

Lecture 15 – The Psalms, IX

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
And knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. Proverbs 9:10*

Key Terms

Imprecatory psalms, curses, rhetoric

Lecture Objectives

- *Identify and discuss theological issues and themes presented through the imprecatory psalms.
- *Discuss the relationship between blessing & cursing and their proper place in godly living.

Preliminary Questions

*Have you ever felt uneasy or even embarrassed by the tone of what are known as “the imprecatory psalms?” How have you dealt with that? How have you responded to objections to the faith which have grown from exposure to these psalms? How have you tried to reconcile God’s “mercy and compassion” with the themes of these psalms? How have you tried to reconcile God’s call to His people to reflect His “mercy and compassion” with these psalms?

Dr. Long starts with a devotion on Pr. 9:10

The Psalms, IX

I. The Psalms

- A. Introduction
- B. Classification schemes
- C. Psalm titles?
- D. Explicating Hebrew poetry: Psalm 2
- E. The shape of the Psalter
- F. The theology of the Psalms
 1. Introduction
 2. Special question #1: messianic psalms
 - *3. Special question #2: imprecatory psalms
 - a. Literature
 - 1) Chalmers Martin “Imprecations in the Psalms”, republished in Classical Evangelical Essays, ed. by Walter Kaiser, Baker Books
 - b. Introduction
 - 1) Definition imprecation: calling down of curses on enemy
 - 2) Imprecations in the Psalms *ex: Ps. 35:4-5, Ps. 58:6-8, Ps. 69:27, Ps. 83:13-15, Ps. 137:8-9*
 - c. Proposed solutions
 - 1) Language of the heart
 - 2) Lower standard of morality
 - d. Genre consideration
 - 1) Ancient and near Eastern rhetoric
 - 2) Poetry, not prose *Illustration: Jer. 20:14 ff.*
 - e. Inductive observations (common denominators)
 - 1) Pronounced against those who are against God Ps. 5:10
 - 2) Focus on God’s name (Ps. 83:5, 16)
 - 3) Pronounced against those who are incorrigible/uncorrectable/lost causes
 - 4) Aimed at proving God’s justice (Ps. 58:11)

5) There always seems to be a sense of just desserts Ps. 35:1, 58:1-2,11, 109:16ff

6) The rejoicing is in the Lord's justice and salvation Ps. 35:9, 58:11

f. Martin's Conclusions

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

g. A final question: who are our enemies as Christians?

1) See Longman, pp. 138-140 -----> Spiritual

BUT: Judgment day is coming

2) See 2 Peter 3:9

3) Lk. 13: How did Jesus respond to natural disasters and blatant criminal acts?

How should the imprecatory psalms be used in the Church today? Should they be sung or prayed in public worship? Should they be prayed against particular people and/or countries? Why or why not?