

Listen and Obey: The Application of Scripture to Everyday Life

Justice on the wicked (Imprecatory Psalms)

Examples of imprecation.

- Morning prayer of Moses. (Num 10:35)
- Song of Deborah and Barak. (Judges 5:31)
- Jeremiah. (Jer 11:20; 15:15; 17:18; 18:21–23; 20:12)
- The Martyred Tribulation Saints. (Revelation 6:9–10)
- Quotes in the New Testament. (Psalm 69:25; 109:8)

List of imprecatory psalms: Psalm 7, 35, 58, 59, 69, 83, 109, 137, 139.

Imprecation defined

“An ‘imprecation’ in an invocation of judgment, calamity, or curse uttered against one’s enemies, or the enemies of God.”*

Purposes of imprecations in Psalms.[†]

1. To establish the righteous. (7:8–9)
2. God may be praised when the Psalmist is delivered. (7:17; 35:18, 28)
3. Men will see the reward of the righteous and recognize it is God who judges the earth. (58:11)
4. Demonstrate God is sovereign. (59:13)
5. Prevent the wicked from enjoying the same blessings as the righteous. (69:28)
6. To cause the wicked to seek the Lord. (83:16–18)

Basis for imprecation.

Genesis 12:1–3[‡]

1 Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you.

2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Teaching:

- _____ on those who _____ Abraham’s posterity
- _____ on those who _____ them.

Abraham’s covenant was _____ and still in effect.

How should we apply?

“In light of the fact that the Abrahamic covenant reflects God’s promise to Abraham and his descendants, **it would be inappropriate for a church-age believer to call down God’s judgment on the wicked.** [emphasis mine]”[§]

The Christian Response:

Romans 12:14, 19, 21

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Matthew 5:44–45

⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Acts 7:60

Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

2 Timothy 4:14

Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works.

1 Peter 2:21–23; 3:9

²¹ For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

²² “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”; ²³ who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;

⁹ not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

* Carl J. Laney, “A Fresh Look at Imprecatory Psalms,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 138:549 (Jan, 1981), 36.

† *Ibid.* 41.

‡ All quotes from NKJV.

§ Laney, 43–44.