

Singing the Psalms with Christ (Part V: Imprecatory Psalms)

Introduction

If we're going to reclaim Psalm singing in the church, we're going to have to learn what to "do" with the Psalms of lament – especially those laments that talk a lot about the "enemy" and even cry out for judgment and vengeance to be meted out upon the enemy. These Psalms are often called "imprecatory" psalms because "imprecate" means "to pray evil against" or "to invoke [a] curse upon." (Asbury Bible Commentary) What place, if any, can laments like these have in our New Covenant worship?

I. Psalms 1 & 2 – Key to Understanding the Imprecatory Psalms

The key to reading and understanding the psalms—including the imprecatory psalms—is found in the introduction to the book of Psalms (Psalms 1 & 2). In Psalm 1, we find that there are only two "ways" to walk in. On the one hand, there's the "way" of the righteous:

- Psalm 1:1–3 — Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates [**murmurs**] day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

On the other hand, there's also the "way" of the wicked:

- Psalm 1:4–5 — The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous...

And then Psalm 1 concludes like this:

- Psalm 1:6 — ...for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

The reality of these two "ways" and the two ends to which they lead is something like the basic laws of physics – they're fundamental to all of life, and they're unchanging and unalterable. Which way are you walking in? The **way** of the righteous or the **way** of the wicked? The **way** that the Lord knows and watches over or the **way** that ends in destruction?

But now the reality of these two ways implies a mortal struggle and conflict. And it's this conflict that we see in Psalm chapter two.

- Psalm 2:1 — Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot [**murmur**] in vain?

In Psalm 1 we saw that that man is blessed who "*murmurs*" God's law day and night. But now we see the nations raging and the peoples "*murmuring*" rebellion.

- Psalm 2:2–3 — The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”

The Lord’s Anointed is the king who sits on David’s throne in Jerusalem. So we see that the way the nations plot rebellion **against the Lord** is by plotting rebellion **against His king**. But now David gives us God’s perspective on raging, plotting, and scheming nations:

- Psalm 2:4–6 — He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”

God’s answer to the plotting nations is to inform them that they will never win. His Anointed will triumph in the end over all who rebel against his rule. And so now we hear the king himself speaking in the first person:

- Psalm 2:7–9 — **I** will tell of the decree: The LORD said to **me**, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

That’s a huge promise. Just “*ask of me*,” the Lord says to His anointed, “and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them [the raging, plotting, scheming nations] with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” All the king has to do is *ask*! But, of course, he must ask trusting only and wholly in the Lord. He must ask in true faith and obedience. It’s in light of this awesome decree of the Lord that the psalmist now exhorts all the rebellious nations:

- Psalm 2:10–12a — Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you **perish** in the **way**, for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Remember how chapter one ended: “The Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the **way** of the wicked will **perish**.” And now the plotting kings and nations of the earth are all warned lest *they* “**perish in the way**” – lest the king break them with his rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. Finally, the psalm concludes:

- Psalm 2:12b — **Blessed are** all who take refuge in him [in the Lord’s anointed king].

Remember the first words of Psalm one:

- Psalm 1:1–2 — **Blessed is** the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

How can this man who murmurs the Lord's law day and night know that he will be blessed even in the midst of this conflict and struggle? The blessing promised in Psalm 1 ("Blessed is the man...") is guaranteed in Psalm two: "Blessed are all who take refuge in him." Are you one of those who have truly taken refuge in the King?

II. Imprecatory Psalms – Prayers of the King

So how does this introduction to the Psalter enable us to rightly understand—and sing—those imprecatory Psalms of lament? What does the Lord say to His anointed king? "Ask of me, and... you shall break [the nations] with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (2:8-9). That's graphic language isn't it? That's what we call an imprecatory prayer—a prayer for vengeance—prayed by the king himself. And this is a prayer that the Lord is actually *inviting* the king to pray ("Ask of me..."). What we have to see first of all is that this prayer for the total destruction and annihilation of the king's enemies is wholly in accordance with the Lord's will—it's what the Lord *wants* His anointed king to pray for because it's what the Lord Himself has already purposed to do. We also have to see that when the king prays for the destruction of his enemies it's the very *same thing* as praying for the destruction of God's enemies.

- Psalm 2:2, 11–12 — The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, **against the LORD** and **against his Anointed... Serve the LORD** with fear... **Kiss the Son**, lest he be angry...

Finally, we see that the king's prayer is against those who are hardened beyond all hope of repentance; against those who finally refuse to heed the warnings and who never cease their raging and plotting and scheming. In the Psalms, the "reprobate" are often just called the "wicked." And so the king's prayer for the destruction of the wicked never rules out at the same time prayers for sinners to repent ("Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way...").

When we put all these things together (this is the *king's* prayer, the enemies of the king are the enemies of God, and the prayer is directed only against the reprobate with hardened hearts), we see that the king's prayer that he might "break the [plotting nations] with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" is really just a prayer that the kingdom of God would be established here on earth. There really could be no prayer more right and good and more pleasing to God than this imprecatory prayer of the king!

Should we assume, then, that King Jesus prayed, and still prays, imprecatory prayers?

- Acts 1:15–17, 20–22 — In those days Peter stood up among the brothers... and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas... For it is written in the Book of Psalms, '**May his [Judas'] camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it**'; and '**Let another take his office**.' So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us... one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection."

Peter quotes here from some of the most graphic imprecatory prayers in the whole book of Psalms.

- Psalm 109:6–10 — Appoint a wicked man against him; let an accuser stand at his right hand. When he is tried, let him come forth guilty; let his prayer be counted as sin! May his days be few; **may another take his office!** May his children be fatherless and his wife a widow! May his children wander about and beg, seeking food far from the ruins they inhabit!
- Psalm 69:24–25 — Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your burning anger overtake them. **May their camp be a desolation; let no one dwell in their tents.**

The question is, who is it that prayed these imprecatory prayers against Judas? Jesus knew that Judas was reprobate and hardened beyond all hope of repentance.

- John 17:12 — I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except **the son of destruction**, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

Jesus knew that Judas was the “son of destruction” and so it was good and it was right that He should pray for that destruction in accordance with the perfect will of God who hates all the wicked and all who oppose His anointed King. Listen to these terrible words of Jesus in Matthew twenty-six:

- Matthew 26:24 — The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but **woe to that man** by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! **It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.**

In the upper room, just before His betrayal, Jesus said to His disciples:

- John 13:18 — I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, “He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.”

Did Jesus know the context of these words that He quotes from Psalm forty-one?

- Psalm 41:9–12 — Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me. But you, O LORD, be gracious to me, and **raise me up, that I may repay them!** By this I know that you delight in me: my enemy will not shout in triumph over me. But you have upheld me because of my integrity, and set me in your presence forever.

Could these words be more appropriate on the lips of any other than Jesus? God did, indeed, raise Jesus up and set Him in His presence forever and Jesus did, indeed, repay His enemies when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem (cf. Luke 23:26-31) and he will again repay all His enemies when He’s “revealed from heaven with his mighty angels... inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thess. 1:6-10 & Ps. 21:8-12).

When Jesus cried out on the cross, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” (Luke 23:46) did he know the context of these words from Psalm thirty-one?

- Psalm 31:5–8, 17–18 — Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God. I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols, but I trust in the LORD. I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul, and you have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy; you have set my feet in a broad place... O LORD, let me not be put to shame, for I call upon you; let the wicked be put to shame; let them go silently to Sheol. Let the lying lips be mute, which speak insolently against the righteous in pride and contempt.

Do we really believe that Holy Spirit inspired prayers like these—prayers of David—would be unworthy of Jesus, David’s greater Son (cf. Isa. 50:4-11)? Are you coming to see that our Lord Himself invoked curses upon His enemies as He prayed the Psalms (cf. Matt. 23), and especially as He asked His Father for the very things that He had promised Him in Psalm chapter two?

III. Imprecatory Psalms – Praying with the King for God’s Kingdom to Come

So what does all this mean for us? Have you felt like so far we’ve been on the outside looking in? In almost the entirety of Psalm 2 the only actors are the **Lord**, the Lord’s **anointed king**, and the **enemies** of the Lord and the Lord’s anointed king. So where do *we* fit into this picture? The Psalmist answers in the very last words of the verse:

- Psalm 2:12 — Blessed are all who **take refuge** in him [in the Lord’s anointed king].

On the one hand, by identifying ourselves with the king we’re inviting on ourselves all of the same hatred and opposition that the king Himself experiences. What has *our* King who sits now on David’s throne said to us?

- John 15:18–21 — If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you... If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you... all these things they will do to you on account of my name.

On the other hand, by taking refuge in the king, we’re also guaranteeing that we will, in the end, share in His ultimate victory over all **His** enemies – **and ours**; over all **the Lord’s** enemies – **and ours** (cf. Ps. 3:1-7, 8; 28:1-7, 8-9). Listen again to what our King has said to us:

- John 16:33 — In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

As we experience the same plotting and scheming that our King experiences it becomes the most natural thing in the world for us to pray along *with* Him in accordance with the Lord’s own decree and promise in Psalm chapter two: “Oh Lord, may all the reprobate and the wicked—may all those who plot and scheme and murmur rebellion against your anointed king (and against all of us who take refuge in Your anointed)—may they all be broken with a rod of iron and dashed in pieces like a potter’s vessel!”

Do you see how all imprecatory prayer is only prayer according to the revealed will and promises of God” (Gen. 12:3; 1 Jn. 5:14)? And do you also see that there’s no personal vendetta

here (cf. 1 Sam. 24-25) – no bitterness and malice that takes pleasure in someone else’s suffering (cf. Prov. 24:17-20; Job 31:29-30)? It was right after Jesus proclaimed the coming terrible destruction of Jerusalem that He prayed as He hung on the cross:

- Luke 23:34 — “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

And we read in Luke nineteen:

- Luke 19:41–44 — When he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.”

When I pray along *with* the King that all *His* enemies be broken with a rod of iron and dashed in pieces like a potter’s vessel, this isn’t about a score that I have to settle or about a personal offense against me personally. We pray for the total annihilation and destruction of all the wicked because apart from this prayer being answered God’s righteous rule will never come. Jesus taught us to pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Mat. 6:10). Here, then, is a prayer for the death and destruction of all who finally refuse to do the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven. Are you seeing that those who can’t pray earnestly and passionately for the destruction of the wicked cannot be longing fully for the coming of the King and His kingdom?¹

- Galatians 1:8–9 — Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.
- Galatians 5:11–12 — If I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!
- 2 Timothy 4:14 — Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.

One way the kingdom comes is through sinners repenting, but another way the kingdom comes is through the finally unrepentant being utterly wiped out from off the face of the earth. Therefore, this is what we long for, and this is what we pray for. Peter reminds us that what we’re waiting for in the end is a new heavens and a new earth in which only righteousness dwells (cf. 2 Pet. 3:13).

- Proverbs 25:4–5 — Take away the wicked from the presence of the king, and his throne will be established in righteousness.

¹ “Instead of being influenced by the sickly sentimentalism of the present day, Christian people should realize that the glory of God demands the destruction of evil. Instead of being insistent upon the assumed, but really non-existent, rights of men, they should focus their attention on the rights of God. Instead of being ashamed of the Imprecatory Psalms, and attempting to apologize for them and explain them away, Christian people should glory in them and not hesitate to use them in the public and private exercise of the worship of God.” (Vos; quoted in Bushell, 92)

It's often said that God "hates the sin but loves the sinner." There's a sense in which that's true, because hatred can mean different things. One person has pointed out that "**morally**, hate is the *vice* of malice and ill will, as opposed to the virtue of unselfishness and good will. **Volitionally** [in terms of the will], hate is rejection as opposed to attachment and loyalty ['Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated']. **Emotively**, hate is detestation [and revulsion] as opposed to [pleasure and] delight." (Nichols; God and Decree Syllabus) Does God hate the sinner? Morally, no, because God still shows goodwill and kindness even to the evil and the unjust (cf. Mat. 5:45) – and so should we. God knows nothing of malice, and neither should we. Jesus said:

➤ Matthew 5:44 — Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...

Does God hate the sinner? Morally, no, but emotively, yes he does, because there is in God a natural revulsion and detestation not only for sin, but also for the sinner.²

- Psalm 5:5 — The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers.
- Psalm 11:5–6 — The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence. Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.

So if God hates the wicked, should we be at all surprised that His anointed king does too? One of the most beloved Psalms in the Bible also expresses the most deep-seated hatred of sinners.

- Psalm 139:1–2, 17–22 — O LORD, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar... How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! ... Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me! They speak against you with malicious intent; your enemies take your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies.

What we have to ask ourselves is this: How could David *not* detest those who hate his God – the God that he's just celebrated in the previous eighteen verses? Given the theme of Psalm 139, these are the most natural words in the world. The Apostle Paul writes:

- 1 Corinthians 16:22 — If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!

The measure of the king's hatred for the wicked is very simply the measure of the king's delight in the Lord. So immediately after expressing his "complete hatred" the king writes:

- Psalm 139:23–24 — Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

² "We must learn to love those who hate and persecute us for righteousness sake and at the same time to plead with God to bare His arm and destroy them utterly for the sake of His own glory and the peace of the church." (Bushel; 88-89)

To hate the wicked and pray for their complete and total destruction is to love God and long for the coming of His kingdom. Therefore, we too are called to pray these prayers—but only and always in and with Christ our King.

IV. Imprecatory Psalms – Praying with the King for Vindication

We pray for the wicked to be broken with a rod of iron and dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel because we delight in the Lord and long for the coming of His kingdom, *and also* because we long for the righting of all the injustices that are inflicted upon us. We cry out for vengeance never as a personal vendetta, but as a vindication of God's own righteousness and justice and therefore also as a vindication of our trust in the Lord. If there's no vengeance or retribution, then we who have taken refuge in the king and shared in His sufferings are of all people most to be mocked and scorned. But since there is a God who metes out vengeance, we pray for this vengeance in the midst of our persecutions and sufferings – we cry out for it earnestly. The psalmist cries out in Psalm 137:

- Psalm 137:7–9 — Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem, how they said, “Lay it bare, lay it bare, down to its foundations!” O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us! Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!

Is this really a prayer that the church can still pray today? We should think very carefully before answering. Remember that the psalmist only prays this prayer together with the Lord's anointed who prays that all his enemies be broken in pieces. And yet this psalm was written there was no king in Jerusalem. So it's really a prayer for David's throne to be restored and for God's kingdom to come (cf. vv. 1-6). Remember, too, that the psalmist isn't taking *any* delight or pleasure in the physical suffering of infants or even in the suffering of their parents. The psalmist is only praying in accordance with what the Lord Himself had already spoken against Babylon in Isaiah thirteen:

- Isaiah 13:13, 15–16 — I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger... Whoever is found will be thrust through, and whoever is caught will fall by the sword. Their infants will be dashed in pieces before their eyes; their houses will be plundered and their wives ravished.

It's not wrong to pray in accordance with what God has revealed to be His will. It's not wrong to pray along with the king what God Himself has invited the king to pray. To the contrary, this is right, and even necessary for the faith of God's people. If there's no vengeance or retribution, then we who have taken refuge in the king and shared in His sufferings are of all people most miserable. But since there is a God who metes out vengeance, we therefore pray for this vengeance in the midst of our sufferings – we cry out for it earnestly.

Revelation 6:9–10 (cf. Lk. 18:1-8 & Ps. 72:4) — “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”

We long for our trust and faith in God to be vindicated and proved right in the total destruction and annihilation of all our enemies.³ This is why the psalmist says to all his enemies in the midst of his prayer: “O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, *blessed* shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us! Blessed shall he be who takes *your* little ones and dashes them against the rock!”

- Revelation 18:6, 8, 20 (cf. Rev. 16:5-6) — “Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds... her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire... **Rejoice** over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!”
- Revelation 19:1-4 — After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “**Hallelujah!** Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.” Once more they cried out, “**Hallelujah!** The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”

Imprecatory prayers like Psalm 137 are wholly according to the will of God and wholly necessary for sustaining our faith in the midst of suffering. We pray for the destruction of the wicked *in order that* we might never be overcome by bitterness and never, *ever* avenge ourselves (cf. Rom. 12:18-21). Jesus, who cried out for the destruction of Judas, His betrayer, is also the one who greeted Judas in love even when he betrayed Him with a kiss:

Matthew 26:50 — “Friend, do what you came to do.”

The psalmist who prayed that his enemies would be “like chaff before the wind” (Ps. 35:4-6) is also the one who could say:

Psalm 35:12-14 — But I, when they were sick— I wore sackcloth; I afflicted myself with fasting; I prayed with head bowed on my chest. I went about as though I grieved for my friend or my brother; as one who laments his mother, I bowed down in mourning.

It’s only when we can cry out to God with all our desires for the wicked to be utterly broken and dashed in pieces that we’re wholly freed to love even our enemies. If we don’t understand this, that’s probably because we’ve never experienced what the psalmists experienced. We can sit here in comfort and ease and analyze and evaluate words like these: “Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!” But what if we were the ones who experienced the enemy dashing our own little ones against the rocks?⁴ Listen to what this pastor says:

³ I am not speaking here of the heresy of annihilationism.

⁴ “In the latter verses [Psalm 137:7-9], we have utterances of burning indignation against the chief adversaries of Israel,—an indignation as righteous as it was fervent. Let those find fault with it who have never seen their temple burned, their city ruined, their wives ravished, and their children slain; they might not, perhaps be quite so velvet-mouthed if they had suffered after this fashion. It is one thing to talk of the bitter feeling which moved captive Israelites in Babylon, and quite another thing to be captives ourselves under a savage and remorseless power, which know not how to show mercy, but delighted in barbarities to the defenseless. The song is such as might fitly be sung in the Jews’ wailing-place. It is a fruit of the Captivity in Babylon, and often has it furnished expression for sorrows

“I was participating in a seminar on the Psalms in Glasgow, Scotland, some years ago. The subject of the imprecatory Psalms was the focus of one session, with contributing scholars from several different nations taking part. One of the participants was a young priest from the Anglican Church in Rwanda. He spoke about the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, and how most of his own family was brutally slain in that violence. Three of his brothers were killed on the same day. It was painful for this man even to talk about those events. Then he told about the hundreds of missionaries who flooded into the nation after the violence had ceased – missionaries from the West who came instructing the people that they needed to forgive and reconcile with their brutal adversaries. My colleague said that, while he and his fellow Christian survivors in Rwanda recognized the need for forgiveness, the messages from these missionaries seemed hollow. They simply did not understand the brutality of what they had experienced. But then he found Psalm 137 in his Bible. And he said to us, that in reading this Psalm, he found peace to trust God to bring justice and thereby to let go of the bitterness in his own heart. For in Psalm 137, he found that the psalm singer understands the necessity of justice to put things right again. And ironically, he was able to forgive, because of Psalm 137.” (Lefebvre, 129-130)

Conclusion

The imprecatory psalms allow us who live in ease and comfort to truly enter into the sufferings of our persecuted brothers and sisters. They enable us to feel as deeply as we can the horrors inflicted upon them. And so perhaps the best way for us to pray for the persecuted church is to learn to regularly pray together with them and with our King the imprecatory psalms.

At some point, we have to stop trying to figure it all out, and just start praying the Psalms by faith – even Psalm 137; and perhaps in some ways especially Psalm 137. And I’m convinced that the most powerful way for us to really embrace and own these imprecatory Psalms for ourselves is to sing them.

In the book of Acts, the Apostles viewed their own sufferings for the sake of Christ through the lens of Psalm chapter two:

- Acts 4:24–30 — They lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord... who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’— for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

which else had been unutterable. It is an opalesque Psalm within whose mild radiance there glows a fire which strikes the beholder with wonder.” (Spurgeon; quoted in Bushell, 91)

And so even as the Apostles saw in Psalm chapter two the explanation of their own sufferings, they also saw in Psalm chapter two the guarantee of their final triumph in the prayer that God had invited Christ their King to pray:

- Psalm 2:8–9 — Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

And so the Apostles were filled with boldness to continue proclaiming the word (cf. Acts 4:31) because they had taken refuge in *this* king and because now they could rest in these words:

- Psalm 2:12 — Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Are you one who has taken refuge in the Lord's anointed King? Are we those who rejoice to know that in the end, we will share in the King's triumph and victory over all His enemies – **and ours**? As those who have taken refuge in the King will we take up the imprecatory psalms and pray them with Him, by faith?⁵

⁵ “Given the amount of venom directed at the imprecatory Psalms it is probably not necessary to point out that they have no counterpart in the world of hymnody. There is a reason for that. The line between righteous anger and carnal hatred is a fine line... No hymn writer has ever attempted to express the depth of righteous anger expressed in these disputed Psalms. The task is simply too difficult. The imprecatory Psalms meet a genuine need and it is one that no writer of hymns has ever been able to fill... There are times when the trials of the people of God are so severe, the anguish so intense, that only songs inspired by God are equal to the task. That is something that people living in the comfort of the richest culture in history have a hard time grasping. But the saints of old understood it. And as the wheels of history continue to turn, the church in this country may one day be on its knees pleading the words of these maligned Psalms before the throne of grace.” (Bushell, 92)