

Psalm 109:1-31 Praying for a Counterblow Jan. 9, 2022 PM Falls OPC

This is a Psalm of David, which simply means it was written by David, and so even sung by David. The tune that David used has been lost, which is too bad. I would really like to hear which tune goes with words like verse 29, “*may they be wrapped in their own shame like a cloak!*” Or which tune goes with words like verse 9, “*May his children be fatherless and his wife a widow!*”

For us modern people in America, it is hard to imagine the singing of these words as part of a song of worship. Probably that is because it is hard for us to imagine the dangers and cruel attacks that David had during his lifetime.

The main point is this: When God’s people are under cruel attack, we pray for an act of God.

1. Prayer for God’s action. (v.1- 5)

The Psalm begins with saying “God of my praise.” Before all of the troubled thoughts come in, this is the stance of the Psalmist. The Psalm will struggle and try to get back to this place, but it will take until the last two verses to get back here. We are off on a troubled journey!

“*Be not silent,*” is asking God to take action.

David is under an all-out attack on his character. Verse 2 – “*wicked and deceitful mouths are opened against me...*” Verse 3 – “*they encircle me with words of hate...*” verse 4, “*In return for my love, they accuse me, but I give myself to prayer.*” Verse 5, “*...they reward me evil for good, and hatred for my love.*”

This was not a few whispering rumors. This was a brazen and open attack.

David is wounded deeply in the relationships. David was betrayed by people close to him.

2. Prayer for God’s justice. (v.6 - 20)

In verse 6, David changed from plural wicked men and wicked mouths, over to singular wicked man and he and him. This continues through verse 19. In verse 20, David returns to plural, “my accusers” and “those who speak evil.”

So, David is focused on one person.

Verse 7, David wants him to be brought to court and found guilty. This is the title of my sermon “Praying for a counterblow” that wants to give the accuser a taste of his own medicine. Let someone accuse the accuser! Give a counterblow to the one who is accusing David!

Verse 8, as if in the courtroom of God, David is asking for the guilty to be executed and replaced. Verse 9, David wishes disgrace upon the man. Verse 10, having his children begging for food, verse 11, having creditors seize all of his belongings verse 12, let no one show him kindness, nor even to his children, verse 13, let his descendants die out, and his memory be blotted out. Verse 14, remember the sins of his parents, verse 15, let the LORD cut off the memory of these people from the earth! Verse 16, because the guilty person failed in kindness, and did the

opposite – hurt the poor and needy, and even put to death the brokenhearted. Verse 17 is more of the reversal theme – since he cursed, let the curses revert back on him, verse 18, let the curses soak in, verse 19, may the curses wrap around him like his clothing, and verse 20 may the LORD Himself give this counterblow to the guilty for what they did to David! David wants the logic of vengeance – that what a man chooses to give out, that ultimately he himself should fully receive, absorb, and get enfolded in. What a vivid picture. David is praying for justice, which for the guilty comes across as fierce judgment.

3. Prayer for God's help. (v.21 - 31)

Here in verse 21, the whole mood of the Psalm shifts or changes with the phrase “*But You, O God my Lord...*” Here David makes his case on the basis of God's name and on the basis of God's steadfast love.

Deal with me as is fitting for Your honor, O God, since I bear Your name!

Verse 22, the guilty one struck David's heart, leaving David poor and needy, verse 23, the guilty one reduced David to a shadow, and humiliated, treated like a grasshopper that someone would shake off of their clothing as a nuisance, verse 23, he made David weak, and gaunt, verse 25, he made David an object of scorn, so that people wagged their heads upon seeing David. Verse 26 is a clear unequivocal request “*Help me, O LORD my God! Save me, according to Your steadfast love!*”

Verse 27, David is asking God to make it known to everyone that it is an action of God to intervene. Verse 28, David does not mind if other people curse him, as long as God is blessing David. David is waiting for God to put the enemies to shame, verse 29, to those them with dishonor and to wrap them in their own shame.

Not until the last two verses, David then returns to his opening stance of praising God. In verse 30, David is committing that once God answers these prayers for action, for justice and for help, that David will be sure to give great thanks to The LORD God, even in the assembled throng of people, and in the last verse 31, David will testify publicly that God stands at the right hand of David, the needy one, and that God saved David from those who sought to condemn David's soul to death. David envisions a time when the accuser will be gone, replaced by God Himself. Instead of David having the accuser at his right hand, attempting to provide David with death, David imagines a time when David will have God at his right hand, providing David with life. David ends in the last verse basically saying what David had said in the first verse – Be not silent, O God of my praise! When God is not silent in bringing a verdict of justice and rescue, then David will not be silent in bringing praise to God.

Okay, you know how the Trinity Hymnal has hymns and some Psalms based on certain Psalms? Well there are no hymns in our hymnal based on Psalm 109. The newly produced Trinity Psalter Hymnal has every Psalm, and so it does have

Psalm 109. In order for us to sing it, we really need to study how it applies to Christians today.

Psalm 109 is one of the Psalms that prays for God to attack. Theologians call these imprecatory Psalms, which means they are war Psalms. They are war songs.

So, when we read these words in church, it seems so shocking. The words seems so diametrically opposed to all that we have been taught in Christian love and being patient with others. Psalm 58:6, “*Break the teeth in their mouths, O God.*” Or Psalm 55:15, “*Let death take my enemies by surprise; let them go down alive to the grave.*” Strong language! Hardly seems appropriate for church, right?

Is it an expression of sinful revenge? Is this pure hatred, when we thought that the Bible teaches about love instead?

The famous Reformer of the 1500s, Pastor John Calvin wrote that in proportion to our understanding of the Psalms, is our knowledge of an important part of heavenly truth. In other words, there is gold in the Psalms, and even in these war Psalms.

Jesus and the apostles used the Psalms constantly in their teaching people to know God. The New Testament directly quotes the Old Testament 283 times and 41 percent of those are from the Psalms. In addition, Jesus alluded to the Psalms over 50 times in what is recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We need to read, learn, and digest these prayers. We need to study them until we can rejoice in them!

How? We go to Christ Jesus.

Christ Himself is the best key to understanding the Psalms.

The church ever since the time of the Apostles, has always regarded the Psalms, even the war Psalms, as the voice of Christ.

Augustine in the 4th century, and Martin Luther in the 16th century referred the war Psalms exclusively to Christ.

It helps that Christ and the Apostles even quote from the war Psalms and gave us profound insight that applies to all the war Psalms.

Christ is in these war Psalms, not just in the Psalms that we call the Messianic Psalms.

This is the key to these strongly worded curses. Christ endorsed all 150 Psalms unequivocally, and so do we.

It is only right for the King of Peace to ask God to destroy His enemies. By Christ asking that, He affirms the supremacy of God the Father, who, as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:25, “*puts all [Christ’s] enemies under [Christ’s] feet.*”

Psalm 109, and other such war Psalms are not merely the emotional prayers of angry men like David, but they become the very war cries of our Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ!

Yes, it is Jesus who prays these prayers for vengeance.

The prayers that cry out for the utter destruction of the enemies of the Psalmist can only be correctly grasped when we hear them, as it were, from the loving lips of our King Jesus. The prayers of Jesus will be answered! God's wrath will be revealed upon all those who oppose the Christ of God.

It is Jesus who told us in Matthew 25:41, what Jesus will one day say, "*he will say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'*"

Now we turn our attention to Psalm 109 in particular.

The war Psalm 109 was written by David, but the life of David is only the first fulfillment. The later and ultimate fulfillment of Psalm 109 is seen in the betrayal of Judas Iscariot. Psalm 109 was known as the Iscariot Psalm. It is a Psalm of Christ's holy judgment upon the man without repentance, even Judas Iscariot. Psalm 109 belongs to Jesus' suffering and crucifixion.

Psalm 109:8 is quoted in the New Testament in Acts 1:20. Peter understood this Psalm was a fit for that situation of Judas Iscariot seeking the death of Jesus by turning Jesus over to the Jewish authorities. Afterwards, Judas killed himself in remorse. At the time of Acts chapter 1, the disciples were seeking a replacement for Judas, so that the 11 disciples could become 12 disciples again. This is when Peter quoted the statement from Psalm 109:8, saying, "*let another take his office.*" Instead of Judas succeeding in the death of Jesus, there was a counterblow, and Judas himself was the one who died. It was an action of God for victory and rescue for His people. This was another fulfillment of Psalm 109.

Anyone who is an enemy of our Lord today needs to hear this Psalm announced out loud today within the victorious church of Jesus Christ! These are not careless prayers of a tyrant leader who pushed the line if not went too far. No. These are the careful and effectual prayers of the Lamb of God who bore the curse of God for the sins of all who bow their knees to Christ by faith.

Christ is at war, and so is His Kingdom and His church!

Consider the war Psalms language and vision getting extended into the New Testament and even down to the last chapters of the last book of the New Testament.

Listen to the war language in Revelation 19:11-15, "*Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and He has a name written that no one knows but Himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the*

Almighty. On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.”

Who is praying a war Psalm prayer for God to destroy His enemies? The answer is Jesus Christ is praying war Psalm prayers for God to destroy His enemies!

This does not do away with King David praying Psalm 109 first. Rather, David prayed them as a first application, and then the Psalms get another fulfillment in the Son of David. It all makes sense, because Jesus is the One who takes David’s throne, but never loses it. 2 Samuel 7:16, where the LORD says to David, *“And your house [David’s house] and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before Me. Your throne shall be established forever.”*

We don’t have to be ashamed of the strong words in Psalm 109. It is Jesus who is praying these words! Our holy and merciful Savior! We glory in these words! We put these words back into our hymnbooks! We go from the Trinity Hymnal, to the Trinity Psalter Hymnal. Christ’s war prayers lead us to give God the honor and trust, because we know that God answers the prayers of His Son Jesus. We are assured that all the powers of evil will fall. We know for certain that God alone will reign forever and ever.

We can sing these prayers! The kingdom of God cannot come without the kingdom of Satan being destroyed. That is how it works. The will of God cannot be done on earth as it is in heaven without the destruction of evil on earth, including evil people. Evil cannot be destroyed without destroying the people who are permanently identified with evil.

Instead of staying within the weak and sickly sentimentalism of our culture in this generation, which wants everyone just to be happy, and God to just love everyone with rainbows and chocolate chip cookies, right-thinking Christian people should realize that praying for the glory of God demands the destruction of evil.

Rather than insisting on the supposed “rights of people,” we should remain focused on what glory God deserves.

Let’s stop being ashamed of war Psalms, and let’s never apologize for them. Let’s never explain them away. Let’s never leave them out of our books for singing. Let’s glory in the war Psalms! Let’s never hesitate to use the war Psalms in our private prayers and in the public worship services of the worship of the Almighty God!

Maybe we don’t know how to pray as well as we should! The disciples of Jesus said, “Lord, teach us to pray” in Luke 11:1. Why do we think we know how to pray better than they did? Jesus responded by giving them the pattern of prayer we find in The Lord’s Prayer.

How does that go? *Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven!* Matthew 6:10. Right after the intro to the prayer “Father in heaven hallowed be Your name, then the first thing we pray for is for God’s Kingdom to come. Christ teaches us to START our prayers by praying for the victory of God’s kingdom! Reign Our God, Reign! When we think about it, we realize that this prayer automatically involves the complete overthrow of Satan’s kingdom and all of Satan’s followers!

Martin Luther said that whenever we pray ‘Thy kingdom come,’ we must “put all opposition to this in one pile and say: ‘Curses, maledictions, and disgrace upon every other name and every other kingdom. May [every other kingdom] be ruined and torn apart and may all their schemes and plans run around.’”

Right.

To pray for the advance of God’s kingdom is to pray for the destruction of all other kingdoms.

Advance and victory for the church means retreat and defeat for the kingdom of darkness.

Psalms 109 is the last of the war Psalms. It is the strongest or the most intense. It calls down 24 curses, and calls for God to hear and save the Psalmist from his enemies.

All of the war Psalms were written by King David. In these Psalms, David wrote in his position as king, and not merely as a private citizen. David was God’s anointed King, appointed and put in position by God. The job of a king was to protect the people and God’s honor. Attacks on the king were attacks on God. These curses did not flow from personal resentment, but rather from zeal for God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness.

David left vindication in the hands of God. In Romans 12:19, Paul taught New Testament believers to do the same when Paul wrote, “*Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”*”

It is right to desire the punishment of evil and the triumph of good. We can pray for wrongdoers to repent of their sin and find forgiveness through the work of Christ. But if the wrongdoers refuse to repent, and if they persist in hurting others, the only right thing left for Christians to do is to desire that they be stopped, that their victims be protected, and that the perpetrators be subsequently punished.

The judgments described in this Psalm are exactly what will come to the wicked eventually. We serve a God who has a hell into which He will cast people for eternity. At the final judgment, worse punishments than Psalm 109 describe and worse punishments than we care to discuss or consider tonight will fall upon the wicked. One use of Psalm 109 is to send out a clear warning to people just how

seriously God views sin. Psalm 109, when viewed correctly, is an urgent plea for all who hear it to seek grace, while grace is available.

Although Psalm 109 is filled with cures, it also starts and ends with praises. Praise to God.

There is hardly a Psalm of David that does not refer to David's enemies. However, there are no Psalms of David that fail to praise God.

CONCLUSION: What should we do? Pray. Peace. Praise.

Pray. Verse 4. *I give myself to prayer.* Stay with your daily prayer times. Turn it over to God. Verse 21, *But you, O LORD my God, deal on my behalf for Your name's sake.* Verse 26, *Help me O LORD my God! Save me according to Your steadfast love!* When we are accused of sin, it is true. We are sinners who need to be saved by God, and that is what Christ has done at the cross. Christ is *our righteousness, our holiness, and our redemption.* 2 Corinthians 1:30. 1 John 2:1, *"if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."* When we are accused, we seek God to help us; we do not seek revenge. Praying to God is the Christian approach. 1 Corinthians 4:12, *"when we are reviled, we bless."* Blessing those who curse us is the Christian approach. We discover this in prayer before God.

Peace. Verse 31, God *"stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save him..."* Philippians 4:6,7, *"do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* Philippians 4:12, *"I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need."*

Praise. Verse 1 *"O God of my praise,"* verse 30 *"I will praise Him."* Keep coming to worship faithfully. There is nothing more close to the core of who we are than worshippers. We live in a world that is hostile to Christ and to His church. We live to praise God. Long before we go to heaven, we can have meetings each week with our God and Savior. We can praise Him from this place. Right in the middle of a spiritual war, we can come and praise the God who has already won our victory. The main purpose of our journey through this world is to get ready for the arrival of Christ. Revelation 19:15 *"On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."* Keep coming to worship faithfully.

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