

RockPointe Church Sermon Notes
Destin Garner – What do we do with our anger?
Sunday, June 22, 2025
www.rpc.fm/sermon-library
Scripture passages: Psalm 137

Imprecatory Prayers (Ps 137)

This community lament remembers the Babylonian captivity and provided words by which the returned exiles can express their loyalty to Jerusalem and pray that God would pay out His just punishment on those who gloat over its destruction. This Psalm is a vivid application of the principle of TALION – the principle that the punishment should match the crime; and that the Babylonians who had smashed Israelite infants should be punished appropriately.

What do we do with our anger?

Two Options: Keep it in or get it out.

Not good/safe to stay bottled up in our heart and it's not good/safe to be released in public space.

Must be a better way - a healthy, productive, positive outlet to help us be angry and not sin.

Consider the Imprecatory Psalms.

Enraged by the betrayal of a spouse?

Bullied by a peer?

Been wronged by a business partner?

Been abused by someone in authority, or been stabbed in the back by a friend?

Harassed, robbed or falsely accused?

“Imprecatory” comes from Latin word *imprecari*, = “to pray for, to call down, to invoke”

To pray for what, to call down what, to invoke what? Curses that invoke misfortune and disaster upon a foe. Author/Singer calls down calamity, destruction, and God’s wrath, anger, judgment and vengeance on his and God’s enemies.

- **Ps 58:6** Break the teeth in their mouths, O God; Lord, tear out the fangs of those lions!
- **Ps 59:13** For the curses and lies they utter, consume them in your wrath, consume them till they are no more.
- **Ps 69: 23-24** May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever. Pour out your wrath on them; let your fierce anger overtake them.
- **Ps 69: 27-28** Charge them with crime upon crime; do not let them share in your salvation. May they be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous.
- **Ps 109:8-13** May his days be few; may another take his place of leadership. May his children be fatherless and his wife a widow. May his children be wandering beggars; may they be driven from their ruined homes. May a creditor seize all he has; may strangers plunder the fruits of his labor. May no one extend kindness to him or take pity on his fatherless children. May his descendants be

cut off, their names blotted out from the next generation. (*A Psalm of David / To the choirmaster – to be sung in Temple Service*)

The study of imprecatory psalms aren't just theological, they're personal. When you've been wronged, betrayed, abused, or unjustly treated, what do you do with that rage and desire for revenge? This ancient Psalm shows us a path forward!

Psalm 137 - By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down & wept, when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our lyres. For there our captors required of us songs, & our tormentors, mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How shall we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy! Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem, how they said, "Lay it bare, lay it bare, down to its foundations!" O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us! Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones & dashes them against the rock!

"In these later verses, we have utterances of burning indignation against the chief adversaries of Israel, — an indignation as righteous as it was fervent. Let those find fault with it, who have never seen their temple burned, their city ruined, their wives ravished, and their children slain; they might not, perhaps, be quite so velvet-mouthed if they had suffered in this same fashion."

Psalmist prays that the Lord will bring on Babylon's head the atrocities they themselves had committed in Judah and elsewhere.

Imprecatory prayers are for when people of God are oppressed, and the character of God is at stake.

1. Imprecatory Prayers are Honest

Honest about God's Just Judgement

God's righteousness demands judgment. People are accountable to God for their deeds.

Honest About Raw Human Emotion

Psalms express what we often repress. They give us words to cry out when we're hurt, betrayed, or enraged.

"The Psalms are not pious words for the devout, but honest speech from the depths of pain, dislocation, and sometimes rage."

God prefers honest prayers over sanitized platitudes.

2. Imprecatory Prayers are NOT Prescriptive

God allows space for honest, emotional grief—but He does not endorse revenge.

Imprecatory Psalms are like a wound—bloody and unfiltered. It's not prescribing action; it's describing agony. Pray them, don't perform them.

3. Imprecatory Prayers are Healing

God gave us these Psalms not to encourage retaliation, but to invite us to bring our rage to Him as a way to not become enslaved and consumed by thoughts of revenge.

4. Imprecatory Prayers are Acts of Surrender & Trust

“When the saints pray for divine vengeance, they do not give way to personal emotion but call upon God to act as righteous judge.”

Romans 12:19 "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord.”

1 Peter 2:23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

“It is an act of faith to entrust your most precious hatred to God, knowing He will take it seriously.”

5. Imprecatory Prayers are Compatible with the Gospel.

“Anger against sin and a desire that evildoers be punished, are not opposed to the spirit of the gospel, or to the love of enemies which our Lord exemplified. The law of holiness requires us to pray for the fires of divine retribution: the law of love, to seek meanwhile to rescue them from the burning.”

6. Imprecatory Prayers are Fulfilled in Jesus

“If we want to read and pray the prayers of the Bible, and especially the Psalms, we must not ask first what they have to do with us, but what they have to do with Jesus.”

The imprecatory Psalms find their fulfillment not in human vengeance, but in the cross.

Jesus fulfills the Psalms including the imprecatory ones—not by canceling them, but by **redirecting their trajectory**.

1 Peter 2:24 “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.”

Imprecatory prayers cry out, 'God, make it right.' The gospel replies, 'I did at the cross, and I will at the judgment.'”

Closing Application:

Is there any pain, injustice, rage are you holding onto today that you need to bring to God.

You don't have to deny your anger or explode with it. You can bring it to the Cross.

Psalms 62:8 Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

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RockPointe Church Sermon Discussion Questions

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Scripture passages: Psalm 137, Romans 12:19, 1 Peter 2:23-24

Have a few people from your small group read the verses above aloud, prior to beginning group discussion.

Icebreaker – when you were growing up, how did your parents handle their anger?

1. How does Psalm 137 and/or this sermon challenge or reinforce your understanding of God's character?
2. What words do you see repeated in Psalm 137? What role does memory play in this Psalm?
3. How does this Psalm give permission to honestly reflect the challenges and difficulties of worshipping God amidst suffering?
4. Destin shared six important points about imprecatory psalms. Which point spoke to you?
5. Have you ever thought about how some situations might make it difficult for individuals to "sing the Lord's song"? What are some examples of those situations?
6. How does the notion of justice and retribution appear in this Psalm? How does it relate to current understandings of justice and Romans 12:19?
7. What are some types of things that stir up anger in you as a follower of Christ? How does 1 Peter 2:23-24 help you translate your anger into Christ-exalting action?
8. When are the most common occurrences of your anger? What does it reveal about your heart?
9. How can this Psalm and/or sermon help you bring your anger to God? How does the cross make a way for us to not be consumed by thoughts of revenge?

For further application

- Prayerfully consider: Is there any pain, injustice, rage are you holding onto today that you need to bring to God. You don't have to deny your anger or explode with it. You can bring it to the Cross.
- Read through the [anger quiz](#) and ask the Lord to show you what He wants to you to address in your heart this week?
- Memorize Romans 12:19 this week
- Lament typically follows a five-fold pattern. Which part of the lament are you most comfortable with and likely to offer and which of these are you most uncomfortable offering? Write your own Psalm of Lament this week using the outline from Psalm 137 and prompts below:

A Pronouncement of Lordship
A Profession of Trust

A Portrayal of the Problem
A Promise to Praise

A Plea for Assistance