

## Psalm 5

For the Director with the flutes—a Psalm of David

1 My words hear, O LORD; give heed to my sighing.

2 Listen to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, because to you I pray.

3 O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;  
in the morning I plead (put in order) my case to you, and I watch.

4 For not are You a God who desires wickedness;

You –not will dwell with you evil.

5 Not will remain standing the boastful in front of your eyes;

you hate

all workers of evil.

6 You destroy speakers of lies;  
the bloodthirsty and deceitful  
The LORD abhors

7 But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house,  
I will bow down toward the temple of your holiness in awe of you.

8 Lord, lead me in your righteousness

because of my enemies; make straight before my face your way.

9 For there is not in his mouth something that can be trusted;

their hearts are destruction;  
an open grave is their throat;  
their tongues speak deceit.

10 Declare them guilty, O God; let them fall by their own counsels/plans;

In the abundance of their transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you.

11 But let rejoice all who take refuge in you; for everlasting may they sing for joy.

And you shall spread your protection over them, so that they may exult in you who love your name.

12 Because You bless the righteous, LORD; as with a shield with good favor You surround him.

- 1 My words hear, O LORD; give heed to my sighing/groaning.  
 2 Listen to the sound of my cry/plea, my King and my God, because to you I pray.  
 3 O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;  
     in the morning I plead (put in order) my case to you, and I watch.

Notes:

- ❑ The word for ‘sighing’ is a very emotive word

“The lament is an expression of a great need felt by the psalmist. **He expresses himself with audible sounds, whether they be words or groans.** In his state of mind he does not think about the formalities of prayer, because he knows that the Lord hears both the inner thoughts (in the form of a "sighing" for the moment of redemption) and the audible prayers. The "words" and the "sighings" (groanings) reveal his need and come to the Lord's ear as a "cry for help." The "sighing" is a nonverbal expression of need (cf. Ps 39:3; Rom 8:26). The word "sighing" (*hagig*) is related to the root *h-g-g* ("long for," "burn," elsewhere only in 39:3 “fire/musing”). **The cry of dependence and need comes from an oppressed person to someone who is in the position to redeem and deliver.** It presupposes that an injustice has been done. [EBCOT]

- ❑ King (melek) and God (elohim) words are used for governance appeals, but made personal by the pronoun ‘my’

“The psalmist asks for God to hear both his spoken “words” and also his “murmuring,” namely the inarticulate attempts to vocalize his situation, or the silent words spoken within his heart. In prayer, he approaches with a certain confidence, for he addresses the Lord as my King and my God; God, who is creator and ultimate Lord of all being, is also one who can be approached in personal terms and addressed as one known and loved. [WBC]

- ❑ “Plead” is often used in a legal case/argument

- 4 For not are You a God who desires wickedness;  
     You –not will dwell (as guest) with you evil.  
     5 Not will remain standing the boastful in front of your eyes;

you hate (A)  
     all workers of evil. (B)  
     6 You destroy speakers of lies; (C)  
     the bloodthirsty and deceitful (B’)  
 The LORD abhors. (A’)

Notes:

❑ Verses 4-5a are connected by emphatic “not” and 5b-6 is a chiasmic [stair-step] structure.

❑ God is ‘elohim’ so this is a throne-room/palace scene (no ‘dwelling’, no ‘remain standing’)

“Because God takes no pleasure in wickedness, evil (or evil persons) may not be his guest or stand in his presence, as the psalmist is doing (vv 2–4, 8–9). God is not merely a God of power with whom powerful (but evil) persons might hope to stand as guests and companions; God’s nature as good and righteous specifies the character required of human beings who desire to “sojourn” (or be as guests) with him. [WBC]

“The psalmist expressed his confidence in approaching a God who hates iniquity (evil). An evil person cannot dwell with such a God. People who are presumptuous and boastful, who do not shrink from murder or deceit, God hates and will destroy. They are totally detestable to Him. [BKC]

❑ Moral outrage is a responsibility of the righteous—especially righteous rulers!

“The evil persons specified here are of various kinds. They include “boasters” (either persons arrogant and confident in their own strength, or worshipers of another god; see v 6, note a), “workers of iniquity” (the most common expression in the Psalms for wicked persons) and those who speak “falsehood” (v 7). “Bloodthirsty ... men” may either be murderers, or more likely unscrupulous persons whose falsehood and deceitfulness create trouble for the weak and innocent, and could in certain cases result in the death of the innocent (e.g. through false testimony in court). But all evil persons are not only cut off from God’s presence (v 5), but are also hated (v 6) and loathed (v 7); their ultimate destiny is destruction (v 7), for life lived in direct contradiction to God is doomed from the beginning. [WBC]

“God hates both the sin and those who sin against him (v. 5). The **particular sins are examples of a way of life**. The liar is only a hairbreadth away from the murderer (v. 6). Though the liar may claim that he only goes so far with his deception, when he is caught, the liar is a dangerous man, because he may attempt to cover his tracks. **Deception and greed** mark the man who is unfaithful to God and man; he is a potential candidate for **murder**. The **"bloodthirsty"** man is, therefore, **not necessarily one who is guilty of murder, but one who no longer knows the limits between "mine" and "thine" and thus twists and perverts justice, even at the cost of human lives or dignity** (cf. Isa 3:13-15; 5:8-10; Amos 6:12). Instead of "taking pleasure" in evil, the Lord "abhors" all who practice wickedness. [EBCOT]

❑ The judgments of God here deal with earthly matters:

“Yahweh’s judgment on sinners is described in four different ways: (1) they may not stand, or “cannot remain,” in his presence (literally “cannot stand before your eyes”). Care should be taken in translating this expression, so as not to give the impression that the psalmist is talking about not going to heaven. The expression fits well with the idea of God as king (verse 2), who does not allow criminals and lawbreakers to come into his presence. So the translation can be “You do not allow proud people to come into your presence.” [UBS Bible Translator’s Handbook]

7 But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house,  
I will bow down toward the temple of your holiness in awe of you.

Notes:

- ❑ The opposite of ‘expulsion because of unrighteousness’ is NOT ‘acceptance because of righteousness’!

“In contrast with such wickedness David did not extol his own virtues. Rather he stressed God’s mercy (*hesed*, “loyal love”) toward him. By this he could approach the tabernacle to worship the Lord in reverence. The Hebrew word for bow down (often trans. “worshiped,” e.g., Ex. 34:8) signifies prostrating oneself, a posture that represents the proper inner attitude toward God in worship. The wicked are arrogant; a worshiper is humble before God. [BKC]

“The hope of fellowship with God is based, not on his righteousness, but on God's sovereign "love" (*hesed*; "love" or "unfailing love"). The entrance into the house of God was not limited to the godly, because the priests could not distinguish between the godly in heart and the godly in appearance. It is to this end that the people were reminded of the conditions for entrance into God's presence and fellowship in Psalms 15 and 24. For the psalmist the hope of entering into the temple is much more than the physical walking into the courts of the temple. The psalmist seeks the affirmation of God's love for him in an evil world and, hence, the assurance of God's presence with him. [EBCOT]

“Though evil persons are excluded from God’s presence because of their sin, it does not follow that the psalmist is admitted by virtue of his own goodness. The psalmist’s entrance into God’s house would be based only upon “the abundance of your lovingkindness” (v 8); that is to say, it was only God’s grace and covenant love (*hesed*) toward his people which made entrance into his presence possible. But those who knew and understood this love of God sought not only to turn from evil, but also sought forgiveness for the evil they had done. [WBC]

- ❑ Another chiastic structure: (your love)  
(enter house)  
(bow down toward temple)  
(your fear)

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

Notes:

- ❑ “enemies”—those who ‘lie in wait’
- ❑ The path must be created by YHWH to avoid the enemies seizing on simple missteps, and to avoid the normal perils of travels (“*on a straight path in which they will not stumble*” Jer 31.9)

9 For there is not in his mouth something that can be trusted;  
their hearts are destruction;  
an open grave is their throat;  
their tongues speak deceit.

Notes:

- ☐ The main weapon against the psalmist is speech/slander/conspiracy

*“word from their mouth. The most frequent weapon used against the psalmists is the tongue* (for a striking example see Ps 12; see also note on 10:7). The psalmists experienced that the tongue is as deadly as the sword (see 57:4; 64:3-4). Perhaps appeals to God against those who maliciously wield the tongue are frequent in the Psalms because only in God's courtroom can a person experience redress for such attacks. .... For the plots and intrigues of enemies, **usually involving lies to discredit** the king and bring him down, see Ps 17; 25; 27-28; 31; 35; 41; 52; 54-57; 59; 63-64; 71; 86; 109; 140-141--all ascribed to David. **Frequently such attacks came when the king was "low" and seemingly abandoned by God** (as in Ps 25; 35; 41; 71; 86; 109). **In that case he was viewed as no longer fit to be king--God was no longer with him** (and so he could no longer secure the safety of the nation; see 1Sa 8:20; 11:12; 12:12; 25:28; 2Sa 3:18; 7:9-11). In any event, he was an easy prey (see 3:2; 22:7-8; 71:11). [NIV Study Bible Notes]

“He then cataloged their sins. They were untrustworthy in their words, deceitful in their flattery. They planned destruction. What they said (their throat is substituted by metonymy for “their words”) brought death (is an open grave). Apparently their speech was flattering on the surface but vile in its intent (they speak deceit; cf. v. 6). [BKC]

“The wicked are further described as instruments of destruction and death (v.9). By their reign of terror, they are opposed to the God of life and truth. The heart of the wicked is full of "destruction," as they plot to destroy God's established order (cf. chs. 17; 25; 27-28; 31; 35; 41; 52; 54-57; 59; 63-64; 71; 86; 109; 140-41). Their mouths, filled with lies and deceit, are likened to "an open grave," because of their deadly words (cf. Jer 5:16). They speak words that rob people of their desire to live. With their "slippery" tongues they sow discord, hatred, and death (v.9; cf. Ps 12).” [EBCOT]

- ☐ This passage is quoted in Romans 3:13 as evidence of the guilt before God of the Jew

10 Declare them guilty, O God; let them fall by their own counsels/plans;  
In the abundance of their transgressions cast them out,  
for they have rebelled against you.

Notes:

- ❑ His appeal is to God's stated character (as outlined in the first half of the psalm)

“Second, the psalmist prays that the **Lord's righteousness will triumph by holding the wicked culpable for their acts and, once culpable, that he will remove them from the covenant community. The wicked cannot continue to live as if their way is blessed or condoned by the Lord.** The seeds sown in unrighteousness and unfaithfulness must **bear their fruits** by bringing "calamities" on the wicked. **God's justice must cause the schemes of the wicked to backfire on themselves** [EBCOT]

- ❑ The requested judgment is just for ‘reaping what you sow’

“*You shall do to him as he intended to do to his brother*” (Deut 19:19).

“He does not ask for thunderbolts from heaven; **he asks only that their evil might reverberate upon themselves**, that they might be tripped up in their own devious schemes, and thus become their own victims. [WBC]

- ❑ The issue of “imprecatory psalms” [see handout]

“**Verse 10.** Is such a request as this proper? Like most of the imprecations **it asks God to do what he has asserted he will in any case do—expose and punish sin and sinners (10a, c); do to false accusers what they would have done to the object of their spite (10b; cf. Dt. 19:16–19)**; leaves action to God, not proposing to take personal vengeance (Pr. 20:22; Rom. 12:19); and is motivated by the hurt done to God (10d), not personal animosity. [New Bible Commentary]

“The presence of so-called "**imprecations**" (curses) in the Psalms has occasioned endless discussion and has caused many Christians to wince, in view of Jesus' instructions to turn the other cheek and to pray for one's enemies (see Mt 5:39, 44), and his own example on the cross (see Lk 23:34).

**Actually, these "imprecations" are not that at all; rather, they are appeals to God to redress wrongs perpetrated against the psalmists by imposing penalties commensurate with the violence done (see 28:4)--in accordance also with normal judicial procedure in human courts (see Dt 25:1-3).** The psalmists knew that he who has been wronged is not to right that wrong by his own hand **but is to leave redress to the Lord, who says, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay"** (Dt 32:35; see Pr 20:22; Ro 12:19). Therefore they appeal their cases to the divine Judge (see Jer 15:15). [NIV Study Bible Notes]

11 But let rejoice all who take refuge in you; for everlasting may they sing for joy.  
And you shall spread your protection over them,  
so that they may exult in you who love your name.  
12 Because You bless the righteous, LORD;  
as with a shield with good favor You surround him.

Notes:

- The rejoicing is not at the fall of the wicked, but at God's protection

“The ground for rejoicing is not the impending destruction of the wicked persons (v 11), but rather the spontaneous result which is experienced by all those “who take refuge” in God, and are delivered from anxiety about “those lying in watch” (v 9) [WBC]

- Images of protection:

“The psalmist prays that God will “set a screen” over (v 12; or, “overshadow, cover,” *סָכַף*) his people, evoking perhaps the imagery of God's protection being like that of a bird covering its chicks protectively with its wings (cf. Ps 91:4). In v 13, the metaphor is expanded into the simile of the large body-shield which protects the entire body from the assaults of enemies. Both the metaphor of v 12 and the simile of v 13 develop the initial statement concerning those who “take refuge” (v 12a) in God [WBC]

- Singing as a form of rejoicing

“The psalm closes with a note of encouragement (be glad . . . sing for joy . . . rejoice) that God blesses and protects those who love Him. Singing is a natural way to praise the Lord; this is the first of more than 70 references to singing in the Psalms. The righteous are those who love His name. The Lord's “name” (mentioned more than 100 times in the Pss.) refers to His character and attributes revealed to mankind. Here the manifestation of His name means protection and favor as with a shield (cf. 3:3). [BKC]

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“Psalm 5 offers not only a prayer that may be used in the worship of God, but also a mirror of mankind without God. And it is important to note that the principal characteristic of evildoers in this psalm is to be found in their speech: they are “boasters,” they speak “falsehood,” “there is no truth in their mouth,” “their throat is an open grave,” and “they speak flattery.” Ancient Israel was not a primitive society where the only ills were acts, but—like our own society—it was an age in which the more sophisticated sins of speech abounded. And the sins of speech were not only an affront to God, but also caused pain in the lives of fellow human beings. Thus, from a NT perspective, it is difficult to limit this psalm as a prayer for protection; it must also be perceived as a prayer of self-examination and a request for forgiveness and deliverance.. [WBC]

### **Observations:**

- Moral outrage is OK—moral “superiority” is not!
- In the NT, the main enemy is *us* (our ‘old nature’).
- Prayer: sometimes “groaning” and sometimes presenting a legal case...
- Protection is not invincibility – stay behind the shield!
- Weapon: words of deceit – the whispers of our sin nature...



# The Imprecatory Psalms

## Introduction

“The imprecatory prayers and prayers for vengeance in the OT are often discussed in terms of the **apparent antithesis that exists between them and the NT commands to love rather than curse one’s enemies** (Matt 5:39, 44; Luke 23:34; Rom 12:14; 1 Cor 4:12; 1 Thess 5:15); this theological problem is particularly **striking when the curses of the NT are brought into the picture** (Matt 21:18–21; 25:41; Acts 8:20; 13:10–11; Gal 1:8–9; 1 Cor 16:22; Rev 6:10; 22:18–19).”

## Principles: Lead with Blessing

*Give heed to me, O Lord, and listen to what my adversaries say! 20 **Is evil a recompense for good? Yet they have dug a pit for my life. Remember how I stood before you to speak good for them, to turn away your wrath from them. 21 Therefore give their children over to famine; hurl them out to the power of the sword, let their wives become childless and widowed. May their men meet death by pestilence, their youths be slain by the sword in battle. 22 May a cry be heard from their houses, when you bring the marauder suddenly upon them! For they have dug a pit to catch me, and laid snares for my feet. 23 Yet you, O Lord, know all their plotting to kill me. Do not forgive their iniquity, do not blot out their sin from your sight. Let them be tripped up before you; deal with them while you are angry** [NRSV, Jer 18.9ff]*

“The confession itself is almost entirely a prayer for judgment on his enemies. The good which he has done them (20) is to have told the truth and **prayed for them**. The central part of the prayer (21–22) might be read as **Jeremiah’s resignation: this is what they have chosen; now it must come, awful though it be**. If the motive in v 23 is blameworthy, the sentiment is still in line with God’s declared purpose and with the prohibition of the prophet’s prayer for the people. [NBC]

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“In fact, in some of these very psalms where he prays for God to vindicate his own honor and name, **David protests that he has kind thoughts toward these same evildoers**. Thus in Psalm 35:12–14 David mourns, “They repay me evil for good and leave my soul forlorn. **Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting**. When my prayers returned to me unanswered, I went about mourning as though for my friend or brother. I bowed my head in grief as though weeping for my mother.” [HSOB]

## Principles: Be willing to ‘imprecate’ yourself—this is about evil, not favoritism!

*3 O Lord my God, if I have done this, if there is wrong in my hands, 4 if I have repaid my ally with harm or plundered my foe without cause, 5 then let the enemy pursue and overtake me, trample my life to the ground, and lay my soul in the dust. [NRSV, Ps 7.3]*

“So **David invoked death by his enemy’s hand** if he were guilty as they charged [BKC]

“If **he** had done such things, the psalmist swears, **then let certain terrible things happen to him** (v 6); the words are addressed to God and in effect cancel the earlier prayer for deliverance, only if the psalmist is indeed guilty of the charges against him. The first penalty which the psalmist invites, in the case of his guilt, is the very thing that he feared and that prompted his prayer in the first instance, namely that he be both pursued and overtaken. The consequence of being overtaken is spelled out in v 6b–c; in effect, it is death. For his “life” to be trampled onto the earth and his “glory” to be set down in the dust, implies not only the destruction of his body, but indicates poetically the departure for Sheol, or the nether-world. The psalmist’s glory was not merely his personal honor, but his capacity to praise and worship God; if he were guilty, that capacity would go, along with life itself. . . The solemn oath sworn by the psalmist, and the accusations laid against him, invite arbitration and a judgment concerning innocence and guilt, so that now the psalmist’s prayer turns to a petition for the establishment of a court of judgment (vv 7–11). [WBC]

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**Principles: Most of the time it is about a *legitimate means (judgment) to a legitimate relief!***

*“Lord, you know how I suffer. Take thought of me and care for me. Pay back for me those who have been persecuting me. **Don’t be so patient with them that you let them kill me.** Be mindful of how I have put up with their insults for your sake.* [NET bible, Jer 15.15]

“God had promised ultimately to deliver and vindicate Jeremiah (v. 11); but in light of the coming calamity (vv. 12-14) Jeremiah **asked for a speedy settling of accounts.** He wanted God to avenge him on his persecutors. Though God was long-suffering, Jeremiah hoped for swift justice; **he wanted to be vindicated before God would take him away in death.** [BKC]

“The second of this pair of laments begins with a cry for revenge on the enemies (so Rudolph, McKane). The cry for revenge begins with a familiar phrase from a protestation of innocence, “O Lord, thou knowest” (cf. 12:3). The enigmatic third colon, “In your forbearance do not take me away,” probably means **“Do not be so patient with my enemies, that they have time to destroy me”** (so Bright). [WBC]

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20 *“See, O LORD, how distressed I am! I am in torment within, and in my heart I am disturbed, for I have been most rebellious. Outside, the sword bereaves; inside, there is only death. 21 “People have heard my groaning, but there is no one to comfort me. All my enemies have heard of my distress; **they rejoice at what you have done. May you bring the day you have announced so they may become like me.** 22 “Let all their wickedness come before you; **deal with them as you have dealt with me because of all my sins.** My groans are many and my heart is faint [NIV, Lam 1.20ff]*

“The last verses admit that the Lord was right in his judgment (18), yet turn quickly to an appeal to him because the city’s wretchedness was so severe (20). There was disillusionment too with the falseness of other nations as friends and a source of help (19). There is terrible recognition of the truth of sin and punishment here and of the reality of the power of God alone. Again, there was no-one to comfort. Only God, and no mere ally, could do this—and it was not yet time for him to do so. The poem ends with a plea **that Judah should not endure God’s wrath alone, but that her enemies too should be brought to account in the day of his wrath** (21; cf. v 12).” [New Bible Commentary]

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**Principles: Also, sometimes it is for demonstrating to the world that “crime doesn’t pay”.**

*Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name; And deliver us, and forgive our sins, for Thy name’s sake. 10 **Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?” Let there be known among the nations in our sight, Vengeance for the blood of Thy servants, which has been shed.** 11 Let the groaning of the prisoner come before Thee; According to the greatness of Thy power preserve those who are doomed to die. 12 **And return to our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom the reproach with which they have reproached Thee, O Lord.** 13 So we Thy people and the sheep of Thy pasture will **give thanks to Thee forever; To all generations we will tell of Thy praise.** [NAS, Ps 79.9]*

“5–7 must **not** be understood to reflect a perplexed or resentful spirit complaining of unfairness. In all the adversities of life, whether occasioned by divine wrath or part of the inexplicable but sovereign workings of his providence, our first reaction must be to bow in acceptance, as 5 implies. But may we not also pray for the **overthrow of those who savagely use us for their own profit and leave our treasured possessions in ruin** (7)? Part of the positive side of ‘leaving vengeance to the Lord’ (Pr. 20:22; Rom. 12:19) is the prayer that seeks the **overthrow of every power that continues to mistreat the Lord’s people.** [NBC]

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... In the OT, imprecatory prayers typically arise in situations in **which the wicked appear to prosper while the righteous are victimized; in this apparent discrepancy between injustice and justice, the honor, majesty, and truth of God are in question,** so that “the imprecatory prayer is a call for the breakthrough of God’s kingdom in liberation and vengeance. [WBC, Rev 6]

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**Principles: This ‘reap what you sow’ is also expressed in the Abrahamic Covenant, as God’s job.**

*Hear, O our God, how we are despised! **Return their reproach on their own heads** and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity. **Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before Thee, for they have demoralized the builders.** [NAS, Neh 4.4]*

“Like some of the imprecatory prayers in which the psalmists invoked God’s condemnation on His enemies, Nehemiah’s prayer in this instance was severe and condemning. He prayed that Sanballat and his cohorts would be taken captive and that they would be judged for their sins...How should a Christian interpret this kind of praying, especially in view of what Jesus Christ said about praying for one’s enemies? (Matt. 5:44; cf. Rom. 12:14, 20) Several facts need to be noted. First, in opposing the Jews, Sanballat ”and company“ were actually opposing God. Second, **God had already pronounced judgment on Israel’s enemies. Nehemiah was praying according to God’s will**—that God would deliver Jerusalem from her enemies (Josh. 1:5). Third, Nehemiah was praying **that God would bring about what He had promised Abraham regarding those who curse His people** (Gen. 12:3). Fourth, vengeance belongs to God, not to Nehemiah or other believers (cf. Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19. [BKC]

“The language and sentiment are somewhat stereotyped, but it is noteworthy nonetheless **that a man of action such as Nehemiah should reply to such an incitement by resorting to prayer**—“Hear, O our God!”—**rather than to direct action**. By characterizing himself and his fellows as “an object of contempt” (הזוּב), he is not only recalling the initial motivation for his mission (cf. 1:3), but is also using a word that is calculated to secure divine response: “he who carries out a bazah against one chosen by Yahweh is himself condemned to insignificance” (M. Görg, TDOT 2, 63). Since God cannot be despised with impunity (the word is often used for offense against his express will), neither, by extension, can his representatives. His honor is at stake in the present confrontation... This thought is then made explicit in the remainder of the verse: **let them suffer what they prescribe for others!** And more—may they in fact endure the penalty from which the Jews have only so recently found relief. The whole prayer is reminiscent of such Psalms as 44, 74, and 79, and in particular of the situation which Hezekiah faced when threatened by Sennacherib; cf. his prayer in 2 Kgs 19:14–19. 37 (5) Nehemiah now makes his own the imprecatory prayer of Jer 18:23. [WBC]

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“The psalmists and others who utter prayers for vengeance are not cursing others **but pray that God will act justly**.... [WBC, Rev 6]

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**The Purposes of the Imprecations**

An awareness of the ethical and revelational purposes of the imprecatory judgments will enable one to understand better the imprecatory psalms. Six purposes are evident.

1. One major purpose of the judgments against evildoers is to establish the righteous. As God judges the wicked, He is also invoked to establish the righteous (Ps 7:8–9). A concern for righteousness and the righteous is foundational to the imprecation found in Psalm 7:6–11.
2. A second purpose of the imprecatory judgments is that God may be praised when the psalmist is delivered (Pss 7:17 ; 35:18, 28 ). Closely related to this is the anticipation of rejoicing when the psalmist sees the vindication taking place (58:10 ).
3. A third purpose in requesting judgment against the wicked is that men will see the reward of the righteous and recognize that it is God who judges the earth (58:11 ). Both the righteous and the wicked will know that God is concerned with justice and that He executes judgment on the earth.
4. The imprecatory judgments are also designed to demonstrate to everyone that God is sovereign. David prayed that his enemies would be destroyed so that men from the ends of the earth may know that God rules in Jacob (59:13 ).

5. A fifth purpose of the imprecatory judgments is to prevent the wicked from enjoying the same blessings as the righteous. David prays that those who persist in wickedness may be blotted out of the book of life (the register of the living), that is, may be judged by physical death (69:28 ).

6. A sixth purpose of the imprecatory judgments is to cause the wicked to seek the Lord. Asaph prays that God would judge and humiliate His enemies so that they would seek His name and acknowledge Him as the sovereign God (83:16–18 ).

These purposes of the imprecations give a divine perspective to the seemingly human cries for judgment. It would appear that the high ethical and revelational purposes of the imprecatory psalms clear them of the charge of being sourced in the bitter spirit of a bloodthirsty, carnal man. [BibSac—V138 #549—Jan 81—35 // “A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms” — J. Carl Laney]