

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (Romans 8:26)

Today, let us explore the idea and place of imprecatory prayers. I set out down this path looking to make a strong declarative case for imprecatory prayer, our duty to pray it, making a case for how wonderful it is, how it's missing in this day and age, and then figuring out how to balance it against the commandment we recently explored from Matthew 5:

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44)?

When our time today is concluded, I hope you'll see I didn't end up where I thought I was going. I did not, as Bugs says, take the left turn at Albuquerque. As I dug into the issue, I found that I couldn't do any of those things in the light of Scripture. I hope you'll all also agree that exploring this topic is important to understanding our duties and responsibilities as they relate to prayer and a study of this topic can be helpful to refining how we pray for our enemies.

Tempering and over-shadowing my initial thoughts about imprecatory prayer was knowledge that there is a movement, for lack of a better word, amongst modern self-labeled evangelical preachers calling for a “return” to imprecatory prayer. They are quite adamant that we need to have prayer meetings and tent revivals and all write up imprecatory prayers against our enemies like in “the old days”, and recite them every day until we're relieved of the evil of the day and we're all singing “Jesus Loves Me This I Know” around the campfire together. The increasingly vociferous position these evangelicals are taking makes the position extremely suspect to me, and so I sought to dig into this question deeper and determine if we should be saying the same thing, and how do I match that up with what I've been preaching about recently with regard to our enemies? We can't have contradiction in our doctrine and our approach, so I want to try and nail this down smartly.

First, let's define the word imprecatory or imprecate, in case you've never heard it. It means to invoke or call down curses upon a person. It comes from a Latin word which means to invoke or to pray for evil toward a person or institution, and is a word not found anywhere in the Bible.

Let's look at a few examples of what are commonly called imprecatory prayers.

“Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded.” (Psalm 7:6)

“A Psalm of David. Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them. Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them.” (Psalm 35:1-6)

“And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee” (Numbers 10:35)

While most expositors don't seem to throw this into the imprecatory bucket, I don't know how you can't

“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Revelation 6:9-10)

These are only a few examples. There are several Psalms that are similar to 35 and described as full of imprecation; many times Jeremiah calls to God to pour out his wrath and punishments upon the people who afflicted him, etc. The point is that these kinds of words are not uncommon in Scripture. These kinds of expressions deserve our attention with an eye toward determining how we are to use them, when we should use these types of expressions, and where we fit this into our routine of prayer.

There are Bible scholars who go on and on about these imprecatory Psalms and how they are an exception to the rule of loving your enemies, that in the heat of a grievous moment a righteous person can call down the wrath of God on people without concern for following the law of loving your neighbor. Some of these expositors I believe erroneously look to the two witnesses of Revelation as examples, saying that if they can pray and bring down fire from heaven, then anyone can. These are mainly new-age expositors, not the gentlemen we tend to recognize as more authoritative, but it is an argument that's out there.

There are those that make excuses, especially for David, that these so-called imprecatory Psalms are exceptions that prove the rule, or that David was such a special person that the regular rules didn't apply to him and so he didn't have to love his enemies. There are others who claim that the Old Testament fathers were okay to just rail against and curse their enemies, this is a new-fangled Jesus thing about

blessing those that curse you, so just basically ignore what David said about his enemies and only bless people now. Yet others claim that David wasn't really cursing his enemies, he was just passionate.

Some expositors, like Gill, try to take the imprecations of David and say they are to be applied prophetically, taking for example Psalm 109, which has clear prophetic application to Judas Iscariot. Of course that bucket doesn't hold water, since David is clearly writing about things that have happened to him and it is not an entirely prophetic Psalm. Moreover, you can't claim all of David's imprecations are prophetically pointed at Judas, so then you have to start making grandiose claims that he's prophesying only about the ultimate destruction of all of God's enemies, and ignore the fact that he was constantly beset on all sides by enemies basically his whole life, he isn't writing about the obvious events that were happening all around him all the time. There's still a hole in that bucket, dear Liza. That kind of explanation doesn't pass a simple smell test, in my view, since we know the oppression these people, especially David, lived under and know the cries of God's people. David lived under extreme pressure from his enemies most of his life, and was a passionate man who didn't hesitate to call on God for help. Make no mistake, David prays for vengeance on his specific enemies. While his prayers are also prophetic at times, they are also specific to Saul, Absalom, Joab, Doeg, Shimei, etc. And as we've seen many times, most, if not all prophecies in Scripture have more than one application, so this "let's sweep David's imprecations under the rug" approach is a complete lack of understanding at best and borders on deceitful at worst.

Part of the problem I have with this view of David's imprecations comes when you contrast what some of these men have to say about Jeremiah's so-called imprecatory prayers. When Gill looks at the imprecations of Jeremiah, for instance, he doesn't really address it at all, just saying that Jeremiah makes some imprecatory comments about the Jews. Look at these words:

"Give heed to me, O LORD, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me. Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them. Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and let their men be put to death; let their young men be slain by the sword in battle. Let a cry be heard from their houses, when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them: for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet. Yet, LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me: forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee; deal thus with them in the time of thine anger."
(Jeremiah 18:19-23)

Imprecations toward the Jews, indeed! These words need explanation and exposition, not a lick and a promise. But that's largely what we get.

These exegetical explanations all fall very short and fail to address what is seemingly a great and glaring contradiction in Scripture. How can we see these great men, these spiritual stalwarts like David and Jeremiah take this approach toward their enemies, when both the law and Christ tell us to love them? Given the state of things today, should we, as these modern evangelicals claim, make a "return" to the so-called "old ways" and continuously seek the destruction of the enemies at our gates? After all, we do hold a sign that says "Too Late To Pray". Is it possible that the author of the Old Testament allowed for these apparent curses to be uttered but changed His mind when it came to the New Testament? Should we, in these days of great struggle, when the whole world rises against us, be engaging in imprecatory pleadings with our God against our enemies or should we be loving toward them? Is it proper for the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in the same prayer to seek the salvation of those who persecute us and their destruction?

The contradiction here seems great, and the expositors struggle with the idea quite a bit. Either they don't understand or see the question (remember some of these men were well-beloved in their day so you can't really fault them for having no experience with the struggle between blessing and cursing our persecutors), or they have no answer and don't even draw attention to the idea that God's people are cursing their enemies, or they essentially weasel out of it with some kind of special circumstance they apply to this or that person; all in all to me it is very dissatisfying. This can be a very distressing question, especially when we are in the throes of some deep persecution or under the weight of an enemy's frequent attack against our lives and well-being, and we should seek clarity and understanding from the Lord on the matter.

To get to the heart of this, first consider that neither the word imprecatory nor any real derivative of it that I can find exists in Scripture. The closest to it I can find is simply cursing. I think this is important, and gets to the heart of the point I'm making. From a Scriptural perspective, there is no such thing as imprecatory prayer. The idea is born of an attempt to justify or box out the reality of the prayers of God's people when they cry for vengeance and relief against their enemies. It is used to try and create some category of prayer that isolates these pleas of David for vengeance and tries to make them align with some human view of loving our enemies. By creating some category you can compartmentalize it and try to build a doctrine around it that makes things convenient for promoting some particular view. The problem with this doctrine of imprecatory prayer is that I only find two categories of prayer in scripture – prayers of the wicked and prayers of the righteous. Rather than trying to create categories that rationalize things for us, we should look at them on their face and accept them for what they are – the testimony left us by God of His will. We don't need more words, categories or labels to make Scripture plain. We simply need understanding. Consider these scriptures:

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” (James 5:16)

“The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.” (Proverbs 15:29)

“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.” (Proverbs 15:8)

The word prayer appears in 107 verses in Scripture. The Hebrew word is tefilaw, Strong's 8605 which means intercession, supplication; by implication a hymn or prayer. The root of that word is pawlal, Strong's 6419, which is a primary root in Hebrew meaning to judge (officially or mentally); by extension to intercede, pray, intreat make supplication or judgment. In the Greek, you have dehayasis, Strong's 1162 which is a petition; prayer, request, supplication, which is from dehomahēe, Strong's 1189 which means to beg or make a petition, beseech.

So in its simplest form prayer is a request made to God that requires some form of judgment and supplication or humble entreaty to God. Even a prayer of thanks falls into this since we request that God accept our thanks, which of course He is under no obligation to do.

Gill at Job 15:4 defines prayer thusly

“prayer is to be made to God and to him only, it is a part of religious worship, directed to by the light of nature, and ought to be performed by every man; it is a special privilege of the saints, who have a covenant God on a throne of grace to go to, and can pray in a spiritual manner for spiritual things; and especially is to be observed in times of trouble”

So prayer is to God. It is a supplication made to Him for assistance, deliverance, to offer up thanks, to seek guidance and wisdom, to praise Him for all things, or a specific thing, etc. We have been given a form of it by Christ that while not intended to be a rote repetition as many use it, provides for us a form, an outline if you will. That example is shown twice in Scripture, once at Matthew 6 and again at Luke 11:

“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.” (Matthew 6:9-13)

“And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.” (Luke 11:2-4)

If you break this down a little bit you see what Christ instructs us to include in our prayers.

- He does not instruct us to repeat these words as our only prayer, as prayer should be effectual and fervent as James tells us. If we’re simply repeating words and not bringing petitions from our hearts, how could our prayer be either? We certainly can use these words but we are not required to.
- He instructs us by example. Note the brevity of the prayer. He doesn’t make a huge pretense and fill the air with a lot of words. He is succinct in His approach and economy of words.
- We should, in prayer, give reverence to our Lord, acknowledging His place and rule over us, and the holiness of even His name. The word hallowed there means to consecrate or make holy. We should acknowledge the holiness of God at all times and in all things, and our prayers to Him should reflect that.
- We seek the establishment of God’s holy kingdom and seek no other kingdom than His as absolute Sovereign, pledging our allegiance to Him and Him alone. As such, we both seek and acknowledge that only His will is to be done in earth, humbling ourselves before His mighty hand and again pledging our service to Him as King and creator of all things.
- We seek from Him all things necessary for life, and this is encapsulated in asking for our daily bread. You’ll notice that the example given in Matthew asks for our bread this day, which is an immediate request, where in Luke it is an enduring request for our needs to be met “day by day”. We must acknowledge our need for God to provide for us not just in a tight spot, but the continuing need we have for Him to supply us everything, both temporal and spiritual, neither an excess nor a dearth.

● The greatest need that we have for our Father to provide us is forgiveness of our sins. Without this forgiveness, obviously our only reasonable expectation is that of the second death, and the only place we can receive that forgiveness is at the throne of our God. We must seek it, and use that as a reminder to forgive our debtors. Notice here Christ doesn't say enemies, nor does He say friends. This is an inclusive statement that we should forgive our debtors. Any person who has committed a wrong against us and become indebted to use for mercy we should forgive, without hesitation and without reserve.

● We must ask God not to allow us to be overtaken by temptation and the sins associated with it. Without that mercy we have no hope of setting aside those sins that so easily beset us and putting off the old man. It is only by the grace of God this can be accomplished, and there is no requirement that He shed that grace on any of us. If we are not humble and meek enough to ask for it, why should it be delivered? Granted, merely asking will not bring it about, but there is a need to request it.

● We must seek the Lord and call upon Him to deliver us from evil. Not just the evil of our own sinfulness, but from all evil, including that which our enemies seek to perpetrate upon us. That request for deliverance is in obedience to Him, as we can clearly see throughout Scripture:

“And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” (Psalm 50:15)

“In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.” (Psalm 86:7)

“He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.” (Psalm 91:15)

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Romans 10:13)

Notice here that if Jesus wanted us to think of prayer in different categories, He had ample opportunity here to teach us such a thing. The thing is He didn't. He outlined for us prayer and gave us a pattern. I'm arguing to you today that this idea of categorizing prayer types might seem a matter of convenience for helping people get a grasp on the concept and duty of prayer and it might seem innocent enough. I'm telling you that what I see it as is a matter of men's pride coming out. These types of prayer are used to justify behavior that otherwise seems inconsistent or out of place.

When men put these labels that don't exist in Scripture on things, watch how they then try to utilize them. Look at some of these preachers and their imprecatory prayers and their arguments for calling down the curses and wrath of God on someone, and compare them to David's so-called imprecatory prayers. They aren't even close because David wasn't using what is called imprecatory prayer.

Let's look at Psalm 35, one of David's supposedly great imprecatory prayers in its entirety and examine some of its details:

“A Psalm of David. Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. (2) Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. (3) Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

David entreats the Lord to act in His role as Man of War, a just call for the downtrodden of God to do, to remind Him of His promises,

(4) Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. (5) Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them. (6) Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them. (7) For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul. (8) Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.

This language is particularly what earns the label of imprecatory for this Psalm by most, because David is here asking that the things they try to do to him be turned about on them. But look at the previous section to see why he's asking for this. It isn't out of some sense of hatred or improperly placed negative sentiment toward anyone.

(9) And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation. (10) All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?

David is recalling here the role of deliverer that God plays for His people and the joy that it brings David to see it. This also gets the Psalm labeled imprecatory by many, because it isn't "loving" in their eyes.

(11) False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not. (12) They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul. (13) But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. (14) I behaved myself as

though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.

Here David is making a case for his proper behavior, and showing the Lord that he doesn't righteously deserve this treatment from his enemies. He is also calling God to witness for him and by making this claim is asking to be judged by the same standard he wants his enemies judged.

(15) But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not: (16) With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth. (17) Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions. (18) I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people. (19) Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause. (20) For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land. (21) Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it.

(22) This thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me. (23) Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord. (24) Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me. (25) Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up. (26) Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me. (27) Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. (28) And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long."

Here David is fully calling upon the justice and righteousness of God, reminding Him of that righteousness with which He has promised to judge and deliver His people. He is pleading with God not to let him be destroyed, not because David is worthy of that mercy, but because saving him is a great display of the righteousness of God. He directly asks to be judged! He is laying his case for deliverance out before the Lord, not making some erstwhile call for destruction on those he simply hates.

A more direct way of looking at this comes in Psalm 69, another Psalm labeled imprecatory. We are fully familiar with verse 4

"They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away." (Psalm 69:4)

But how often do you then look at verse 5?

“O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.”
(Psalm 69:5)

This idea that these Psalms are some special case of David praying down curses on his enemies is, I believe, a lie; a lie made to create wiggle room for people who wish to work their way out of the acknowledgment and submission to the sovereignty of God in one way or another, or in the worst case, try to justify their hateful behavior, thoughts, and words by saying “well David and Jeremiah did it”. That, my friends, is a lot of malarkey. I am open to challenge here, but look at the so-called imprecatory Psalms of David and find me one where David is calling on God to blast his enemies for the sake of it or where he’s trying to wield the wrath of God as some sort of club? Find me one where he isn’t calling on God to **deliver him** from the injustice of his enemies and to thereby show His righteousness and justness in the earth. Look at them and see if there is one where David doesn’t directly declare his own sinfulness and call upon God to look at his sins and bring them to bear as part of His judicial process. Find me an example where David doesn’t, as part of making his case, acknowledge his own unworthiness. I dare say you won’t find one. These imprecatory prayers are not just general cursings of men invoking God’s wrath as though it were their own personal weapon.

Look at Jeremiah’s so-called imprecations as well and you’ll find them to be similar prayers where he is calling to God to remember that he went to help the very people that are now trying to kill him, and to remember His promises to deliver. Reference this as an example:

“Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them. Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and let their men be put to death; let their young men be slain by the sword in battle.” (Jeremiah 18:20-21)

Again, Jeremiah isn’t just saying, “hey look at these jerks, Lord, and kick them in the shins because they’re jerks”, he’s calling to the remembrance of God the good that he spoke on behalf of these very same people, thereby demonstrating his love of his neighbor as the law calls for. He is calling out for God to defend him as He has promised to save him from certain destruction.

To hopefully solidify the case I’m making here let’s look at the great example of prayer we have in James 5, where I believe the case is made that there is only prayer. Not imprecatory prayer, supplication prayer, faith prayer, thanksgiving prayer, etc., etc.

There is only the prayer of the wicked and the prayer of the righteous. James gives us the example of Elijah

“Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.” (James 5:17-18)

Is this not the penultimate imprecatory prayer? Elijah, by the power of prayer stops the rain from falling for over three years! By the view most people have of prayers this was a giant imprecatory effort by Elijah that wouldn't have happened if he didn't call it down. But James doesn't describe it in any such way. He doesn't declare 'here was a great imprecatory prayer, a great curse delivered by Elijah'. No, no, no. He lays it out that Elijah is the same kind of person we are, subject to the same passions, sins and zeal, and he prayed. He prayed for God to remember when He said this

“Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; And then the LORD'S wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you.” (Deuteronomy 11:17)

Now we don't know the precise wording of Elijah's prayer the way we do many of David's. What we have is this:

“And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.” (1 Kings 17:1)

And this

“And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees.” (1 Kings 18:41-42)

So there was some on-the-knees praying going on but we don't have the words used. We know from the rest of the words about and from Elijah that he wasn't some loose-lipped, flapping in the breeze hot headed fool who regularly used words carelessly or lightly. He made some mistakes, he let his passions overtake him from time to time, but he wasn't walking around saying things like “I curse you so God curses you”. He was a compassionate man who was careful with the widow woman and kind to her, and a man of action who single handedly killed 450 false prophets who were leading the people of Israel straight to hell. He was a man of action and a man of God, but he

wasn't careless or flippant in his duty or responsibility and he wasn't a man who disregarded the power of words.

Think of all the people James could have used to make an example of proper and effectual prayer – Hannah, David, Samuel, Jeremiah, Moses, Enoch, Sampson, and many others, just call the roll. Of all the people available to us as examples, the Holy Ghost draws us through James to Elijah, and specifically the prayers of Elijah as they relate to judgment, righteousness and the pleading of God's cause in the earth as a part of our worship. That is something to pay attention to.

What's missing from that neon arrow James uses to point at that specific prayer? Some special name for it. Some declaration that it is a special category of prayer, providing an exemption from the loving of our enemies, the loving of our neighbor, the blessing of those that curse us. Why? Because it isn't different. It's a prayer.

Elijah, like David and Jeremiah both, wasn't seeking vengeance for wrongs done to him when he prayed this prayer, though he was certainly in grave danger for preaching and not joining forces with the succubus Jezebel. He prayed for God's justice to be known in the earth through His judgment and demonstrating His promises upon those who would not keep His law. That is absolutely, unequivocally not at odds with Jesus example of prayer. It falls right in line with it.

Compare that to the imprecatory prayers of those who like to revel in and throw around the word 'imprecatory', swinging it around like some grand weapon they have some God-given right to yield. It's shameful. The prayers of many modern day evangelicals who scream about the lack of imprecatory prayer are base fleshly things. They want to use prayer like some kind of bludgeon to hurl insults and a wish list of horrible things they want to see happen to Obama or some other enemy. They sling around words like they have the power to actually cause their curses to happen! It's shameful, it's prideful, and it's not Scriptural.

When considering these prayers, it is very, very important to realize that these righteous men didn't say these things from a position of power or undue influence. They were delivering a message and pleading for deliverance. Consider David again. Here is a man who had the power of life and death in his hands for anyone at any time; he frequently exercised that power, and as we know sometimes in a sinful way. But in his so-called imprecatory prayers, if he was seeking these horrible things to happen to his enemies, why didn't he just execute this power God had given him and deal with them directly? As King he could kill anyone he wanted. He prayed instead of acting because punishment alone for his enemies **was not the point of the prayer!!**

He sought God's righteousness to be exalted in the earth, and the issues he was bringing before the throne were matters of God, not strictly matters of man. He wasn't seeking personal vengeance in these prayers. When you cross over that line, which it

is easy to do, you've left preaching and gone to meddling. The people of God do not get to use His word as a bludgeon when we feel slighted or think someone looked at us cross-wise. These prayers of justice and righteous retribution are reserved for dealing with spiritual matters, for deliverance from those who would oppress us for speaking God's word, for calling to God's attention the blasphemies we hear on a daily basis and to cry out against the anguish we feel over the misuse of His words, the flaunting of sin and hatred of His standards. Not as a response to "you're ugly, your mother dresses you funny and your belly-button sticks out".

Another important point about these prayers is that the same Jesus that gave us the example of prayer, told us to bless those that curse us, to pray for our enemies, and also directed David's hand when he wrote those Psalms deemed imprecatory, and directed that those Psalms be sung in the worship of God! Jesus Christ is The Word! He is the Old Testament the same as He is the New Testament! He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). There is no contradiction in the delivery of these prayers because the same God delivered them for use!

Remember who we worship. We come before the Living God, the only Living God, whose name alone is Holy. He is our Father by adoption, and He doesn't leave us hanging out here with some dilemma about how to pray. He has sent the Spirit to help us in this matter of framing up these prayers. He did so because inherently we don't know what we should be praying for. Our carnal minds look at this apparent contradiction and go off in the corner and start sucking our thumbs because it's too hard for us to comprehend. Figuratively speaking. A loving God, though, does not leave His children in that state of affairs because He provides all things for us, **including** help in prayer:

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Romans 8:26)

Never forget or lose focus on the absolute rock-solid fact that we come before a King, capable of granting literally any petition placed before Him. That is not a thing that the human mind easily grasps. Oh, we think we do, you know, with the whole "phenomenal cosmic power, itty bitty living space" sorts of ideas, but there is absolutely no way to comprehend the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent power of the Creator. We might as well contemplate infinity and eternity at the same time. It simply isn't a possibility the human mind in this form is capable of properly comprehending.

Therefore, our Father, in His providence, wisdom, mercy and kindness has sent to us the Comforter, to help us in this infirmity to frame up petitions that can be born to our intercessor for perfecting and delivery to our God. When petitions of retribution and the protection of God's truth and righteousness in the earth are needed, He helps us to

frame those up. When petitions of mercy, kindness and deliverance, whether they be for us or for others are needed, He helps us to frame those up. He also helps us to understand the timing of those requests. He also provides for us a clear example of when **not** to stand before Him and request mercy for a people, as He did with Jeremiah

“Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.” (Jeremiah 15:1)

We know that there is a line that a nation crosses where there can be no good prayed for them. Where God will not hear that prayer and those who would issue those prayers risk drawing God's wrath upon themselves.

“Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good.” (Jeremiah 14:11)

This is not free license then to use prayer inappropriately. Even when we know we cannot pray for the good of a people, it is a time to humble ourselves and to avail ourselves fully, through submission to God, of that gift He has given us through the Spirit. To seek His face and to understand from Him, who searches the hearts and tries the reigns, what is appropriate for us to pray for and about, and with what measure of judgment should we be praying. In other words, telling us not to pray “for this people for their good” is not the same thing, nor is it the functional equivalent of saying “pray for this people for their evil”. There is no exhortation in Scripture I can find for that. And unfortunately, that is what the majority of people believe imprecatory prayer to be, and that's how they use it. Which I cannot condone because I think it is evident that Scripture does not condone it.

What then do we make of what is frequently labeled an imprecation of Paul's in 2 Timothy.

Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: (2 Timothy 4:14)

I tell you that I do not make this out to be an imprecation. I take it to be a teaching moment by Paul, even as he writes his final words. I take it to be so because of what he says next:

“Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.” (2 Timothy 4:15)

Ever the teacher, Paul reminds those whom he leads that though Alexander is a mightily evil man, the Lord will have his vengeance, not them, and to be wary of his

power, his evil and his resistance to the truth. He knows the danger this man represents, and will not leave his friends without adequate warning and remembrance to be careful. Even if this is an imprecatory prayer, it still is not a calling down of curses on a person as a matter of personal vengeance. He is clearly calling on the Lord to keep His promises not for specific things he has done to Paul, but for the evil he does to His church.

So then, when we frame up our discussion amongst each other and form up our prayers to God, I think it is important that we do NOT use this made up form of imprecatory prayer. Where we need to pray for righteous judgment and vengeance, we simply pray for it in a meek, humble and appropriate way, and where we don't need to, we don't. I don't see any other way of reconciling the idea of praying for our enemies and not cursing when they curse us with these prayers of the righteous throughout Scripture. They must be able to sit side by side and not conflict, and if we approach the mercy seat with the proper viewpoint, looking at these things spiritually and not carnally, they sit side by side quite nicely. If we seek to use prayer as a blunt force object that we can yield upon whomever we wish without bridling our tongues or controlling our spirits, then they simply do not.

Like most things in Scripture, I think it's actually pretty simple. We pray. That's all. We pray continually, effectually, fervently, with faith, making supplication, offering praise and thanks to our Father who is in Heaven and whose name alone is Holy. We seek intercession on our behalf by our Lamb, our Christ, to perfect our prayers and make them more than acceptable to the Judge of all, to make them a sweet savor to our God who alone we seek to please in our worship of Him.

Pray without ceasing, friends.