

Imprecatory Psalms: Praying Judgment On Our Enemies?

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Question: "I've been wrestling with the question since last night, I'm still wrestling with it, I hope I can ask it reasonably briefly. In trying to follow the example of godly people in the Scriptures, my question concerns what and how we are to pray. I've always wrestled with the imprecatory Psalms, but I don't just want to leave it in the Old Testament. I want to go to the New Testament there as well. We have a godly man, a godly psalmist, praying judgement upon the enemies of God in the Old Testament. And in the New Testament, as you talked about, we have perfect love in Heaven and John has a vision in Revelation 6 of the martyrs praying to God: "When are you going to avenge our blood?" Is it a violation of the Law of Christ, or are we doing something wrong? Yes, we are to pray for our enemies, we are to pray for their salvation. But at the same time, if they will not be saved, are we okay if we pray for judgement to fall upon the enemies of God at the same time?"

Charles: Okay, does everybody understand the question?

It relates to the revelation that we have in Scripture concerning praying for God to send judgement in certain situations. And the question is if that's a violation of the Law of Love, and the answer is no. It's absolutely not. And it is right. I think when we look at those imprecatory Psalms, we need to realize that those were not personal grudges. But they were things related to the glory of God and to righteousness in the Earth. And there can be a time to pray that God would step in and do something. And I'm a little bit afraid of praying for God to kill somebody or something like that, but we can certainly cry out for Him to intervene and uphold righteousness. Whatever that is. And if He can do it by mercy, that's what we want. But there's sometimes that He can't.

I know of a godly pastor in Canada, who's gone to be with the Lord now. There was a woman, here they were trying to lead the church, and a woman came, I've forgotten what the situation was, but she said, "That's not going to happen in this church. It'll happen over my dead body!" That's what she said. And so they went to prayer, they were not praying for God to kill her, they were praying, "Oh Lord, do something, because this is an unrighteous situation." And there was all this opposition. They're crying out to God to help and in the middle of that prayer meeting the phone rings and they say: "So and so has just dropped dead." So it was over her dead body. They didn't want that, they wanted mercy.

But I think that the sentiment in those Psalms is not something evil. It's something where there's a concern for the righteousness of God. So anything of that sort in Scripture: we're wanting mercy, we follow the example of Jesus. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But there is a right time to pray that He would vindicate His name. And like you said, in

Revelation, "Oh Lord, how long..." Souls of those under the altar, they're crying out, "How long before You avenge this?" How long before You get this taken care of. Their concern is not personal. That's the big thing. If we can pray sincerely about the glory of God in a situation, and it's not some personal grudge, then I think we can do that fully in the love of Christ. Because it comes from love to God, that's where it flows from.

When Jesus cleansed the Temple, it says, "Zeal for Thy house will consume me." He was upset. Get this junk out of here. "You've made My Father's house a house of merchandise!" He was angry. But it was not any anger related to any personal offense, it was anger for the glory of God. And there is such a thing. I think it's more rare than most people think, but there is such a thing.