

## **Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, Praise In Book II, Session 3**

### **Lament-Praise**

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This is Dr. Ted Hildebrandt in his teaching on the praise of God in the second book of the Psalter. This is session number three on lament and imprecation as the basis of praise.

Welcome to our third presentation of the praise of God in book two of the Psalter.

Today, we're basically going to go over three things. These are three major ideas that come out of book two in relationship to praise. First of all, we're going to talk about the ritualistic background of the book of Psalms.

Psalms is centered on the temple and the ritual was very important for those people back then and for us today. So, we'll talk about the ritualistic background of book two in terms of praise. Then we'll go into two that are very difficult topics.

One is a lament. I'm going to try to establish lament as the basis for praise. Then secondly, we're going to work on imprecation as the basis for praise.

That is where the rubber meets the road. That's a difficult connection to make. What happened is basically as I read book two over and over and over again, I kept noticing how frequently the imprecations played the background to praise.

So those would be the three things we're going to tackle today in our third presentation. Thank you for joining us. Now, last time we talked about the three main characters of the book of Psalms.

So, we had the king, we had the psalmist, and we had the enemy. These were our three main characters. Then what we noticed was that the enemy plotted to harm and devour and snare, dig pits, and their mouth devours like lions and serpents and wild animals, wild dogs.

The enemy is attacking the suppliant or the psalmist. The psalmist then pleads to the king and he laments and cries out. The king pleads and petitions, sacrifices, and then basically the king responds to the psalmist with deliverance, salvation, rescue, and protection.

We said there were metaphors like fortress and rock and security. Those types of things. Then ultimately the king renders justice.

Now the king also, and this is what we'll be focusing on today. The king also, while he saves and delivers the psalmist, also fights against, defeats, punishes, and renders justice against the enemy. That's where the imprecations, the judgments will come in.

We'll look at that today as a basis for praise. Then the psalmist will praise God on the basis of that. So, our three characters fit into our discussions today.

Now I want to begin with this ritualistic context of praise. The book of Psalms is written in what Old Testament scholars call the cultic background, which basically means ritual. The temple is the focus or loci of the expressions of the Psalms.

Where you have like in something like Proverbs, the king in his court with his sages is the center. You have the historical books and they go into the annals of the kings and backgrounds of Moses and that kind of thing. But with Psalms, the temple is really the focus and the rituals that go on in that kind of environment.

So, what we're going to look at today, and I just want to look at book two and we'll go through some of these things about how the ritual kind of makes its way into the text of book two of the Psalter. So, I'll just read some passages out of it. For example, the opening pair in Psalms chapter 42 and 43 verses 42, 3, and 4, it says, my tears have become my food day and night while men say of me all day long, where is your God? And so, he's being taunted and the way that the enemy taunts him is where is your God? And that is the taunt then that ripples through book two of the Psalter.

These things I remember as I pour out my soul, how I used to go with a multitude leading the procession to the house of God. So do you see that the procession, he consoles himself. The enemy asks, where is your God? And he says I remember when I went with the multitude, with the procession to the house of God, that is the temple with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng.

Then just down a few verses in chapter 43 verses 3 and 4, you remember chapters 42 and 43 are a Psalm pair, similar to Psalms 1 and 2, similar to Psalms 9 and 10, Psalms 42 and 43. So it's 43, 3 and 4. It says, send forth your light and your truth. Let them guide me. Let them bring me to your holy mountain, the holy mountain, Mount Zion, where the temple is, to the place where you dwell.

Then I will go about your altar, the altar of God. Then I will go about the altar of God. So, you see then it's a temple context with the altar in front of the temple.

And he says, then I will go to the altar to God, my joy and delight. I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God. I will praise you.

So, the praise with the harp is taking place in the context of the temple, the mountain of God, and the altar here from chapters 42 and 43 as book two opens. Now, when we go to the next one, the next one talks probably more in detail than any other one in book two about this procession leading to the sanctuary. There will be other Psalms where they call them Psalms of Ascent where people go up to Jerusalem.

But here in chapter 68, let me read some verses that talk about, and then it concludes with Baruch Elohim, blessed be God. Psalm 48 verses 24 through 27. It says, starting, your procession has come into view, O God, the procession of my God and King.

Notice the linking of God and King there. These are major characters, and a major metaphor of Psalm in the book of Psalms. God is King.

So, O God, the procession of my God and King into the sanctuary. In front are the singers and after them the musicians. So, it's actually giving us how this procession took place.

Out front are the singers followed by the musicians with the instruments. With them are the maidens playing the tambourines. Praise God in the great congregation.

And so, you see that this is all taking place in the temple. The procession is going, singers, musicians, young girls playing the tambourine and they go up in the congregation to praise God. Praise the Lord in the assembly of Israel.

There is the little tribe of Benjamin leading them. So, it goes through the tribes and it shows how the tribes then go follow these singers, musicians, and tambourine players. They go up to the temple and little tribal Benjamin is leading them.

Then in verse 35, it goes, 68:35, you are awesome, O God, in your sanctuary, the place where it took place. The God of Israel gives power and strength to his people. Praise be to God or Baruch Elohim.

Praise be to God. So that's the procession and it describes in detail how the procession of the singers and musicians, as well as the tribes go up to the sanctuary. Now over to chapter 51 and 51 is probably the most famous Psalm in Book 2.

51 is the basically penitential Psalm of David after sin with Bathsheba. And I'm saying, Lord, forgive my transgressions, my iniquities, and give me a clean heart, O God. But in chapter 51 verses 15 to 19, there's praise in the context of sacrifice.

And this is a song of praise. Let me just read these verses Psalm 51. 15 through 19, O Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise.

You do not delight in sacrifice. They're going up in the context of the altar, the temple, the congregation is there. They're leading in the singing.

He says, but you do not delight in sacrifice. So, it's not just a ritualistic thing. The ritual by itself means nothing.

But he says, you do not delight in sacrifice or I would bring it. You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. Again, the context is the altar where this Psalm of penitential Psalm 51 would be sung.

O God, you will not despise. In your good pleasure, make Zion prosper. Again, the Jerusalem motif coming up very big here.

Build up the walls of Jerusalem. Now this is in David's penitential Psalm, Psalm 51. And we notice that Psalms 46 to 48 were really focused on the city of God, the mountain of God, and the temple.

And here we see that over in 51 it picks up that strain of Jerusalem. Build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then there will be righteous sacrifices.

Apparently, sacrifices depend on the character of those that offer righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you. Then bulls will be offered on your altar. Now, by the way, very interesting connection between Psalm 51 and Psalm 50.

In Psalm 50, God says, basically, Hey, I don't want your sacrifices. I don't need, do you think I eat your sacrifices? Did I need your food? He says I don't need your food. I own a cattle on a thousand hills.

Can I remember that song? I own the cattle on a thousand hills, the insects I even keep track of. I don't need your food. And it's interesting.

So, Psalm 50, you get this kind of like God saying, Hey, don't think you're doing me any big favor by feeding me with your sacrifices. I don't need this. However, David in Psalm 51 then continues over to this penitential Psalm and says righteous sacrifice.

What are the righteous sacrifices of God? Are broken and a contrite heart you will not despise. And so that's the part that God is interested in. David brings that up in Psalm 51.

Now one last one on the ritualistic context or the cultic context. It comes from over in chapter 66 verses 13 through 20, praise in the context of the temple, sacrifice, and prayer. And again, this is a Baruch Elohim kind of comment that's made there in 66, 13 through 20.

It says I will come to your temple with burnt offerings and fulfill my vows. Now you see vows are also a cultic kind of ritualistic thing, making a vow. And now he comes to the temple to fulfill his vow to you.

Vows my lips promised and my mouth spoke when I was in trouble. We're going to see later on; we're going to call this a vow to praise. In other words, the Psalmist is in trouble.

He cries out to God, his king, and he says, God save me. And basically he makes a vow that if you save me, I will praise you. And so, you have this vow to praise here.

Vows my lips promised and my mouth spoke when I was in trouble. I will sacrifice fat animals to you and the offering of rams. I will offer bulls and goats.

And you see all the sacrificial kind of language here. Selah, meditative pause. Come and listen, all you who fear the Lord, let me tell you what he has done for me.

Now he's fulfilling his vow, telling others when he was in trouble, he vowed and now he's fulfilling it. I cried out to him with my mouth. His praise was on my tongue.

If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. So here you see there's a characterological or a virtue prerequisite to God hearing his prayer. But God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer.

Praise be to God, Baruch Elohim, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me. And so again, very much in a context, a ritualistic kind of context there, focusing on the sacrifices, the praise of God, him coming to fulfill his vow. Kind of similar to what Paul did when he took the Nazarite vow in the book of Acts and then came to Jerusalem.

The Nazarite would have to shave his head and burn his hair on the altar. Beware the vow was completed as we see over in Numbers also with the Nazarite vow in Numbers 5 and 6 there. Okay.

Now we are switching and this is going to be a big one. Lament as a basis for praise. So, this is going to be one of our major topics then, lament as a basis of praise, and then we'll do imprecation as the basis for praise.

Now, first of all, let's begin with just a guy named Herman Gunkel who basically went through and brilliantly and in great detail broke the Psalms up into what are called different genres. One of the genres was called the Psalms of Lament. Other people don't like the term lament, which is unfortunate for them, I think, and call them Psalms of Petition.

And so, there's a kind of a terminological discussion there. Now there's Psalms of Lament of the individual. Psalm 42 and 43, this opening pair, that was individual lament.

Psalm 51, Psalm 54 to 57, 59, 61, 64, 69 through 71. So, you see there are quite a few Psalms in book two that are individual Psalms of Lament. The community lament is when it switches from the individual, which is an I, me, my kind of thing, individual, singular.

Community switches to we, our, us kind of thing. And in Psalm 44 and Psalm 60, you have a community lament usually identified by the pronouns going to the plural, we, us, and our. And then finally you have the hymns.

You have hymns in 47 and then especially 65 to 68 are the great hymns in the second book of the Psalter. The hymns are praise to God straight up. So when anybody normally studies the praise of God in book two, you're going to run right straight to 65 to 66, 67, and 68 and get those Psalms of praise.

However, as I went through and kept reading Book 2 of the Psalter over and over again, I began noticing that much of the praise, yes, it's in the hymns, but there was a ton of praise in these Psalms of Lament. And so, I started seeing a connection between these Psalms of Lament. What I'd like to do next is just go through, this is a classic Psalm of Lament.

I realize it's in book one, book one, and book two of the Psalter, chapters one to 41 is book one. And much of the laments are found in that first book. Also in book two, as we showed before, there are a ton of these lament Psalms.

Now what happens is as you move from book one and book two laments in many ways, when you get to book five at the end of the Psalter, you'll find that that's where the praises are. Psalm 145 to 150 praise God, praise God over and over again, hallelujah kind of thing. Praise the Lord.

Now what's interesting is that even in book two, it starts with laments and then goes to praise at the end of book two. So there seems to be this lament to praise movement. Lament, the earlier Psalms and the ending 65 to 68, the hymns of praise.

So, what I want to do is just read a classic. This is a short classic Psalm of Lament and just show you this shift. This is the big point I'm trying to make that there's a shift that happens in lament Psalms.

The shift goes from basically lament, to then all of a sudden in the Psalm, apparently for no reason, but there is a reason. I think God delivered the person. There's a shift to praise.

So, there's a shift from lament to praise in many of these lament Psalms. So, Psalm 13, is a classic, by the way, we've got a student here, Wes Roberts, who did a brilliant visualization of Psalm 13. It's up on YouTube.

If you're interested, Wes Roberts' portrayal of Psalm 13. It's very good. Classical lament.

Here's how it starts out. Now I always tell people, can you picture yourself being in a church and the elder of your church stands up and he's going to pray a Psalm to God. He stands up in your church, the elder, and he starts out his prayer like this.

The Psalms are prayers after all, many of them. How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever? And you can just hear the hush running through the church. How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? And you can see people raising their hands.

God hasn't forgotten you. God knows everything. God remembers you.

And you can see people jumping in to break up his lament because we can't take laments. But he says, how long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? So, you see the Psalmist being attacked by the enemy again. How long will the enemy triumph over me? This is the lament.

He's asking God, how long, how long? Look on me and answer me, O my God, give light to my eyes or I will sleep in death. My enemy will say, I have overcome him and my foes will rejoice when I fall. Boom, shift happens.

Here it happens. But I trust in your unfailing love. My heart rejoices in your salvation.

I will sing to the Lord for he has been good to me. And so, the Psalm ends. There's a break.

He laments. He's not afraid of being honest with God. How long, O Lord, will you forget me? And that's how he feels.

And then all of a sudden, boom, he switches to this praise at the end of Psalm 13. This is characteristic of a lot of the laments. Now I must say, not all the laments end like that.

We always like to end on this happy note of praise. Some of the Psalms, and that's why I love the Psalms, are so realistic that it comes down and the guy is lamenting, lamenting. It's getting darker.

And all of a sudden he ends and he ends the Psalm kind of down. He doesn't come up for air. So, Psalm 88 is a classic on that.

Be careful then. Everybody says, well, the lament Psalms always end on praise. That's not always true.

And by the way, that's often true with life too. While life can have the turn and can have the change to praise, sometimes this goes down and that's the beauty of the Psalms. They portray life as it really is.

Psalm 88 does not come up for air. Why, O Lord, Psalm 88, do you reject me and hide your face from me? From my youth, I have been afflicted and close to death. I have suffered your tears and am in despair.

Your wrath has swept over me. Your terrors have destroyed me. All day long they surround me like a flood.

They have completely engulfed me. You have taken my companions and loved ones from me. Darkness is my closest friend.

Period. End of discussion. Darkness is my closest friend.

We say, well, wait a minute, you've got to come up for praise. No, darkness is my closest friend. Period.

End of it. Some people have tried to get out of the pessimism, and I don't agree with this pessimism of Psalm 88 by trying to tie it into Psalm 89. But I think that violates the integrity of Psalm 88.

And by the way, Psalms 88 and 89 are not a pair. You have Psalm pairs, clear pairs in chapters one and two are a clear pair. Chapters 42 and 43, as we have shown with the repeated refrain are a clear pair.

Psalm 9 and 10 are a clear pair where there's an acrostic and this acrostic runs from chapter 9 to chapter 10, linking them together. Psalms 89 and 88 are not a pair like that. And so, I think what you have here is similar to what you have at the end of the book of Mark, Mark 16 at the end of verse 8. At the end of Mark 16:8 it ends with the resurrection of Jesus and the women come and what they're in fear and trembling.



And it ends there. And that's why the monks, I think, said that's a really bad ending to a gospel. You got to end up with Jesus rose from the dead.

It's got to be positive. And so, all of a sudden you get the long ending of the book of Mark. But I think the short ending of the book of Mark, and you'll notice in the NIV and others mark that off, basically, the women are with fear and trembling, and then boom, the gospel ends.

And I think it's poignant. It gets you to think about things. It gets you to think about life and things and how these women were terrified.

I think you have to ask, take that notion of fear and trembling back through the book of Mark, and get to see some very interesting things there. So, these are laments and we've talked some about laments. Now let's focus, by the way, I should say too, I forgot the great lament that everybody in this room or listening to this will know is Psalm 22.

It goes, David, by the way, this is a Psalm of David. Now when I say it, you're not going to think David, you're going to think somebody else. I want you to think David.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from my groanings? And he goes on and on, Psalm 22. As soon as I say, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? You say, well, whose mouth is that on? That's David writing a thousand years before Jesus. Jesus would take that Psalm on his lips when he was on the cross.

So that's the importance of lament, not just a minor thing. Jesus in one of the most critical times of his life picks up the lament and allows the lament to express his relationship to his father. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Now let's jump over and let's make this connection between lament and praise.

I'm going to jump into book two now because that's our focus of attention here. Let me just say, I think the laments have been underplayed in the church. We are in a church context where everybody loves to think if you follow Jesus and you live your life right, that everything will go well for you in life.

The Psalms of lament, Jesus on the cross, tell us that that's not always true. So, the prosperity gospel is a death. I think what's happening to our culture is we love the notion of prosperity rather than the very harsh statements of Jesus, give it all away.

If you want to be my follower, those are very hard statements. The laments also come from the mouth of Jesus. They're underplayed in our culture because we like it happy.

It's kind of like Proverbs and other cultures and even the Bible. Basically, if you're a happy person and you have a lot of wealth, you have a thousand friends, but if you're poor and sad, the person who weeps, weeps alone. The person who rejoices has a hundred friends.

And what I'm saying is, I think we need to, Jesus says, you weep. I believe it's Paul that weep with those that weep and you rejoice with those that rejoice. Okay, over to the gospel here.

Let me just pick up one thing at the bottom of this last slide here. I want to say this, the importance of lament as a basis of praise. I want to say that lament plays the rich hues of praise arising out of the cry for the King's deliverance.

So even on the screen, as we've struggled with the screen when you have a dark background, the white stands out better. If you have a tan background here, the letters would not bounce out. So, lament is going to give us that dark background from which praise will stand forth.

So, I think the rich hues of lament play the background for Psalms. So, we want to connect it up and basically the point here too is that what I want to suggest is that praise is basically reality anchored. In other words, this isn't just praising God.

We praise God for who you are, not for what you've done. The Psalmist says, no, I praise you for what you've done. And so, the praise is anchored in reality.

So that's the ups and downs in life and that doesn't just make everything happy. Lament is the basis of praise. Five examples and I want to just work through five examples.

There are many, many more here, but let me just work through these five. First of all, chapters 42 and 43, you see me keep coming back to these chapters. Chapter 42 verse three says this, my tears have been my food day and night while men say to me all day long, quote, where is your God? Chapter 42 verse 10, my bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me saying to me all day long, quote, where is your God? Same question, same question repeated twice in the psalm pair.

The refrain of the psalm then breaks out. It says, why are you downcast my soul? Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why are you so disturbed within me? And then he makes the break. The shift occurs.

Put your hope in God. I will yet praise him. How does he break out of this downcast soul? He breaks out when he thinks, I will yet praise him, my Savior, the one who's going to give me deliverance, my Savior and my God.

Now that's one case then where you have this, where is your God? And then my soul is downcast and then boom, he breaks out of it. Over in chapter 57, we have our second, this is our second one. We probably bounce over here just to see this for a bit.

And basically, this is Psalm 57, another psalm that we're going to bring out this lament and see this shift here. Now let me just read these verses from Psalm 57. Verse two, I cry out to God most high, to God who fulfills his purpose for me.

He sends from heaven and saves me rebuking those who hotly pursue me. So you see this hot pursuit. You see the enemies kind of coming after him.

God sends his love and his faithfulness. I am in the midst of lions, he said. Now remember how lions were one of the metaphors used for the enemy.

I lie among ravenous beasts, men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp as swords. So, instruments of destruction and harm. They spread a net for my feet.

I was bowed down in distress. They dug a pit in my path, but they have fallen into it themselves. So, they dig a pit as a snare for them and they fall into themselves.

Now down in verse nine and following then you get this kind of shift happening. So basically, he says, you've got these ravenous beasts coming after me. Their tongues and things are sharp as swords and they're really coming after me.

And then all of a sudden in verse nine, chapter 57, verse nine, you get this shift occurring. He says, I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations. I will sing of you among the peoples for great is your love reaching to the heavens.

Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let your glory be over all the earth.

This aspect of Psalm 57 verses 9 to 11, was featured in a psalm by a guy named Matt Houghland. It's on YouTube. I just looked it up before we came in.

It's called Great is Your Love. If you want to search for it, Great is Your Love by Matt Houghland. It's on YouTube.

Matt was one of my former students. He works up at Camp Forest Springs up in Wisconsin. He is a tremendous musician and a beautiful singer.

He sings based on this passage. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let your glory be above all the earth.

Where did that come from? It came from these ravenous beasts ready to devour the psalmist. Then he turns and this shift toward praise happens. Then he goes off on this great praise to God.

I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations. Again, breaking out of that Jerusalem context. Remember we had Jerusalem chapters 46 to 48, 51, etc.

And now all of a sudden you see it from Jerusalem breaking out into all the nations. So, this is Psalm 57, beautiful shifting from this lament to praise once again. Now we're going to jump over to Psalm 59 for our third one.

And this one says Psalm 59 starts out with the lament. And it says, see how they lie and wait for me. Fierce men conspire against me for no offense or sin of mine, O Lord.

I have done no wrong yet they are ready to attack me. Arise to help me. Look on my plight.

I have done no wrong yet they are ready to attack me. So, he's got this they're ready to attack and he cries out to God. They return at evening like snarling, snarling like dogs, and prowl about the city.

So, you have this kind of ravenous animal kind of metaphor. Do you remember the dogs going after them, licking up the blood of Jezebel and devouring her and stuff that was like a bad thing, really bad thing. See what they spew from their mouths.

They spew out swords from their lips. Again, lips and swords being connected, damage that they're doing through their speaking. And they say, who can hear us? They think they get away with it.

Nobody knows about this. Who can hear us? They return in the evening like snarling like dogs and prowling about the city. Verse 14.

And then what happens? Again, these snarling dogs attacking and ready to consume him. And then all of a sudden verse 19 or 16, 59, 16, boom, you get this shift. And the shift here it is, but I will sing of your strength in the morning.

Notice they're prowling around at night. He will sing of your strength in the morning. I will sing of your love for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble.

Again, the king metaphor breaks down into the rock metaphor, fortress metaphor, the citadel tower kind of strong tower kind of metaphor. Oh, my strength, I sing praise to you. Oh God, oh God, you are my fortress, my loving God.

So that's again with the connection between lament and the shift over to praise. Now a couple more, that was number three. Number four is going to be Psalm 69.

69 is a long psalm, a psalm of lament. And basically, we're going to see the same lament giving way to praise. So, Psalm 69 reading through these, save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.

You can think of Jeremiah. Remember, Jeremiah was put in that septic tank for several days. He almost died in there.

And so, this cry out from the waters coming up to my neck, I sink in the miry depths where there is no foothold. I have come into deep waters and floods engulf me. I am worn out calling for help.

My throat is parched. My eyes fail looking for my God. Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head.

Many are my enemies without cause. They seek to destroy me. I am forced to restore what I did not steal.

And then he comes in verse six and says this, may those who hope in you not be disgraced because of me, O Lord, the Lord Almighty. May those who seek you not be put to shame because of me, O God of Israel. For I endure scorn.

Now he goes back to describing the lamentable situation he's in. I endure scorn for your sake and shame covers my face. Again, it's in a shame and honor culture.

It's a big thing. He's imbibing the shame that's coming upon him. I am a stranger to my brothers and an alien to my own mother's sons.

The shame is so deep that even his family relations break down. For the zeal of your house consumes me. Sound familiar to anybody? The zeal of your house consumes me.

I wonder who that was talking about? David. Yes. Jesus, later on when he cleanses the temple, the zeal of your house consumes me.

And the insults of those who insult you fall on me. When I weep and fast, I must endure scorn. When I put on sackcloth or burlap, people make sport of me.

Those who sit at the gate, a place of honor where the elders are, those who sit at the gate mock me. I am a song of drunkards. Verse 19 then, you know how I am scorned, disgraced, and shamed.

All my enemies are before you, God. Scorn has broken my heart and left me helpless. I looked for sympathy, but there was none.

Comforters, but I found none. Check this out. Okay.

Let me just read that again. It's beautiful. I looked for sympathy, but there was none.

For comforters, but found none. They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst. Sound familiar? Cross of Jesus Christ.

They gave me gall. They gave me vinegar for my thirst. There was no one to comfort.

The disciples had run away. Now this is David. They were talking about these Psalms and Jesus incarnating the Psalms and these laments.

So, Jesus verbalized the laments. He incarnated the laments. And by the way, if we are followers of Jesus, we are told to take up our what? Take up our prosperity? No, no.

Take up our cross and follow him. This is a description. It happened to David, it happened to Jesus.

It echoes through Scripture. And by the way, if we're true followers of Christ, it's going to echo through our lives as well. Psalm 69, is that where he leaves things? No, there's a shift that occurs and here it occurs.

Psalm 69 verses 29 and 30, I am in pain and distress. May your salvation, O God, protect me. And then he makes it, boom.

I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving. Beautiful. In the end, he actually personifies creation.

He says, let heaven and earth praise him. Remember Jesus said, if you don't do the praise, the rocks will cry out. And here the psalmist says, let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and all that move in them.

For God will save Zion. And there we go with Zion again. This is Psalm 69 now coming back to Zion.

For God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah. Then people will settle there and possess it. So that's Psalm 69.

Beautiful. You hear the messianic overtones of this with Jesus and the cross and things. And then our last one is actually going back a couple of psalms to Psalm 66.

And this is Psalm 66. The reason why I picked this one, there are so many of these where you get this kind of lament to praise shift is basically because it has the Exodus motif in there and the Exodus from Egypt and the movement for praise and then the individual tale of deliverance and praise as well. And so this is a really kind of good sound that way.

So let me just read through some verses here. First, let me start out with what would be called the Exodus motif. Eventually, I'm hoping this spring we're able to tape David Emanuel, Dr. David Emanuel from Nyack College, who does a great job with the Exodus motif in the Psalms.

He wrote his dissertation in Israel on this notion of the Exodus motif in Psalms. And if anybody has read also the book of Matthew where Jesus is portrayed as the new Moses and kind of the new Exodus. So, this Exodus motif is repeated all through Scripture.

The Exodus was the great redemptive act of the Old Testament. As Jesus is the great redemptive act, freeing us from the slavery of sin in the New Testament, the Exodus freed the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt is the great redemptive act in the Old Testament. So here it is in Psalm 66 verses five through nine, come and see what God has done, how awesome his works in man's behalf.

He turned the sea into dry land. And there you have it, the Exodus coming across the Red Sea or the Reed Sea. They pass through the waters on foot.

Come and let us rejoice in him. Do you remember after they crossed the Red Sea, what was the first thing? Do you remember the song of the sea that Miriam sang just after that? And so, it's interesting that after this great deliverance out of Egypt, there's a song that comes in Exodus 15, kind of interesting connection there. He turned the sea into dry land.

They cross through the waters on foot. Come, let us rejoice in him. He rules forever by his power.

His eyes watch the nations. Let not the rebellious rise up against him. And he goes, praise our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard.

He has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping. That's the way it was with ancient Israel. They came across, praise God.

He kept our feet from slipping, delivered us from Egypt, those kinds of things. Now switch, let's go to the individual. Psalm 66 then moves from the deliverance of Egypt over into the praise of the individual.

He says, come and listen, all you who fear God, let me tell you what he has done for me. Now it's just not the national deliverance of God and the great redemptive act, but what he's done for me. I cried out to him with my mouth.

His praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer.

Praise be to God who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me. Again, beautiful, again, shifting saying, praise God. I was in real trouble.

God helped me and praise God. So basically, with these five, I've just tried to make that connection. It's all through the Psalms of this lament where the Psalmist is realistic.

Praise is anchored in reality. As Christians, we don't try to deny reality and deny the hurts and sufferings of life. Instead, we embrace them and we embrace them and bring them and watch for God's deliverance.

When we see God's deliverance, it gives us great reason for praising God. So, lament is the basis for praise. Now that's one level, this lament connected to praise and this shift that occurs in many of the Psalms.

I want to tackle something now that's even more difficult and undoubtedly more difficult and that is imprecation. What is imprecation? Imprecation is when the Psalmist, or actually you get it in some of the other places in Scripture too, where the Psalmist curses a person. In other words, I wish bad to happen to you.

We say, wait a minute, wait a minute. People have had great ethical problems with these imprecations. We are not going to discuss the ethical implications of these imprecations today.

It would take like, I mean, there are whole dissertations and actually, I've got dissertations up online. I'll give you a reference to that. So, what are the imprecatory Psalms? These are a collection of Psalms.

Here's a list of imprecatory Psalms. These are Psalms that are known to have these, let them dash your babies upon a rock, let them smash you in the jaw, let you fade away like a slug on a rock with no water. So, Psalms 5, 10, 17, 35, 59, 58.



Now, by the way, 58 is in our text, the second book of the Psalter, 59. So 58 and 59 are imprecatory Psalms. We want to look at 59, 69, and 70.

These are four imprecatory Psalms in the second book of the Psalter. Then Psalm 79, 83, by the way, this one's famous, Psalm 109, big famous imprecatory Psalm. Everybody quotes that one, Psalm 129.

Psalm 137 is also a kind of a post-exilic, you destroyed Jerusalem and now you're going to be, we hope you're destroyed like that. So, Psalm 109, 137, if I had to pick two, those two are probably the most famous of them. Now for us, it'll be Psalm 58, 59, 69, and 70.

These are the famous and then the famous ones are these two calling for the destruction of the enemy. Now I just want to make a comment. So those are called imprecatory Psalms.

And so, I'm thinking, okay, 58, 59, 69, 70, those are the four that I got to deal with. No, what I found going through the Psalms, anybody who's done much reading in the Psalms, is that there are a ton of imprecatory statements all through the Psalms, but yet they don't classify these as imprecatory Psalms. They're short statements, basically condemning and calling for judgment down on the enemy, but they are not classified.

So, what I want to do is I'm going to go through many of the imprecatory statements that are not found in imprecatory Psalms. So, I want to make a distinction between the problem with some of the genre analysis. And by the way, I'm very grateful for what Gunkel and others have done in terms of the genre of knowing the Lament Psalms, Psalms of Hymns, individual and communal Psalms of Lament, and other didactic Psalms of Wisdom.

Those are very handy, very helpful classifications. However, you've got to be very careful lest the genre classification blinds your eyes to say, here are the imprecatory Psalms 58, 59, 69, 70. And I'm saying, no, they're all over the place.

So, you've got more explaining to do, so to speak, than just those four Psalms. You can't just isolate those four Psalms. And then as some people don't like dealing with the imprecations, they'll do all sorts of things to diminish them, to skip over them, to call them, even some people devilish, that they're devilish.

Jesus says, what? Love your enemy. You pray for not against your enemy. And so all these really pious people then come off with this thing about the imprecations.

By the way, are imprecations part of the word of God? Yes, they are. And so, I think we need to try to understand them rather than to dismiss them. Let me say that again, very important.

I think we need to try to understand them rather than to dismiss them. You've got to be careful. People pick and choose out of Scripture what they like and what they don't like.

And so, what you have is we like the happy parts of Scripture and this is some of the tough stuff. And so, I want to just kind of, we won't go through the toughness of the whole thing. I'll put you on to some resources that do, but be careful with this and how they're doing.

What I want to do here is to present kind of a model. And as I was thinking about this, I came up with a model for understanding and I want to use the kind of model that the already, but not yet model that basically George Elton Ladd developed for the New Testament for the kingdom of God. I want to apply that already, but not yet to the imprecation issue.

So, you have the already that is the past. These are imprecations that have already happened, curses that God has actually judged somebody that has already happened. And those things are described in the Psalms.

Then you also have the future or the not yet. These are yet to come. This is the future judgment.

And then you have the present where he says, may he, in other words, may God come down and bash these guys in the teeth, that kind of thing. May he destroy these people. So that'd be the present.

So, I want to put this model up and I think it's helpful to see the imprecation in a bigger context. So, here's, first of all, God is king. God is king and as king, he's judged.

Solomon, you remember in 1 Kings 3, his mention of judging righteously. And you remember Moses judging the people of Israel and getting upset because there's too much for him in Numbers 11. So basically, God is king.

He's a judge and his job is God and king is to deliver, to rescue the psalmist. But part of that rescuing the psalmist will be to deliver him and to destroy the enemy, the wicked. So that the job of the king is both to deliver and rescue, but also to destroy and render justice on the wicked and the enemy.

So, what you have is in the Psalms, it talks about what God has already done. When did God destroy the wicked? Well, the plagues in Egypt and the going through the

Red Sea, the conquest by which the Amorites were destroyed in the land of Palestine. Personal deliverance is where the psalmist himself acknowledges, God has delivered me and destroyed the enemy.

Lament, going to praise this shift that happens that we've looked at that also takes place that God has already delivered him. Now that's the already. What about the not-yet? In the book of Psalms, it describes the future.

It doesn't describe it as the quote, the day of the Lord, as you get in, say the book of Joel or something like that. But the day of the Lord-like types of things are described. God says I will destroy the enemy.

The destruction of the wicked is something that God has said he would do in the future. He will, not yet, he will. And then deliverance of the righteous, how long? I think remember how we get that statement, how long, O Lord, will you forget me? That how long statement deals with that God will destroy the enemies in the future.

And so, the psalmist then is caught between the then and the now and the future. And so, he asks how long before this happens? And then the vow to praise says, hey, God, if this happens, future praise, future praise, I promise, I promise, I vow to praise you in the future. So, what we have in the implications then is, may he and this is the hope of the psalmist.

The psalmist then offers implications that he will be delivered the enemy will be destroyed and that justice will happen. Lex talionis, that justice will happen as you have done to others. Now it will be done for you as you came after him to destroy me.

Now you will be destroyed. Do you remember Pharaoh with the firstborn of Egypt? He was going to destroy the sons of Israel. And it turns out that his own son then ends up dying in this.

The vindication, God's glory, and the promise to praise that comes out of these implications. So, what I'm going to try to suggest is that implication is the basis for promise to praise. Implication is connected to praise.

So, it's not just all about vengeance and that kind of thing. Now I'm going to just put this in a little bit of a context, and then we'll jump into it in this book of Psalms here. We wrestle with the comments of Jesus, you know, love your enemy, pray for those that spitefully use you.

I'm not going to solve that problem, but I think we need to go back and try to re-understand Jesus' comments because Jesus spoke very strongly to his own enemies, by the way. Whoa, unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, the miracles have

been done in you have been done in Sodom and Gomorrah. They would remain until this day.

It'd be better for you if you'd never been born, Jesus said. So be careful when you get this lovey-dovey Jesus, love your enemies and all this kind of stuff. Jesus had some really harsh statements for his enemies.

So be careful. And so, I'm saying is I think that that passage in Matthew 5.44 needs to be, you don't take one verse and map it on the whole Bible like that because you've got, the Bible is much more diverse than that. You've got to understand things in their broader context.

So, I want to put that context of imprecation then in a praise context. By the way, now, if you say all imprecation is devilish, as some people have said, it's wicked to pray for your destruction of your enemy. What do you do then with what John Day has pointed out in Revelation chapter six, verse nine, the fifth seal judgment, the souls under the altar in heaven.

Now this is in heaven. We'd say the souls, the martyrs that are in heaven, they're not going to be, you know, you can't say, well, the Psalmist was just messed up. That's what a lot of people say.

The Psalmist, oh yeah, the Psalmist is good, but he also is a human being. So, he's got all these problems and imprecations. They're one of those problems.

No, no, these guys are in heaven. They're under the altar of God. And what are they praying under the altar of God? Let me read this to you.

This is Revelation chapter six, verse nine. Now what you say is, oh, the book of Revelation, nobody understands it. No, no, this is very clear what they're praying.

Heaven's open, the fifth seal. Remember the seals, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls of the book of Revelation. So, the next seal, the scroll is being opened.

And as it's opened, each seal, that seal that's shut is being broken as the scroll is open. This is scroll number five. It says, when he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God.

Talk about enemies. The enemies had actually gotten these guys. They had been slain because of the word of God.

By the way, I must say this, this is 2018 and I have had to watch Christian brothers lined up along the Mediterranean Sea by a guy named the Islamic State. Dare I say the name of it? And they chopped the heads off of 21 of our brothers and sisters in

Christ while their blood was going into the Mediterranean Sea. How often have we had to watch that kind of thing where believers are slain? And what does the world say? It goes on television for about two minutes and then it just goes by us and it's like nothing happened.

Go to Mosul. Mosul in Iraq is where an ancient Nineveh was up the Tigris River. I watched one of the last ladies to leave Mosul.

There were, I believe it was a hundred thousand Christians there and she was the last one to leave. She was a crippled woman and she left Mosul. A hundred thousand Christians were displaced from Mosul.

Where is the world saying anything? Today there are Christians being slaughtered in Syria. And again, this genocide of Christians in Syria, what does the world say? The world says, Oh, no. And then we just overlook that because of who's doing it.

And we don't want to be considered a phobe of whatever. I'm sorry for going off on this. When it says the souls of those who have been slain, we live in a generation where more Christians have died than any other generation.

And that needs to be said. Now, those who are slain, what do they say? Oh, God just loved them. Everything.

Father, forgive them. They don't know what they do. Yet that's maybe part of it.

Are we complex beings? Do we have multiple feelings? So, part of us, yes, Father, forgive them. But what do these people actually say? By the way, this is in the book of Revelation. It's clear those who have been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they maintained, called out in a loud voice, how long, sound familiar? How long sovereign Lord, holy and true until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood.

Pretty strong statement. Again, we skip that one. We skip that one because it doesn't fit our lovey-dovey kind of stuff with Christianity.

That's what the souls in heaven pray. Are they sinful for praying that? I'm sorry, they're in heaven. You've got to look more to your own sin than to them.

So anyway, I'm just bringing up some of these issues just to show the complexity of the situation. It's not a simple solution. Be aware of the person who's got a simple solution for this, including myself.

This is a complex issue here and we wrestle with complex things. You know what I'm saying? Life is not just singular and we always respond in one way to a situation. Now let me put these up here so you guys could actually get them.

John Day has done a lot of work on this. He's got a book called *Crying for Justice*. His dissertation was also on this notion of imprecation.

He also published an article in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Dallas Seminary in 159, 2002. Basically, both of these, the dissertation and his article are up on my website and you can buy this as a published book. Chelmer Martin wrote *Imprecation in the Psalms*, the Princeton Theological Review.

That's also present freely available on my website, the one at Gordon College. It was done in 1903. So, the copyright's gone in the pages here.

This was considered a classic, the *Imprecations of the Psalms*. Probably the best one that I like best is not free and the book is worth the buy. It's by this Eric Zenger and it's *A God of Vengeance, Understanding the Psalms of Divine Wrath*.

This is probably the best book, in my opinion, the best book out on it. I'm not sure of the date of it, but it's fairly recent. I would consider this the best book on that.

So those three resources, two of them free up online. Now, let me start off with the model. The model, first of all, is that God is King and he has caused judgment already in Egypt and he already has caused.

So, I want to start with the already. Then we'll move to the not yet, to the future, what he will do, and then we'll come back to the Imprecations. So first of all, let me start out Psalm 44 verses two and three.

He has already destroyed the enemy in the past. He has already destroyed the enemy in the past. The conquest of Joshua is referenced in Psalm 44 verses two and three.

With your hand, you drove out the nations. You planted our fathers and you crushed the peoples and made our fathers flourish. It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory.

It was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face for you loved them. Now, why did God do that? Was it vengeance? No, God was doing that because he loved his people and he delivered them and gave them a land that he had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So, the conquest in Egypt is referred to.

Psalm 53 talks about the pedagogical function of past judgments. The pedagogical function of the past judgment. And so, what he says is, again, I'm trying to show that this is not God.

When he works with the wicked when God works with the righteous, does he have many purposes? Has he had many purposes in your life? At various times of your life, God has worked with you in one way or another. He is a good parent. Does a good parent always react the same way to their kid? No, a parent is not a robot.

Actually, we've got smart robots now. So maybe that's a bad illustration, but he's not a robot. A parent doesn't do the same thing every time.

My brother and I were just talking about that. When I was young, I threw a stone through a neighbor's house on purpose because I was wagered that I couldn't hit the third-floor window and knock it out. I thought my dad was going to kill me.

Literally, I was scared to death. My father got home. My father was a very strict disciplinarian.

And when he got home, I was shocked. I was expecting that it was going to be really bad. And he, rather than making it bad, there was a gentleness about him.

So, what I'm saying is that as a good parent knows when to react in different ways to their own children. So, God reacts to us in multiple ways and he also reacts to the enemies in different ways as well. So here we are in Psalm 53, book two of the Psalter, verses four and five, Will the evildoers never learn? Those who devour my people as men eat bread and who do not call on God.

There they were overwhelmed with dread where there was nothing to dread. God scattered the bones of those who attacked you. God scattered the bones of those who attacked you.

You put them to shame for God despised them. God despised them. Does God despise people? Apparently so.

These enemies, God scattered their bones, destroyed. So in the past, God has done this. He has destroyed people.

He's scattered their bones. He's despised them and that kind of thing. So there's a pedagogical function here.

It's not just pure vengeance. It basically is saying that wicked people should look at that and they should learn. They should look and learn from that.

So, there's a pedagogical function. The implications are not just all vengeance. There are many purposes behind these things.

I think that needs to be brought out more. Here's one over in chapter 57. So we've gone to 53, 57, and this is a lex talionis nature.

Lex talionis means the law of retaliation. An eye for an eye, two for two. Now for us, we would say eye for eye, two for two sounds like terrible judgment.

But what it's saying is the crime should fit the punishment. There should be equity. There should be equity between the crime and the punishment.

There should be equity between them. There shouldn't be an overreaction. In our case, in many of the countries, it shouldn't be an underreaction.

So lex talionis, as you have done, so it will be done to you. Psalm 57 verse six, they spread a net for my feet. I was bowed down and distressed.

They dug a pit in my path. What's the negative thing happening here? They dug a pit for me to fall into, but they have fallen into it themselves. What they went to do to others now has happened to them.

So that's a lex talionis. So, there's a justice motive here. There's justice motive as you have done.

So, it will be done to you with this. Now let's switch topics now and let's move over to the, he already has done this. This has already happened.

Now what does he say will happen? What has not yet happened? The destruction of the enemy in the future, the not yet side of things. Psalm 50 verse four describes almost like a day of the Lord kind of thing. He summons the heavens above and the earth so that he may judge his people.

He summons the heavens and earth so that he may judge his people. God himself is warning of an imprecatory judgment, a judgment of a curse coming down on his own people. Okay.

Consider this, you who forget God. Now this is the next one that we want to bring up. This one is very interesting because you have heard God himself offering up an imprecatory curse kind of thing on people, warning them ahead of time.

You better get your act together here. And so here you've got God himself. So, you can't just say, Oh, this is the Psalmist and the Psalmist is all this vengeful, wicked person who doesn't love his enemy.



And this is the Old Testament. So, it doesn't count anyway. No, no, no.

This is God speaking and this is in Psalm chapter 50 verse 22, where God himself speaks in a precarious future judgment. Here's what God says, consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you in pieces with no one to rescue you. No one can rescue you.

God is the rescuer. I will tear you in pieces. That's a very strong statement.

That's coming from God. In quotes from God, I will tear you in pieces. So, you can't just dismiss the imprecatory.

No, no, you can't just do that. Chapter 52 verse five, and this is the Psalm against Doeg the Edomite who killed the priests of Nob who gave David solace and gave David the sword of Goliath and food. Psalm 52, surely God will bring you, Doeg or the wicked, he stands in for the wicked, down to everlasting ruin.

He will snatch you up and tear you from your tent. He will uproot you from the land of the living. Pretty strong statements.

God's going to snatch you up and take you down. That's bad. So, another one for the future.

Psalm 53 verse 23, we'll move through these quickly. But you, God, will bring down the wicked. Part of the function of God, you bring down the wicked into the pit of decay.

The bloodthirsty and deceitful will not live out half their days. But as for me, I trust in you. God's going to bring down the wicked.

He will bring down the wicked. But as for me right now, I trust in you. Beautiful statement, Psalm 55 verse 23.

Now that's what God will do in the future. There's coming a future judgment. God has warned about it and they've set it up and it's saying the wicked, bad things are going to happen.

There's going to be some curses coming down on these people in the future. Bad things are going to happen. And so the future.

Now, what about the present with the Psalmist engaging? This is now moving to the may he, this is the imprecation. I'm going to be drawing the connection between imprecation as a basis for praise here. Now the Psalmist is going to enter.

Yes, God did those things that damaged the wicked in the past. And yes, he warns about future judgment, but now the Psalmist who is in the midst of his own peril. And now the Psalmist himself, and we'll just work through some of these and we'll try to do it quickly.

I'll just read through some of these. Psalm 52 verses five and six, Psalm 52 verses five and six. Surely, God, you will bring down to everlasting ruin.

He will snatch you up and tear you from your tent. He will uproot you from the land of the living. He will uproot you from the land of the living.

Man, you're dead. Selah, meditative pause. He will snatch you up and tear you from your tent.

He will uproot you from the land of the living. Selah, kind of a refrain there. Now down, same Psalm 52 verses eight and nine.

So, he says, God's going to take you up. Man, I'll tear you up. That's Psalm 52 verses five and six.

A couple of verses down he says this, but I, in contrast to them and what happened to them, I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God. I trust in God's unending love forever and ever. I will praise you forever for what you have done.

In your name, I will hope for your name is good. I will praise you in the presence of your saints. And so, while yes, the wicked, bad things happen, I will trust in you and I will praise you.

The connection between imprecation and praise is put back to back. Here's another one, Psalm 54 verses four through seven. Psalm 54 verses four through seven, surely God is my help.

The Lord is the one who sustains me. Let evil recoil on those who slander me. In your faithfulness destroy them.

I will sacrifice a free-will offering to you. And then he says, I will praise your name, O Lord, for it is good. For he has delivered me from all my troubles and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.

Yes, the foes were defeated. There is a victory here. It's the victory of God.

It's not always for vengeance, but he praises God for the victory that his eyes have gotten to witness where the wicked are destroyed. He is sacrificing to God in praise. Psalm 56 verse nine, a similar type of thing.

Then my enemies will turn back when I call for help. So, the enemies are after him. They're going to turn back when he calls for help.

By this, I will know that God is for me. In other words, the enemies are coming after me to destroy me. They turn back and when they turn back, he says, there's a pedagogical function here.

Then I know that God is for me, that God is on my side. So, in other words, the implications are not always when God destroys the wicked or the psalmist asks him to destroy the wicked, there's not always vengeance there. He's saying, I will learn something and that God is on my side.

And so, there's a pedagogical motivation, a pedagogical function. And then 57, let me see here. If we got 57, we've skipped that.

Let me just read 57 verses five and six and verse 11. They spread a net for my feet. I was bowed down and distressed.

They dug a pit in my path, but they have fallen it into themselves. And then by the way, what's this Psalm? Okay. They dug a pit, they fell into the pit themselves.

What is the psalmist's response to them falling into the pit that they used to trap him, to snare him? Be exalted O God above the heavens. Let your glory be over all the earth. Psalm 57, that was the one we just said, Matt Hoffland sings with God and his glory being all through the earth with the destruction of the wicked.

Now Psalm 58, do you notice this is the first time we've actually dealt with an imprecatory Psalm. All those other implications were not in quotes, imprecatory Psalms. Now we're in an imprecatory Psalm and let's see what happens.

What I'm going to suggest here is that vengeance is not it, but there's a pedagogical function going on here. In other words, there's many functions going on with these. So this is Psalm chapter 58 verses six through nine.

It says, break the teeth in their mouths. Pretty strong statement. Break the teeth in their mouths, O God.

Tear out, O God, the fangs of the lions. So, the focus on the teeth is a lion comes and devours, breaks their teeth. Let them vanish like water that flows away when they draw the bow.

Let their arrows be blunted like a slug melting away as it moves along like a stillborn child. May they not see the sun. Those are really strong statements.

Before your pots can feel the heat of thorns, whether they be green or dry, the wicked will be swept away. Then men will say, okay, as a result of a break in the teeth, the slug, a stillborn child. It says, then men will say, surely the righteous still are rewarded.

Surely there is a God who judges the earth. So, there's a response to imprecation when these curses, remember the covenantal curses in Deuteronomy, Leviticus, Deuteronomy 28, Leviticus 26, 5, 6, they're around there. Where God comes in the covenant, in the context of the covenant, it ends with the blessings and the cursings.

Now the cursings are actually happening on an individual basis here in the psalmist. And these people say, when that happens, people say, there's a God and he judges the earth. So that's an imprecatory psalm.

Psalm 59, our second imprecatory psalm, we've had 58 and 59, two imprecatory psalms. 59 says but do not kill them, O Lord, our shield or my people will forget. Why God do I not want to see the destruction of my enemy? Because if you destroy them, people will forget.

What's happened in America? People are destroyed. People forget. In your might, make them wander about and bring them down.

Consume them in wrath, consume them until they are no more. Then it will be known to the ends of the world that God rules over Jacob. O my strength, I sing praise to you.

The judgments come and the judgment falls. The psalmist then turns and that becomes the basis. O my strength, I sing praise to you, O God.

O God, you are my fortress, my loving God. Beautiful switch there, kind of happening with the imprecations similar to what we've seen with the laments. Psalm 62, verse 12, God's unfailing love.

And that you, O Lord, are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done. And so, this brings up the notion of equity and fairness.

There's going to be a judgment against the wicked and the enemy, but fairness happens there. Psalm 63 verses nine and 10, they who seek my life will be destroyed. They will go down to the depths of the earth.

They will be given over to the sword and become food for jackals. A very strong statement there in 63, verses 9, and 10. Go down to 64 and let me just bring this up.

64, but God will shoot them with arrows. Suddenly they will be struck down. He will turn their tongues against them and bring them to ruin.

All who see them will shake their heads in scorn. Now 68 becomes another imprecatory psalm here. And I want to just raise this and we're going to see again imprecation leading to praise.

We'll see the connection between the imprecation. We're just showing in those last couple of ones that those were outside, there were imprecations outside imprecatory psalms. So, I'm suggesting is the notion of imprecation is throughout the Psalms, not just in imprecatory Psalms.

But 68 is an imprecatory psalm. So, here's what it says, as smoke is blown away by the wind, may you blow them away. As the wax melts before the fire, may the wicked perish before God.

But may the righteous be glad and rejoice before God. May they be happy and joyful. Sing to God, sing praise to his name, extol him who rides the clouds.

His name is Yahweh and rejoice before him. So, you've got the destruction of the wicked and then immediately turn to praise the one who rides the clouds. A beautiful, you know, imprecation to praise move that we've seen similar to lament.

Now we're not done yet, getting almost close to the end of this. 64, 7 through 9, we get the same imprecation to praise shift. It says, but God will shoot them with arrows.

Suddenly they will be struck down. He will turn their own tongues against them and bring them to ruin. All who see them will shake their heads in scorn.

Now check this out. All mankind will fear. They will proclaim the works of God and ponder what he has done.

When they see the destruction of the wicked, the righteous then proclaim the works of God and ponder what he has done. 69, imprecatory psalm. Again, back to Psalm 69, charge them with crime upon crime, kind of a judicial context.

Do not let them share in your salvation. Very strong statement. May they be blotted out of the Book of Life.

Very strong statement. The book of life, you remember Genesis and Revelation, the book of life, and not be listed with the righteous. I am in pain and distress.

May your salvational God protect me. And then what's the response? I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving. And so you get, again, this imprecation and then it's followed immediately by this statement of praise in God's name.

Now working to the end, we're almost to the end of book two, chapter 70, the imprecatory psalm. 70 is also an imprecatory psalm. 69 and 70, 58 and 59, the four imprecatory psalms in book two.

May those who seek my life be put to shame and confusion. May all who desire my ruin be turned back in disgrace. May those who say to me, aha, aha, turn back because of their shame.

But may all who seek you, so the big contrast there, go against those God who are saying and trying to shame me. But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad. May those who love your salvation always say let God be exalted.

Let God be exalted. Again, imprecatory statements followed immediately statements of praise. Now Psalm 71 is not a imprecatory psalm, but yet here's what it says.

Psalm 71, verses 10 through 15 and then 23 to 24. For my enemies speak against me. Those who wait to kill me conspire together.

They say, quote, God has forsaken him. Do you remember the early chapter? This is chapter 71, just about to finish the book. Remember how the book opened in 42 and 43.

Where is your God? Here we are in chapter 71 and they're saying, for God has forsaken him. Pursue him and seize him for no one will rescue him. Be not far from me, O God.

Come quickly, O my God, to help me. May my accusers perish in shame. May those who want to harm me be covered with scorn and disgrace.

But as for me, I will always have hope. I will praise you more and more. Again, shift, despise, scorn upon the enemies.

I, on the other hand, God will praise you more and more. My mouth will tell of your righteousness, of your salvation all day long, though I know not its measure. My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you, I whom you have redeemed.

My tongue will tell of your righteous acts all day long. For those who wanted to harm me have been put to shame and confusion. And that actually is saying that imprecation is part of praise.

He's now praising God in the imprecation. Here, let me read that again. For those who wanted to harm me have been put to shame and confusion.

That's part of his praise to God. Psalm 71, his vow to praise in the future. Psalm 71, that's the one we just covered.

Now we have not talked about two Psalms in book two and I don't want to talk about them long because it's going too long. But chapter 45 was about the human king and the wedding of the human king as he weds his bride. Beautiful Psalm 45, the king's wedding with his bride.

Psalm 72 is connected with Psalm 71. Psalm 71, the psalmist says, oh man, God help me. I'm so old and don't abandon me when I'm old and weak.

And then Psalm 72 is Solomon, the young vibrant king takes over. So Psalm 71, the weak king fading off, and Psalm 72, the strong king arising, Solomon. It's almost like 1 Kings 1 with David going off the scene and Bathsheba and Nathan coming into him and Solomon taking over in two and three, 1 Kings chapter two and three.

And then Solomon is granted wisdom by God in chapter three of 1 Kings. So, Psalm 72 is Solomon's thing. And notice one of the requirements of the human king.

Now we're not talking about the divine king, God judging the wicked. We're talking about the human king. In Psalm 72 verse four, it says, he, the human king will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy.

He will crush the oppressor. What is one of the jobs of a human king? To crush the oppressor. That's imprecation.

That's kind of a curses kind of thing happening there. Now I want to suggest then that I've shown outside the imprecatory Psalms, imprecatory statements that yielded over to praise or that shifted over to praise. We've shown imprecation and then praise, imprecation, and praise.

We've also looked at the four imprecatory Psalms 58, 59, 69, and 70 and showed that those also have that same move. Imprecation against the wicked, the destruction of the wicked causes the righteous to praise. Now, Zenger in his book, *A God of Vengeance*, makes this statement and I'm going to read it, in this short paragraph.

I think he's really nailed it. The Psalms of enmity, he says, offer us neither a dogmatic doctrine of God nor a summary of biblical ethics. And that's been the focus of much of this discussion on imprecation.

He says, no, these are poetic prayers that hold up a mirror to perpetrators of violence. They are prayers that can help the victims of violence by placing on their lips a cry for justice and for the God of vengeance to hold fast to their human dignity and to endure non-violently in prayerful protest against violence that is repugnant to God, despite their fear in the face of their enemies and images of enmity. The transfer of vengeance to God that is indicated in the Psalms implies renouncing one's own revenge.

I don't take vengeance out on the people, the enemies that are coming after me. I do not go after them. I commit that to God in prayer.

I sing a song of imprecation and God then does it for various reasons, pedagogical reasons, for teaching reasons, for justice reasons, for vengeance reasons, and many reasons. And I commit that and therefore the victim of the violence is freed from having to do vengeance on another. He commits that vengeance to God.

He commits that justice. And so basically the imprecatory Psalms are a cry for justice, are a cry for justice to those who are oppressed, calling the king to help them in that needy situation. And that causes them to do what? The helpless people who are violated then praise God.

And so that's that. Now the enemy damages the psalmist. The psalmist calls out to God for deliverance and the king delivers.

And then the psalmist then returns praise to God. Now, in summary, we just kind of work through this. The three things we've done over, we've done over the rituals and basically showed that the Psalms come in this ritualistic temple, altar, procession kind of context.

We've also noticed the importance of lament as the basis of praise. And basically, what we did there was we said that the praise is reality anchored. In other words, this isn't just happy, oh, we praise God kind of stuff.

It's anchored in the laments. We also then showed that imprecation is the basis of praise. And even some of the imprecations turn out to be praise themselves.

God's deliverance and destruction of violence and the establishment of justice leads to the cry for praise, to praise God. Now, next time, what we'll do next time is look at praise itself in terms of the vow to praise, the call to praise, the cause to praise, the place of praise, how to praise, and then the modern implications of worship. So next



time we're going to focus just on that aspect of praise and bring that out as we did lament and implication today.

Thank you for staying with us. I hope this has been helpful. And again, we praise God for his word and the hope of justice in this world. Thank you.

This is Dr. Ted Hildebrandt in his teaching on the praise of God in the second book of the Psalter. This is session number three on lament and imprecation as the basis of praise.