

Bible Study on Psalms

Imprecatory Psalms – Judge between Me and Them

Some psalms include vivid curses which ask God to punish our enemies, as He protects and defends us from evil. In light of Jesus' teaching to love our enemies, these prayers may seem improper and un-Christian. However, in each one the psalmist cries out for God to take revenge. The imprecatory psalms put the psalmist squarely on the side of God who hates injustice and who does indeed rescue His abused children. While we leave vengeance to the Lord, and while we yearn for the ungodly to turn from sin to the Savior, we still hate wickedness and evil. Ultimately, Satan instigates all injustice, and the imprecatory psalms find their true target as we pray them against the kingdom of darkness. (LL)

A few psalms that fit into this category are Psalms 35, 58, 69, and 137.

Psalm 35

Read Psalm 35 and work through these questions.

1. We don't know the specific situation for which David wrote this psalm. What attacks does he mention as the reason for his call for help?
2. Compare Psalm 35:19 with John 15:23-25. What kinds of attacks did both David and Jesus suffer?
3. What did David and Jesus each ask God to do as a result of this? (Psalm. 35:13, 14, 23, and Luke 23:24)
4. Psalm 35 may be divided into three sections, the first ending at verses 9-10, the second at verse 18, the third at verses 27-28. Each ending is an expression of hope. Which of the three comforts you most as you consider the injustice in the world and/or in your life?

Psalm 58

Read Psalm 58 and work through these questions.

1. Who suffers most when government officials are evil? (See Isaiah 10:1-2)
2. In verses 6-9, the psalmist uses strong images to appeal to God. What points do these images make concerning wicked rulers and their fate?
3. Can Christians rightfully experience the joy expressed in verses 10-11? See Rev. 19:1-2

Psalm 69

Read Psalm 69 and work through these questions.

1. Psalm 69 is one of the psalms most frequently quoted in the New Testament. The sufferings expressed by David foreshadow the sufferings experienced by Jesus. As you read through the psalm, write down the events foreshadowed by David and fulfilled in Jesus. See:
 - a. Matthew 27:29-31...
 - b. John 2:17...
 - c. John 7:5...
 - d. John 15:25...
 - e. John 19:28-30...
2. Psalm 69 was written about 10 centuries before Jesus' birth. What does this say to you about God's plan to send a Savior?
3. How is David's concern in verses 5-6 still important for God's people today?
4. We, too, were born enemies of God. The curses of this psalm could rightly belong to us. Why don't they? See Romans 5:6-10

Psalm 137

Read Psalm 137 and work through these questions.

1. Years of captivity in Babylon and the sorrows of this exile provide the background for Psalm 137. The psalmist expressing longing for Zion (Jerusalem). How does the psalmist express this longing?
 - a. Verse 1...
 - b. Verse 2...
2. Verses 3 and 4 tell how the Babylonians mocked God's people and their songs. Unable to travel to Jerusalem for their festivals, the Jews had no desire to sing. If you were kept from worship today as the Jews were in Babylon, what joys would you miss?
3. God would judge all the enemies of his people eventually. Read Revelation 18:4-8. As you think about these verses, as well as about the psalms you studied this week, what comfort do you have in knowing God as both Savior and Judge?

After reading and rereading a psalm, ask yourself these questions. What words or phrases stick out to you? How do these words or phrases reveal the poet's purpose for the psalm? What effect does this psalm have on you as you meditate on it?