

“Be Angry, And Sin Not”
Psalm 109
(Preached at Trinity, July 1, 2012)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Oh, how these words burn our ears:
Psalm 109:8-10 KJV - "Let his days be few; *and* let another take his office. ⁹ Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. ¹⁰ Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek *their bread* also out of their desolate places."
2. Such words seem harsh in the ear of a Christian. We’ve been taught to pray, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”
We remember the instruction of our Lord,
Matthew 5:44-45 – “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; ⁴⁵ That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”
3. So how are we to understand the terrible pronouncements of condemnation in the imprecatory psalms?
We’ve already seen several of the imprecatory psalms.
This is the last of the imprecatory psalms in the Psalter. The other imprecatory psalms include Psalm 7, 35 & 69 – although there are many others with imprecatory elements.
For example:
Psalm 58 - "Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD. ⁷ Let them melt away as waters *which* run continually: *when* he bendeth *his bow to shoot* his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces."
Psalm 59 - "Scatter them by Thy power, and bring them down, O Lord, our shield. ¹² *On account of* the sin of their mouth *and* the words of their lips, Let them even be caught in their pride, And on account of curses and lies which they utter. ¹³ Destroy *them* in wrath, destroy *them*, that they may be no more"
In all there are 104 imprecatory verses in the psalms.
Of the imprecatory psalms, Psalm 7 is the mildest and Psalm 109 is the strongest.
Commentators have counted at least 30 anathemas in Psalm 109.
4. So harsh are these words that some commentators take the position that David is actually describing the words his enemies are using against him. There is no need to try to explain it away in such a manner.
5. It also seems strange to us that so many of these psalms were used in the context of Israel’s worship.
 - A. Notice the superscription, “To the chief musician”
It was written to be sung.
 - B. Years ago we sang this psalm in our own worship. It is on page 65 in our psalm supplement. I chose to discontinue singing it because of the complaints I received.
 - C. Perhaps they had a better grasp of God’s justice and glory than we do.

6. I've set the imprecatory psalms before you in the past but I don't want to skip over Psalm 109 as simply needless repetition. Before looking into the text let me remind you of several important considerations regarding the imprecatory psalms.
- A. Most of the imprecatory psalms were penned by King David. He was writing as king and he had a duty to dispense justice. The imprecatory psalms are a plea for justice. An assault upon the king was actually an assault upon God. Such is the nature of all rebellion against authority:
Romans 13:1-2 NAS - "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ² Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves."
- B. David leaves all vindication in the hands of God. David was personally known for being merciful and longsuffering. When given the opportunity to take the life of his archenemy Saul David would not harm him.
Romans 12:19 KJV - "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."
- C. It is proper to desire the punishment of evil and to see the triumph of good. Of course, we desire evil men to repent and turn to Christ, but perpetual evil must fact the judgment of God. The incorrigible son was to be stoned to death without mercy.
Deuteronomy 21:18 NAS - "If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, ¹⁹ then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his home town. ²⁰ "And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.' ²¹ "Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear *of it* and fear. ²² "And if a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree,"
7. The key element is a love for the glory of God. We must love righteousness and hate evil. This is at the heart of Paul's command
Ephesians 4:26 KJV - "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:"
- A. Clearly there is a sinful anger and a righteous anger. **Ephesians 4:26** is in the imperative – "Be ye angry—and sin not"
 We are commanded to be angry but our anger must not lead to sin.
- B. How can this be? Most of the time our anger is self-centered with a selfish motivation. We become angry because someone harms us. Our attention is upon ourselves and our own glory.
- C. But what about God's glory? Are we highly offended when God's holiness is offended? Before we answer yes, is this reflected by our holy lives? Before we can be offended at someone else's sin we must be offended over our own.
8. We don't know anything about the context of **Psalm 109**. We can't know for certain who the adversaries are.

9. As we look at **Psalm 109** it can be divided into three sections:
- I. **Verses 1-5 – David’s portrayal** of the attacks of his adversaries
 - II. **Verses 6-20 - David prayer** for God’s justice upon his adversaries
 - III. **Verses 21-31 – David’s plea** for God’s mercy in his own life
- I. **Verses 1-5 – David’s portrayal** of the attacks of his adversaries
- A. David describes these ruthless and wicked men
 1. **Verse 2** – They are deceitful and full of lies
The wicked man mirrors his father
John 8:44 KJV - "Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."
 2. **Verse 3** – They are filled with hate – complete opposite of the redeemed who are characterized by love.
 - B. The key element in these opening verses is the heart of David
 1. He is filled with praise towards God
Psalm 109:1 KJV - "Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise;"
 - a. In other words, God was the source of David’s praise – God had captured David’s heart
There are several Hebrew words for praise:
יָדָה - a verb which also means “to give thanks” – **Verse 30**
הִלָּל - Often combined with the word **יָדָה** – **Verse 30**
Another is found here in **Verse 1: תְּהִלָּה** Tehillah – a noun meaning praise or adoration directed towards God.
 - b. People can have their heart fixed upon many objects, and these objects become their glory and the objects of their praise.
 - c. For David, God was the source of his praise and adoration
 2. The second thing we see about David was his holy life
 - a. Again, we cannot have a holy hatred at the sins of others if we don’t have a holy hatred of our own sin.
 - b. **Verse 2** implies they are falsely maligning the character of David
 - c. **Verse 3** - "fought against me without a cause."
David declares his righteousness with his adversaries
 3. **Verse 4** – implies that he had only demonstrated love towards his adversaries.
 - a. This might lead us to consider Absalom as David’s adversary but we can hardly imagine David’s imprecatory words directed at his son.
2 Samuel 18:33 KJV - "And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

- b. On the other hand we must pursue holiness no matter what. Perfect holiness will glorify God no matter who the perpetrator is. What will our attitude be on the Day of Judgment?
(Joab rebuked David's over affection for his son)
- c. Aaron knew this when God smote his two sons
Leviticus 10:2-3 KJV - "And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.
³ Then Moses said unto Aaron, This *is it* that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace."

II. Verses 6-20 - David prayer for God's justice upon his adversaries

Psalms 109:4 KJV - "but I *give myself unto prayer.*" A prayer of imprecation

- A. David begins praying against his adversaries
 - 1. Remember, David's motivation is the glory of God
 - 2. David's attention was not just on himself. He had an eye upon God's righteousness.
 - a. Anger over sin and a holy hatred over sin are not at all incompatible with the Gospel.
Spurgeon quotes:
"Anger against sin and a desire that evildoers may be punished, are not opposed to the spirit of the gospel, or to that love of enemies which our Lord both enjoined and exemplified. If the emotion or its utterance were essentially sinful, how could Paul wish the enemy of Christ and the perverter of the gospel to be accursed."
 - b. We can have a holy hatred of the sinner while at the same time be filled with pity and a desire for his salvation.
 - c. We can have a holy hatred for the sinner with regard to their blasphemy towards God and at the same time love them and have pity upon them when they persecute us.
Matthew 5:44 KJV - "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;"
 - d. We can pray "for" them and at the same time pray for God's justice "against" them.
 - 3. I've pointed out in the past, David's greatest concern was the glory of God
 - a. David frequently contrasts righteousness and wickedness. His desire is for God to destroy all wickedness from the face of the earth. His great desire is for God to be honored in destroying all wickedness.
 - b. Christians during the time of Hitler should have prayed for his overthrow and destruction and should have rejoiced at his fall.

4. The prayers of God's people are powerful.
 - a. John Knox was credited with flaming the fires of the Reformation in Scotland. In response to Knox's imprecatory prayers, Mary Queen of Scots is reputed to have said: "I fear the prayers of John Knox more than all the assembled armies of Europe."
 - b. We must pray fervently that God would destroy all wickedness from the face of the earth – either through regeneration, or through the justice of His vindication
- B. Nowhere else in Scripture do we find such powerful words of imprecation
1. **Verse 8** - David prays for the end of his adversary's life
This person must have been someone of position. David prays, "Let someone else take his office." The word implies "oversight"
Peter quotes from this passage applying it to Judas Iscariot.
 2. We are particularly stirred at the curses upon the wife and children of David's adversary
Psalm 109:9 KJV - "Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow."
Psalm 109:10 KJV - "Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek *their bread* also out of their desolate places."
 3. **Verses 17-18** describes perfect justice
We also saw this in **Psalm 28**
Psalm 28:4 – "Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert."
- III. **Verses 21-31** – David's plea for God's mercy in his own life
- A. David calls upon God for deliverance, but his motive is God's glory
Psalm 109:21- "But do thou for me, O GOD the Lord, for thy name's sake"
1. This is consistent with the rest of the psalm. David's imprecatory words towards his enemies were not motivated by personal vengeance.
 2. David left all vengeance to God
Romans 12:19 KJV - "Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."
 3. David wanted God to deliver him, but only if it glorified the name of God. His enemies were slandering him, but David wasn't as concerned about his own reputation as he was for God's reputation.
 4. David's prayer was, deliver me in such a way that they might know of a certainty that this was the mighty hand of God.
Psalm 109:27 KJV - "That they may know that this *is* thy hand; *that* thou, LORD, hast done it."
- B. In the final two verses David anticipates God's deliverance
1. He is praising God for God's great deliverance
Psalm 109:30 KJV - "I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; yea, I will praise him among the multitude."
 2. In essence David is saying, "Let my enemies curse, but I will praise God in their midst – and they will know that God's mighty hand is with me."
 3. God is never absent when His people are in need.
Psalm 109:31 KJV - "For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save *him* "

Conclusion:

1. May this psalm convict us of our own selfish concern for our own name. Paul says, “Be angry, and sin not . . .” May God grant us to have holy anger at all that offends God.
2. And may this holy anger be reflected in our own holy lives—that we do not allow anything that offends our great God.