

# PSALM 109

Whether David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul, or when his son Absalom rebelled against him, or upon occasion of some other trouble that was given him, is uncertain; and whether the particular enemy he prays against was Saul, or Doeg, or Ahithophel, or some other not mentioned in the story, we cannot determine; but it is certain that in penning it he had an eye to Christ, his sufferings and his persecutors, for that imprecation (v. 8) is applied to Judas, ~~400~~ Acts 1:20. The rest of the prayers here against his enemies were the expressions, not of passion, but of the Spirit of prophecy.

**I.** He lodges a complaint in the court of heaven of the malice and base ingratitude of his enemies and with it an appeal to the righteous God (v. 1-5).

**II.** He prays against his enemies, and devotes them to destruction (v. 6-20).

**III.** He prays for himself, that God would help and succour him in his low condition (v. 21-29).

**IV.** He concludes with a joyful expectation that God would appear for him (v. 30, 31). In singing this psalm we must comfort ourselves with the believing foresight of the certain destruction of all the enemies of Christ and his church, and the certain salvation of all those that trust in God and keep close to him.

## ~~400~~ PSALM 109:1-5

### APPEAL TO GOD AGAINST ENEMIES

*To the chief Musician. A psalm of David.*

It is the unspeakable comfort of all good people that, whoever is against them, God is for them, and to him they may apply as to one that is pleased to concern himself for them. Thus David here.

**I.** He refers himself to God's judgment (v. 1): “*Hold not thy peace, but let my sentence come forth from thy presence,* <sup><150></sup>Psalm 17:2. Delay not to give judgment upon the appeal made to thee.” God saw what his enemies did against him, but seemed to connive at it, and to keep silence: “Lord,” says he, “do not always do so.” The title he gives to God is observable: “*O God of my praise!* the God in whom *I glory*, and not in any wisdom or strength of my own, from whom I have every thing that is my praise, or the God whom I have praised, and will praise, and hope to be for ever praising.” He had before called God the *God of his mercy* (<sup><150></sup>Psalm 59:10), here he calls him *the God of his praise*. Forasmuch as God is the *God of our mercies* we must make him the *God of our praises*; if all is of him and from him, all must be to him and for him.

**II.** He complains of his enemies, showing that they were such as it was fit for the righteous God to appear against.

**1.** They were very spiteful and malicious: They are *wicked*; they delight in doing mischief (v. 2); their words are *words of hatred*, v. 3. They had an implacable enmity to a good man because of his goodness. “They open their mouths against me to swallow me up, and *fight against me* to cut me off if they could.”

**2.** They were notorious liars; and lying comprehends two of the seven things which the Lord hates. “They are *deceitful* in their protestations and professions of kindness, while at the same time they speak against me behind my back, *with a lying tongue*.” They were equally false in their flatteries and in their calumnies.

**3.** They were both public and restless in their designs; “They *compassed me about* on all sides, so that, which way soever I looked, I could see nothing but what made against me.”

**4.** They were unjust; their accusations of him, and sentence against him, were all groundless: “*They have fought against me without a cause*; I never gave them any provocation.” Nay, which was worst of all,

**5.** They were very ungrateful, and *rewarded him evil for good*, v. 5. Many a kindness he had done them, and was upon all occasions ready to do them, and yet he could not work upon them to abate their malice against him, but, on the contrary, they were the more exasperated because they could not provoke him to give them some occasion against him (v. 4): *For*

*my love they are my adversaries.* The more he endeavoured to gratify them the more they hated him. We may wonder that it is possible that any should be so wicked; and yet, since there have been so many instances of it, we should not wonder if any be so wicked against us.

**III.** He resolves to keep close to his duty and take the comfort of that: *But I give myself unto prayer* (v. 4), *I prayer* (so it is in the original); “I am for prayer, I am a man of prayer, I love prayer, and prize prayer, and practise prayer, and make a business of prayer, and am in my element when I am at prayer.” A good man is made up of prayer, *gives himself to prayer*, as the apostles, ~~4404~~ Acts 6:4. When David's enemies falsely accused him, and misrepresented him, he applied to God and by prayer committed his cause to him. Though they were his adversaries for his love, yet he continued to pray for them; if others are abusive and injurious to us, yet let not us fail to do our duty to them, nor *sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for them*, ~~4923~~ 1 Samuel 12:23. Though they hated and persecuted him for his religion, yet he kept close to it; they laughed at him for his devotion, but they could not laugh him out of it. “Let them say what they will, *I give myself unto prayer.*” Now herein David was a type of Christ, who was compassed about with *words of hatred* and lying words, whose enemies not only persecuted him without cause, but for his love and his *good works* (~~4802~~ John 10:32); and yet he *gave himself to prayer*, to pray for them. *Father, forgive them.*

## ~~4916~~ PSALM 109:6-20

### PROPHETIC IMPRECATIONS

David here fastens upon some one particular person that was worse than the rest of his enemies, and the ringleader of them, and in a devout and pious manner, not from a principle of malice and revenge, but in a holy zeal for God and against sin and with an eye to the enemies of Christ, particularly Judas who betrayed him, whose sin was greater than Pilate's that condemned him (~~4801~~ John 19:11), he imprecates and predicts his destruction, foresees and pronounces him completely miserable, and such a one as our Saviour calls him, *A son of perdition*. Calvin speaks of it as a detestable piece of sacrilege, common in his time among Franciscan friars and other monks, that if any one had malice against a neighbour he might

hire some of them to curse him every day, which he would do in the words of these verses; and particularly he tells of a lady in France who, being at variance with her own and only son, hired a parcel of friars to curse him in these words. Greater impiety can scarcely be imagined than to vent a devilish passion in the language of sacred writ, to kindle strife with coals snatched from God's altar, and to call for fire from heaven with a tongue set on fire of hell.

**I.** The imprecations here are very terrible — woe, and a thousand woes, to that man against whom God says *Amen* to them; and they are all in full force against the implacable enemies and persecutors of God's church and people, that *will not repent, to give him glory*. It is here foretold concerning this bad man,

**1.** That he should be cast and sentenced as a criminal, with all the dreadful pomp of a trial, conviction, and condemnation (v. 6, 7): *Set thou a wicked man over him*, to be as cruel and oppressive to him as he has been to others; for God often makes one wicked man a scourge to another, to spoil the spoilers and to deal treacherously with those that have dealt treacherously. *Set the wicked one over him* (so some), that is, Satan, as it follows; and then it was fulfilled in Judas, into whom Satan entered, to hurry him into sin first and then into despair. Set his own wicked heart over him, set his own conscience against him; let that fly in his face. *Let Satan stand on his right hand*, and be let loose against him to deceive him, as he did Ahab to his destruction, and then to accuse him and resist him, and then he is certainly cast, having no interest in that advocate who alone can say, *The Lord rebuke thee, Satan* (<sup>301</sup>Zechariah 3:1, 2); when he shall be judged at men's bar let not his usual arts to evade justice do him any service, but let his sin find him out and *let him be condemned*; nor shall he escape before God's tribunal, but be condemned there when the day of inquisition and recompence shall come. *Let his prayer become sin*, as the clamours of a condemned malefactor not only find no acceptance, but are looked upon as an affront to the court. The prayers of the wicked now become sin, because soured with the leaven of hypocrisy and malice; and so they will in the great day, because then it will be too late to cry, *Lord, Lord, open to us*. Let every thing be turned against him and improved to his disadvantage, even his prayers.

**2.** That, being condemned, he should be executed as a most notorious malefactor.

(1.) That he should lose his life, and the number of his months be cut off in the midst, by the sword of justice: *Let his days be few*, or shortened, as a condemned criminal has but a few days to live (v. 8); such bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.

(2.) That consequently all his places should be disposed of to others, and they should enjoy his preferments and employments: *Let another take his office*. This Peter applies to the filling up of Judas's place in the truly sacred college of the apostles, by the choice of Matthias, ~~411~~ Acts 1:20. Those that mismanage their trusts will justly have their office taken from them and given to those that will approve themselves faithful.

(3.) That his family should be beheaded and beggared, that *his wife* should be made *a widow* and *his children fatherless*, by his untimely death, v. 9. Wicked men, by their wicked courses, bring ruin upon their wives and children, whom they ought to take care of and provide for. Yet his children, if, when they lost their father, they had a competency to live upon, might still subsist in comfort; but they shall be *vagabonds and shall beg*; they shall not have a house of their own to live in, nor any certain dwelling-place, nor know where to have a meal's-meat, but shall creep *out of their desolate places* with fear and trembling, like beasts out of their dens, to *seek their bread* (v. 10), because they are conscious to themselves that all mankind have reason to hate them for their father's sake.

(4.) That his estate should be ruined, as the estates of malefactors are confiscated (v. 11): *Let the extortioner*, the officer, seize *all that he has and let the stranger*, who was nothing akin to his estate, *spoil his labour*, either for his crimes or for his debts, ~~412~~ Job 5:4, 5.

(5.) That his posterity should be miserable. Fatherless children, though they have nothing of their own, yet sometimes are well provided for by the kindness of those whom God inclines to pity them; but this wicked man having never shown mercy there shall *be none to extend mercy to him*, by *favouring his fatherless children* when he is gone, v. 12. The children of wicked parents often fare the worse for their parents' wickedness in this way that the bowels of men's compassion are shut up from them, which yet ought not to be, for why should children suffer for that which was not their fault, but their infelicity?

(6.) That his memory should be infamous, and buried in oblivion and disgrace (v. 13): *Let his posterity be cut off; let his end be to destruction*

(so Dr. Hammond); *and in the next generation let their name be blotted out*, or remembered with contempt and indignation, and (v. 15) let an indelible mark of disgrace be left upon it. See here what hurries some to shameful deaths, and brings the families and estates of others to ruin, makes them and their despicable and odious, and entails poverty, and shame, and misery, upon their posterity; it is sin, that mischievous destructive thing. The learned Dr. Hammond applies this to the final dispersion and desolation of the Jewish nation for their crucifying Christ; their princes and people were cut off, their country was laid waste, and their posterity were made fugitives and vagabonds.

**II.** The ground of these imprecations bespeaks them very just, though they sound very severe.

**1.** To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinner's posterity, the sin of his ancestors is here brought into the account (v. 14, 15), *the iniquity of his fathers and the sin of his mother*. These God often visits even upon the children's children, and is not unrighteous therein: when wickedness has long run in the blood justly does the curse run along with it. Thus all the innocent blood that had been shed upon the earth, from that of righteous Abel, was required from that persecuting generation, who, by putting Christ to death, *filled up the measure of their fathers*, and left as long a train of vengeance to follow them as the train of guilt was that went before them, which they themselves agreed to by saying, *His blood be upon us and on our children*.

**2.** To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinner himself, his own sin is here charged upon him, which called aloud for it.

**(1.)** He had loved cruelty, and therefore give him blood to drink (v. 16): *He remembered not to show mercy*, remembered not those considerations which should have induced him to show mercy, remembered not the objects of compassion that had been presented to him, but persecuted the poor, whom he should have protected and relieved, and *slew the broken in heart*, whom he should have comforted and healed. Here is a barbarous man indeed, not it to live.

**(2.)** He had loved cursing, and therefore let the curse come upon his head, v. 17-19. Those that were out of the reach of his cruelty he let fly at with his curses, which were impotent and ridiculous; but they shall return upon him. *He delighted not in blessing*; he took no pleasure in wishing well to

others, nor in seeing others do well; he would give nobody a good word or a good wish, much less would he do any body a good turn; and *so let all good be far from him. He clothed himself with cursing*; he was proud of it as an ornament that he could frighten all about him with the curses he was liberal of; he confided in it as armour, which would secure him from the insults of those he feared. And let him have enough of it. Was he fond of cursing? *Let God's curse come into his bowels like water* and swell him as with a dropsy, *and let it soak like oil into his bones*. The word of the curse *is quick and powerful, and divides between the joints and the marrow*; it works powerfully and effectually; it fastens on the soul; it is a piercing thing, and there is no antidote against it. Let it compass him on every side *as a garment*, v. 19. Let God's cursing him be his shame, as his cursing his neighbour was his pride; let it cleave to him as *a girdle*, and let him never be able to get clear of it. Let it be to him like the waters of jealousy, which caused the *belly to swell* and the *thigh to rot*. This points at the utter ruin of Judas, and the spiritual judgments which fell on the Jews for crucifying Christ. The psalmist concludes his imprecations with a terrible *Amen*, which signifies not only, "I wish it may be so," but "I know it shall be so." *Let this be the reward of my adversaries from the Lord*, v. 20. And this will be the reward of all the adversaries of the Lord Jesus; his enemies that will not have him to reign over them shall be *brought forth and slain before him*. And he will one day recompense tribulation to those that trouble his people.

## ~~PSALM~~ PSALM 109:21-31

### HUMBLE PETITIONS

David, having denounced God's wrath against his enemies, here takes God's comforts to himself, but in a very humble manner, and without boasting.

**I.** He pours out his complaint before God concerning the low condition he was in, which, probably, gave advantage to his enemies to insult over him: "*I am poor and needy*, and therefore a proper object of pity, and one that needs and craves thy help."

**1.** He was troubled in mind (v. 22): *My heart is wounded within me*, not only broken with outward troubles, which sometimes prostrate and sink

the spirits, but wounded with a sense of guilt; and *a wounded spirit who can bear?* who can heal?

2. He apprehended himself drawing near to his end: *I am gone like the shadow when it declines*, as good as gone already. Man's life, at best, is like a shadow; sometimes it is like the evening shadow, the presage of night approaching, *like the shadow when it declines*.

3. He was unsettled, *tossed up and down like the locust*, his mind fluctuating and unsteady, still putting him upon new counsels, his outward condition far from any fixation, but still upon the remove, hunted like a partridge on the mountains.

4. His body was wasted, and almost worn away (v. 24): *My knees are weak through fasting*, either forced fasting (for want of food when he was persecuted, or for want of appetite when he was sick) or voluntary fasting, when he chastened his soul either for sin or affliction, his own or other's, ~~PS~~ Psalm 35:13; 69:10. "*My flesh fails of fatness*; that is, it has lost the fatness it had, so that I have become a skeleton, nothing but skin and bones." But it is better to have this leanness in the body, while the soul prospers and is in health, than, like Israel, to have leanness sent into the soul, while the body is feasted.

5. He was ridiculed and reproached by his enemies (v. 25); his devotions and his afflictions they made the matter of their laughter, and, upon both those accounts, God's people have been exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that were at ease. In all this David was a type of Christ, who in his humiliation was thus wounded, thus weakened, thus reproached; he was also a type of the church, which is often *afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted*.

II. He prays for mercy for himself. In general (v. 21): "*Do thou for me, O God the Lord!* appear for me, act for me." If God be for us, he will do for us, will do *more abundantly for us than we are able either to ask or think*. He does not prescribe to God what he should do for him, but refers himself to his wisdom: "Lord, do for me what seems good in thy eyes. Do that which thou knowest will be for me, really for me, in the issue for me, though for the present it may seem to make against me." More particularly, he prays (v. 26): "*Help me, O Lord my God! O save me!* Help me under my trouble, save me out of my trouble; save me from sin, help me to do my duty." He prays (v. 28), Though they *curse, bless thou*. Here



**(I.)** He despises the causeless curses of his enemies: *Let them curse*. He said of Shimei, *So let him curse*. They can but show their malice; they can do him no more mischief than *the bird by wandering* or *the swallow by flying*, <sup><180></sup>Proverbs 26:2. He values the blessing of God as sufficient to counterbalance their curses: *Bless thou*, and then it is no matter though they *curse*. If God bless us, we need not care who curses us; for *how can they curse those whom God has not cursed*, nay, whom he has blessed? <sup><181></sup>Numbers 23:8. Men's curses are impotent; God's blessings are omnipotent; and those whom we unjustly curse may in faith expect and pray for God's blessing, his special blessing. When the Pharisees cast out the poor man for his confessing Christ, Christ *found him*, <sup><182></sup>John 9:35. When men without cause say all the ill they can of us, and wish all the ills they can to us, we may with comfort lift up our heart to God in this petition: *Let them curse, but bless thou*. He prays (v. 28), *Let thy servant rejoice*. Those that know how to value God's blessing, let them but be sure of it, and they will be glad of it.

**III.** He prays that his enemies might *be ashamed* (v. 28), *clothed with shame* (v. 29), that they might *cover themselves with their own confusion*, that they might be left to themselves, to do that which would expose them and *manifest their folly before all men*, or rather that they might be disappointed in their designs and enterprises against David, and thereby might be *filled with shame*, as the adversaries of the Jews were, <sup><183></sup>Nehemiah 6:16. Nay, in this he prays that they might be brought to repentance, which is the chief thing we should beg of God for our enemies. Sinners indeed bring shame upon themselves, but they are true penitents that take shame to themselves and *cover themselves with their own confusion*.

**IV.** He pleads God's glory, the honour of his name: — *Do for me, for thy name's sake* (v. 21), especially the honour of his goodness, by which he has proclaimed his name: "*Deliver me, because thy mercy is good; it is what thou thyself dost delight in, and it is what I do depend upon. Save me, not according to my merit, for I have none to pretend to, but according to thy mercy; let that be the fountain, the reason, the measure, of my salvation.*"

*Lastly*, He concludes the psalm with joy, the joy of faith, joy in assurance that his present conflicts would end in triumphs.

**1.** He promises God that he will praise him (v. 30): “*I will greatly praise the Lord, not only with my heart, but with my mouth; I will praise him, not in secret only, but among the multitude.*” **2.** He promises himself that he shall have cause to praise God (v. 31): *He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, nigh to him, a present help; he shall stand at his right hand as his patron and advocate to plead his cause against his accusers and to bring him off, to save him from those that condemn his soul and would execute their sentence if they could. God was David's protector in his sufferings, and was present also with the Lord Jesus in his, stood at his right hand, so that he was not moved* (~~1968~~ Psalm 16:8), saved his soul from those that pretended to be the judges of it, and received it into his own hands. Let all those that *suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him.*