
13    consume them in wrath;  
    consume them until they are no more.  
Then it will be known to the ends of the earth  
    that God rules over Jacob. *Selah*

1. **Psalm 69 Imprecatory Verses**

**1**Save me, O God,  
    for the waters have come up to my neck.  
**2**I sink in deep mire,  
    where there is no foothold;  
I have come into deep waters,  
    and the flood sweeps over me.  
**3**I am weary with my crying;  
    my throat is parched.  
My eyes grow dim  
    with waiting for my God.

**4**More in number than the hairs of my head  
    are those who hate me without cause;  
many are those who would destroy me,  
    my enemies who accuse me falsely.  
What I did not steal  
    must I now restore?  
**5**O God, you know my folly;  
    the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.

**6**Do not let those who hope in you be put to shame because of me,  
    O Lord God of hosts;  
do not let those who seek you be dishonored because of me,  
    O God of Israel.  
**7**It is for your sake that I have borne reproach,  
    that shame has covered my face.  
**8**I have become a stranger to my kindred,  
    an alien to my mother’s children.

**9**It is zeal for your house that has consumed me;  
    the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.  
**10**When I humbled my soul with fasting,  
    they insulted me for doing so.  
**11**When I made sackcloth my clothing,  
    I became a byword to them.  
**12**I am the subject of gossip for those who sit in the gate,  
    and the drunkards make songs about me.

**13**But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord.  
    At an acceptable time, O God,  
    in the abundance of your steadfast love, answer me.  
With your faithful help **14**rescue me  
    from sinking in the mire;  
let me be delivered from my enemies  
    and from the deep waters.  
**15**Do not let the flood sweep over me,  
    or the deep swallow me up,  
    or the Pit close its mouth over me.

**16**Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good;  
    according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.  
**17**Do not hide your face from your servant,  
    for I am in distress—make haste to answer me.  
**18**Draw near to me, redeem me,  
    set me free because of my enemies.

**19**You know the insults I receive,  
    and my shame and dishonor;  
    my foes are all known to you.  
**20**Insults have broken my heart,  
    so that I am in despair.  
I looked for pity, but there was none;  
    and for comforters, but I found none.  
**21**They gave me poison for food,  
    and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

**22**Let their table be a trap for them,  
    a snare for their allies.  
**23**Let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,  
    and make their loins tremble continually.  
**24**Pour out your indignation upon them,  
    and let your burning anger overtake them.  
**25**May their camp be a desolation;  
    let no one live in their tents.  
**26**For they persecute those whom you have struck down,  
    and those whom you have wounded, they attack still more.  
**27**Add guilt to their guilt;  
    may they have no acquittal from you.  
**28**Let them be blotted out of the book of the living;  
    let them not be enrolled among the righteous.  
**29**But I am lowly and in pain;  
    let your salvation, O God, protect me.

**30**I will praise the name of God with a song;  
    I will magnify him with thanksgiving.  
**31**This will please the Lord more than an ox  
    or a bull with horns and hoofs.  
**32**Let the oppressed see it and be glad;  
    you who seek God, let your hearts revive.  
**33**For the Lord hears the needy,  
    and does not despise his own that are in bonds.

**34**Let heaven and earth praise him,  
    the seas and everything that moves in them.  
**35**For God will save Zion  
    and rebuild the cities of Judah;  
and his servants shall live there and possess it;  
**36**    the children of his servants shall inherit it,  
    and those who love his name shall live in it.

1. **Psalm 70 Imprecatory Verses**

2Let those be put to shame and confusion  
    who seek my life.  
Let those be turned back and brought to dishonor  
    who desire to hurt me.  
3Let those who say, “Aha, Aha!”  
    turn back because of their shame.

1. **Psalm 79 Imprecatory Verses**

**1**O God, the nations have come into your inheritance;  
    they have defiled your holy temple;  
    they have laid Jerusalem in ruins.  
**2**They have given the bodies of your servants  
    to the birds of the air for food,  
    the flesh of your faithful to the wild animals of the earth.  
**3**They have poured out their blood like water  
    all around Jerusalem,  
    and there was no one to bury them.  
**4**We have become a taunt to our neighbors,  
    mocked and derided by those around us.

**5**How long, O Lord? Will you be angry forever?  
    Will your jealous wrath burn like fire?  
**6**Pour out your anger on the nations  
    that do not know you,  
and on the kingdoms  
    that do not call on your name.  
**7**For they have devoured Jacob  
    and laid waste his habitation.

**8**Do not remember against us the iniquities of our ancestors;  
    let your compassion come speedily to meet us,  
    for we are brought very low.  
**9**Help us, O God of our salvation,  
    for the glory of your name;  
deliver us, and forgive our sins,  
    for your name’s sake.  
**10**Why should the nations say,  
    “Where is their God?”  
Let the avenging of the outpoured blood of your servants  
    be known among the nations before our eyes.

**11**Let the groans of the prisoners come before you;  
    according to your great power preserve those doomed to die.  
**12**Return sevenfold into the bosom of our neighbors  
    the taunts with which they taunted you, O Lord!  
**13**Then we your people, the flock of your pasture,  
    will give thanks to you forever;  
    from generation to generation we will recount your praise

1. **Psalm 83 Imprecatory Verses**

**1**O God, do not keep silence;  
    do not hold your peace or be still, O God!  
**2**Even now your enemies are in tumult;  
    those who hate you have raised their heads.  
**3**They lay crafty plans against your people;  
    they consult together against those you protect.  
**4**They say, “Come, let us wipe them out as a nation;  
    let the name of Israel be remembered no more.”  
**5**They conspire with one accord;  
    against you they make a covenant—  
**6**the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites,  
    Moab and the Hagrites,  
**7**Gebal and Ammon and Amalek,  
    Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;  
**8**Assyria also has joined them;  
    they are the strong arm of the children of Lot. *Selah*

**9**Do to them as you did to Midian,  
    as to Sisera and Jabin at the Wadi Kishon,  
**10**who were destroyed at En-dor,  
    who became dung for the ground.  
**11**Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb,  
    all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,  
**12**who said, “Let us take the pastures of God  
    for our own possession.”

**13**O my God, make them like whirling dust,  
    like chaff before the wind.  
**14**As fire consumes the forest,  
    as the flame sets the mountains ablaze,  
**15**so pursue them with your tempest  
    and terrify them with your hurricane.  
**16**Fill their faces with shame,  
    so that they may seek your name, O Lord.  
**17**Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever;  
    let them perish in disgrace.  
**18**Let them know that you alone,  
    whose name is the Lord,  
    are the Most High over all the earth.

1. **Psalm 94 Imprecatory Verses**

1 O Lord, you God of vengeance,  
    you God of vengeance, shine forth!  
**2**Rise up, O judge of the earth;  
    give to the proud what they deserve!  
**3**O Lord, how long shall the wicked,  
    how long shall the wicked exult?

**4**They pour out their arrogant words;  
    all the evildoers boast.  
**5**They crush your people, O Lord,  
    and afflict your heritage.  
**6**They kill the widow and the stranger,  
    they murder the orphan,  
**7**and they say, “The Lord does not see;  
    the God of Jacob does not perceive.”

**21**They band together against the life of the righteous,  
    and condemn the innocent to death.  
**22**But the Lord has become my stronghold,  
    and my God the rock of my refuge.  
**23**He will repay them for their iniquity  
    and wipe them out for their wickedness;  
    the Lord our God will wipe them out.

1. **Psalm 109 Imprecatory Verses**

**1**Do not be silent, O God of my praise.  
**2**For wicked and deceitful mouths are opened against me,  
    speaking against me with lying tongues.  
**3**They beset me with words of hate,  
    and attack me without cause.  
**4**In return for my love they accuse me,  
    even while I make prayer for them.  
**5**So they reward me evil for good,  
    and hatred for my love.

**6**They say, “Appoint a wicked man against him;  
    let an accuser stand on his right.  
**7**When he is tried, let him be found guilty;  
    let his prayer be counted as sin.  
**8**May his days be few;  
    may another seize his position.  
**9**May his children be orphans,  
    and his wife a widow.  
**10**May his children wander about and beg;  
    may they be driven out of the ruins they inhabit.  
**11**May the creditor seize all that he has;  
    may strangers plunder the fruits of his toil.  
**12**May there be no one to do him a kindness,  
    nor anyone to pity his orphaned children.  
**13**May his posterity be cut off;  
    may his name be blotted out in the second generation.  
**14**May the iniquity of his father be remembered before the Lord,  
    and do not let the sin of his mother be blotted out.  
**15**Let them be before the Lord continually,  
    and may his memory be cut off from the earth.  
**16**For he did not remember to show kindness,  
    but pursued the poor and needy  
    and the brokenhearted to their death.  
**17**He loved to curse; let curses come on him.  
    He did not like blessing; may it be far from him.  
**18**He clothed himself with cursing as his coat,  
    may it soak into his body like water,  
    like oil into his bones.  
**19**May it be like a garment that he wraps around himself,  
    like a belt that he wears every day.”

**20**May that be the reward of my accusers from the Lord,  
    of those who speak evil against my life.  
**21**But you, O Lord my Lord,  
    act on my behalf for your name’s sake;  
    because your steadfast love is good, deliver me.  
**22**For I am poor and needy,  
    and my heart is pierced within me.  
**23**I am gone like a shadow at evening;  
    I am shaken off like a locust.  
**24**My knees are weak through fasting;  
    my body has become gaunt.  
**25**I am an object of scorn to my accusers;  
    when they see me, they shake their heads.

**26**Help me, O Lord my God!  
    Save me according to your steadfast love.  
**27**Let them know that this is your hand;  
    you, O Lord, have done it.  
**28**Let them curse, but you will bless.  
    Let my assailants be put to shame; may your servant be glad.  
**29**May my accusers be clothed with dishonor;  
    may they be wrapped in their own shame as in a mantle.  
**30**With my mouth I will give great thanks to the Lord;  
    I will praise him in the midst of the throng.  
**31**For he stands at the right hand of the needy,  
    to save them from those who would condemn them to death.

1. **Psalm 129 Imprecatory Verses**

**4**The Lord is righteous;  
    he has cut the cords of the wicked.  
**5**May all who hate Zion  
    be put to shame and turned backward.  
**6**Let them be like the grass on the housetops  
    that withers before it grows up,  
**7**with which reapers do not fill their hands  
    or binders of sheaves their arms,

1. **Psalm 137 Imprecatory Verses**

**7**Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites  
    the day of Jerusalem’s fall,  
how they said, “Tear it down! Tear it down!  
    Down to its foundations!”  
**8**O daughter Babylon, you devastator!  
    Happy shall they be who pay you back  
    what you have done to us!  
**9**Happy shall they be who take your little ones  
    and dash them against the rock!

1. **Psalm 139 Imprecatory Verses**

19 O that you would kill the wicked, O God,  
    and that the bloodthirsty would depart from me—  
**20**those who speak of you maliciously,  
    and lift themselves up against you for evil!  
**21**Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord?  
    And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?  
**22**I hate them with perfect hatred;  
    I count them my enemies.  
**23**Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
    test me and know my thoughts.\*  
**24**See if there is any wickedway in me,  
    and lead me in the way everlasting.

\*Note that Psalm 139:23 is often quoted, but seldom understood with the context of the Psalm itself! The Psalmist is saying that God should search him to see how thoroughly he hates the wicked and their sins.

1. **Psalm 140 Imprecatory Verses**

**9**Those who surround me lift up their heads;  
    let the mischief of their lips overwhelm them!  
**10**Let burning coals fall on them!  
    Let them be flung into pits, no more to rise!  
**11**Do not let the slanderer be established in the land;  
    let evil speedily hunt down the violent!

1. **Psalm 143 Imprecatory Verses**

**9**Save me, O Lord, from my enemies;  
    I have fled to you for refuge.  
**10**Teach me to do your will,  
    for you are my God.  
Let your good spirit lead me  
    on a level path.

**11**For your name’s sake, O Lord, preserve my life.  
    In your righteousness bring me out of trouble.  
**12**In your steadfast love cut off my enemies,  
    and destroy all my adversaries,  
    for I am your servant.