

Character Assassination Psalm 109

Main Idea: David pours out his heart to God during a time in which he suffered a vicious attack from evil accusers.

- **Understanding Imprecatory Psalms**
- **Understanding Psalm 109**
- **Applying Psalm 109**
 - Pour Out Your Heart to God (Ps 109:1-5)
 - Give Your Enemies to God (109:6-20)
 - Appeal to, and Rest in, the Character of God (109:21-29)
 - Keep Praising God (109:30-31)

Over the holiday season, I made the mistake of watching the Netflix documentary entitled *Making a Murderer*. It was a mistake to start this ten-part program because I couldn't stop watching it! Plus, it kept me from sleeping at night! If you like shows that don't arouse your emotions, stay away from it. It's a story about crime, corruption, innocence, guilt, and the justice system. It has attracted millions of viewers. News programs have carried additional pieces related to the story. The early episodes tell of how a Wisconsin man, Steven Avery, spent eighteen years in jail for a violent crime that he didn't commit. It's enough to infuriate you. Then, the rest of the episodes explore what happened after he was released. Was he guilty for a second violent crime, of which he is now in prison? I'll leave you to draw your own conclusions about this second arrest.

My point in referencing this show is to simply say that the popularity of it says something about what it means to be human. It speaks to some of our most fundamental beliefs and instincts. People sympathize with innocent sufferers. They long for justice. They witness and experience evil. They care about one's reputation and honor. In short, I think this documentary shows us that we long for coming kingdom, where peace, truth, righteousness, and justice reign. We long for a place where Jesus Christ, the ultimate innocent sufferer who took the punishment for sinners, will reign forever. Our longing for justice is ultimately a longing for Jesus.

Psalm 109 speaks about sin, justice, evil, an innocent sufferer, and the need for the coming King. It does so in a most attention-grabbing way.

This Psalm shocks a lot of modern readers. David's outburst against his enemies causes some to wonder how this Psalm could be part of Scripture. Some even view it as "sub-Christian." It reflects lament qualities, but is best known for being an "imprecatory Psalm." Imprecatory Psalms call down curses ("imprecations"), and express hatred toward God's enemies. There are about one hundred verses with imprecations in the Psalms. Many Christians wonder, "Do we have permission to pray these imprecatory Psalms?" Well, probably not *exactly* like the Psalmists, who were inspired writers of Scripture, but these prayers should inform the way we pray when faced with similar situations. But we need to understand them first.

Understanding the Imprecatory Psalms

While imprecations are found throughout the Psalter (Ps 5:10; 10:15; 28:4; 31:17-18; 35:4-6; 40:14-15; 58:6-11; 69:22-28; 109:6-15; 139:19-22; 140:9-10), C.S. Lewis stated that

Psalm 109 is “perhaps the worst” (*Reflections on the Psalms*, 12). This Psalm contains about twenty-four curses! It’s the “mother of all imprecatory prayers!” Lewis and others throughout the centuries have struggled with these Psalms. Lewis said, “In some of the Psalms the spirit of hatred which strikes us in the face is like heat from a furnace mouth” (*ibid.*).

The problem of course lies with the seeming contradiction with the New Testament call to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt 5:43-48). A distinguishing mark of Christian love is that we love our enemies (cf., Lk 23:34; 1 Pet 2:19-23; Acts 7:6). If we only love those who love us, then we’re no different than pagans. So how could it be possible for God’s people to pray with a seemingly vindictive and harsh spirit?

One approach is to simply scrap the imprecatory Psalms. Some have done this. You could avoid them all together. But for those who believe in the inspiration of Scripture, and the profitableness of all of Scripture, this isn’t an option. In the Old Testament we find imprecatory prayers in other books, like Jeremiah (11:18-20; 15:15-18; 17:18; 18:19-23; 20:11-12), and Nehemiah (6:14; 13:29). Further, neither Jesus nor Paul avoided them. Psalm 69 seems to have been a favorite of Jesus, for he cited in several times to express aspects of His own life and ministry (Jn 15:25=Ps 69:4; Jn 2:17=Ps 69:9; Matt 27:24=Ps 69:21). Paul quoted Psalms 69:22-23 in Romans 11:9-10, as having biblical authority. Both Jesus and Paul found these Psalms divinely inspired and profitable.

Others want to argue that this is an area of Old Testament ethics that that New Testament improves on. But that won’t work either. The New Testament writers believed themselves to be heirs of Old Testament ethics (Matt 22:34-40), and strikingly, the New Testament contains some curses of its own either explicitly or implicitly (eg., 1 Cor 16:22; Gal 1:8; Rev 6:9-10; Matt. 10:11-15; 2 Tim. 4:14)

Still others assert that we should only apply these prayers today as prayers of judgment against Satan and his demons. They assert that these prayers only apply to “spiritual warfare” with our ultimate enemy. There’s definitely some helpful truth to this idea, but this position doesn’t take into account other important matters.

None of these options are fully satisfying (though there’s truth in the third option). These Psalms aren’t “sub-Christian.” We must be careful with them, but they’re not sub-Christian. They’re inspired Scripture. I agree with Kidner that we should see them mainly for our *instruction*, not precise *imitation* (Kidner, 389). They have much to teach us about God, our enemies, salvation, and prayer. But we should be extremely cautious in making one-to-one correlations with the Psalmists’ imprecations.

Each of the imprecatory Psalms must be read in its own context, and interpreted individually. However, there are some general principles to keep in mind.

First, the people being cursed aren’t enemies over minor matters. These enemies are wicked. These bloodthirsty liars hate God and God’s people. They participate in gross and vicious evil (cf., Ps 5:4-6, 9-10; 10:15; 42:3; 94:2-7). These aren’t people who cut you off in traffic! These aren’t referees in basketball games!

Second, we must remember the covenantal context of the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 27-28, we see that obedience would bring Israel blessing, while disobedience would bring curses. Israel invited curses on themselves should they fail to honor God. These prayers are in many ways the simple asking of God to do what He promised in His Word, which Israel agreed to follow. We see the promise of divine vengeance expressed in the Song of Moses (Deut. 32:1-43), the principle of divine justice is outlined in the *lex talionis* (e.g., 19:16-21), and the assurance of divine cursing as well as blessing in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen.12:2-3).

Third, both the Old and New Testaments hold in tension the requirement of love and hatred of evil (VanGemeren, 831). Loving one's enemies isn't just a New Testament idea (cf., Lev 19:17-18; Prov 25:21). And the idea that people are accountable to God isn't merely an Old Testament idea (cf., Acts 17:30-31). The New Testament clearly teaches that apart from Jesus, we're under the righteous wrath of God. Jesus and Paul both rebuked unbelief strongly (cf., Matt 11:21-24; Lk 10:13-15; Matt 7:23; 1 Cor 5:5; Gal 1:8-9, 5:12). The Christian life involves both love and hatred of evil; celebration and trembling; happiness and holy awe. It involves both love (1 Cor 13) and discipline (cf., 1 Tim 1:20; 1 Cor 5:5).

Fourth, the curses are poetic; therefore we should see the blend of rhetorical hyperbole and righteous anger (Kidner, 389). Kidner states that sometimes the speaker piles up horror upon horror more to convey his sense of outrage, rather than to spell out the penalties that he literally intends (Ibid., 27). They're comparable to the outbursts in Job and Jeremiah (Ibid., 389). How these curses are executed is left to God.

Fifth, these curses express moral indignation, not personal vengeance. We should appreciate this. We shouldn't want those who persecute the faithful, and turn people away from God to not be punished. Remember, punishment isn't sinful. It's not evil, so long as it's carried out properly.

Sixth, these prayers are fueled by zeal for the honor of God's name, and for the triumph of God's kingdom. They're God-centered, not selfish, evil, or childish. The ultimate character assassination is happening against God's character. That bothers the Psalmists. We too should have a zeal for God's holy name.

Seventh, we must remember that there's a prophetic element to the imprecatory Psalms. We can see this in various ways, one of which can be observed in Romans 15:3. There, Paul quotes David's words regarding Psalm 69:9 (an imprecatory psalm) as the words of *Christ*, "For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on *me*'" (ESV, my emphasis). David spoke in these Psalms as the king, who prefigured King Jesus, the One who has the right to pronounce final judgment on His enemies and will do so (Piper, "Do I Not Hate Those"). In light of this fact, we should see the Christ-emphasis in these Psalms, and be slow to make a one-to-one correlation with the supplicant and ourselves.

Eighth, most of the imprecatory Psalms (Psalm 109 included) assume that these persecutors will not repent. They have resisted the love of the godly (Ps 109:4-5). We're called to love and seek the salvation of the wicked. We don't have perfect knowledge of the possibility of someone repenting. We're not biblical writers. We're not prophets and apostles. While we pray for God to execute judgment, and establish peace, our prayer for our enemies should focus on God bringing people to repentance. Further, in Psalm 83:17-18, the prayer sees punishment as a means of grace leading the wicked to repentance. You can see in Psalm 109 that this is a *song*! Imagine that! Why? Why sing about God's judgment? One reason is to strike fear in the ungodly, in hopes that they may repent. Our deepest desire for our enemies, even those who persecute us and inflict punishment on the church, is that they may be saved. Our hope for Isis ultimately is that these wicked men may experience the undeserved grace of Jesus (cf., Luke 23:34, Romans 9:1-3, 10:1, 1 Tim 2:4, and 2 Pet 3:9). We should trust God to execute justice on those who refuse to believe and persist in wickedness.

Ninth, Christians should remember that any prayer for Jesus to return implies the destruction of the wicked; thus, these imprecations aren't that unusual. Paul says that when Jesus returns that He will inflict vengeance on those who don't know God (2 Thess 1:7b). We want Jesus to crush our enemies, and destroy the accuser of all accusers, Satan.

Finally, remember that we know more about the afterlife than Old Testament saints. Old

Testament saints focused mainly upon the temporal; but people on this side of the cross, have an eternal perspective, for we wait for an eschatological day of judgment (Allen, 77). We can leave ultimate judgment to God. Psalm 109 challenges us to be patient. Final judgment will come.

Understanding Psalm 109

Psalm 109 has been outlined in various ways. One may study it in four parts: (1) *lamentation* (1-5); *imprecation* (6-20); *desperation* (21-29); and *adoration* (30-31). I will offer four applications based on this structure in the next section. Let me mention a few high level ideas first.

Psalm 109 is similar in content and tone to Psalm 69, both of which assert Davidic authorship. The main difference is that in Psalm 69 the David acknowledges that his wrongdoing have played a role in his suffering, whereas in Psalm 109, the Psalmist professes innocence. This helps us see the application to Jesus and Judas in Psalm 109:8. When we look at Jesus' words to Judas, we find Jesus (the true innocent sufferer) condemning Judas harshly (cf., Matt 26:24; Mk 14:21). The gospels also contain harsh condemnations of Pilate and the Jewish leaders as well (cf., Jn 19:11). With this in mind, I think we are wise to read this Psalm with Christ in view.

In both Psalms (69 and 109), it seems that the "enemies" are influential Israelites who are unfaithful to the covenant (Collins, *ESVSB*). God's people knew the consequences of not obeying the covenant. David is essentially asking God to do what He already said He would do, namely curse the wicked.

Further, we should remember that to assault God's king was an assault against God Himself. This Psalm is about the honor of God's name (109:21), not personal vengeance. With this in mind, we should see that this opposition to David's kingship foreshadows opposition to Jesus' kingship. We should long for Jesus to reign, and make his enemies of a footstool, and for God to magnify His name.

Also notice that David doesn't administer these curses personally. Beginning in verse 6, he asks God to act. He doesn't take matters into his own hands. Additionally, these curses picture a deserved judgment, not a judgment against the innocent (109:8-20). It's right for to desire for God to execute just judgment on the earth (Lk 18:8; Matt 23:35). We should appreciate the cry of the martyrs (Rev 6:10). If you've seen dark wickedness, then you should long for Jesus to return and establish peace and righteousness.

Next, we should tremble at God's holiness, and thank God for the Savior. Jesus took the judgment that we deserved. This Psalm should cause us to adore the Substitute.

Finally, see how David's enemies won't repent. They resist his sustained love (109:5). We must remember that as we desire justice for the wicked, we should also long for them to repent (cf., 1 Cor 5:5).

So then, can you hold all of this in balance as we read Psalm 109? Do you believe that God is holy and that His name should be honored? Do you believe that the wicked should be punished? Do you see Jesus as the righteous sufferer, who gave you salvation when you deserved judgment? Do you believe that we should also long for the wicked to be saved? Are you okay with leaving vengeance to God? Let's seek to hold these things in balance by the grace of God.

Applying Psalm 109

Like other laments, Psalm 109 teaches us to *pray* through our anger and frustrations. It teaches us to submit our hearts and lives to God's will, with a gospel-centered, eschatological perspective. This aspect of Psalm 109 we can certainly imitate. We will have enemies in this life. We will face character assassinations. Let's learn how to pray from this Psalm when it happens with the previous principles in mind.

1. *Pour Out Your Heart to God (109:1-5)*. In verse 1, David calls on God to speak, "God of my praise, do not be silent" (1). He doesn't want people to think God is indifferent toward evil. He wants God to act, and indeed is confident that the Lord will act.

David speaks of *praising God* in both the beginning and end of this Psalm. He's going to vent to God in the verses in between, and arrive back at this place of praise. When you express your burden to God, it's amazing how you end your prayer with praise.

Why does David want God to act? His character is being attacked. The nature of this character assassination is pretty clear. He says in verse 2, "For wicked and deceitful mouths open against me; they speak against me with lying tongues" (2). This isn't a secret campaign, but something that's out in the open. David is surrounded "with hateful words" and is attacked "without cause." (3). So then, David is the object of a cruel attack by "wicked" and "deceitful" liars. It reminds us of Jesus being the object of trumped up charges. Interestingly, the word "accuse" or "accuser(s)" appears in verses 4, 6, 20, and 29, a word from which we get the word "Satan."

The remainder of the Psalm shows more of the depth of these wounds. Verses 4-5 reveal the sadness of these attacks. David says:

In return for my love they accuse me,
but I continue to pray.
They repay me evil for good,
and hatred for my love. (109:4-5)

Get this picture. David has done everything to befriend these opponents. He has shown "love" to them. He has "prayed" for them (4; see Kidner footnote 2, 388). He has sought their "good" (5). But they have repaid him with evil and hatred. It was a betrayal "almost worthy of Judas" (Kidner, 388).

What should you do when someone turns on you? How do you respond when people say wicked things about you? Before doing anything or talking to anyone, learn to pour out your heart to God in prayer first.

2. *Give Your Enemies to God (109:6-20)*. Next, we see David specifically pouring out his heart by leaving his enemies with God. While this section may be hard to stomach, learn from David. We see him here submitting to God's will, not seeking to retaliate personally. He's not *plotting*; He's *praying*. This is an important application. His refusal to take matters into his own hands, and instead leave the problem to God, reflects biblical emphasis of loving one's enemies, seeking to overcome evil with good (cf., Rom 12:14ff.).

While it's good and right to expect evil men to face consequences on this earth, we must avoid repaying evil with evil. And because we believe in the supernatural, and the life to come, we can take the long view, leaving the matter to God. On this side of the cross, we have a better eternal perspective than Old Testament saints.

John Calvin said, "No greater injury can be inflicted upon men than to wound their reputation" (in Lawson, 184). What will you do when you're the object of a character assassination? It's certainly wise and good at times to give a defense. But that's another sermon!

Psalm 109 is teaching us to commit this matter to prayer, and entrust ourselves to our God. Character assassinations are painful. But God's presence is medicinal. Bring your wounds to Jesus, the One who was wounded for you. Lawson says, "The best way to get rid of an enemy is to leave him or her with the Lord" (185). Amen.

In verses 6-20, David pronounces specific judgments that He wants God to carry out. This is his list of how he would like for God to bring about judgment on the apparent ringleader of the opposition ("him," 6ff.), and the rest of the accusers (20). We may consider the curses in two broad categories (Lawson, 188).

Appoint an Evil Man Against Him (6-7). In some type of court of law, David asks for his accuser to be accused and indicted. He says, "Set a wicked person over him; let an accuser stand at his right hand" (6). To match his enemy's wickedness, David asks for a wicked man to oppose his wicked enemy. "Give him some of his own medicine!" he asks. Since David's enemy is evil, he wants his enemy to be found "guilty" (7), with no "prayer" (7b) for help.

Appoint a Painful Future for Him (8-20). Next, David expresses his desires for the enemy's future. He asks for his enemy's days to be few (8), and then for someone else to take his office (8b). Apparently this enemy had some official position. The apostles refer to this text in the replacement of Judas (Acts 1:20).

In verses 9-10, as David asks God for deal with his enemy's children and wife: "Let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow. Let his children wander as beggars, searching for food far from their demolished homes" (9-10). The main concern here seems to be public disgrace and for future sins to not continue. He adds that he wishes his enemy's children to be beggars (10a), and for his offspring to be homeless (10b). Then, he wants all his possessions seized and his children to be neglected (12). In verse 13, he asks God to cut his enemy's descendants off. Here's the ultimate disaster, the cutting off of the family line. There was nothing more precious to the Israelite than the generations to come (Williams, kindle). In short, David asks God to execute judgment on the whole family.

Such a disastrous judgment is even pronounced upon the evil man's predecessors (14-15). He doesn't want anyone to even remember them.

Why such harsh punishment? David tells us in verse 16: "For he did not think to show kindness, but pursued the afflicted, poor, and brokenhearted in order to put them to death" (16). His enemy didn't show covenant love; he didn't do justice and love mercy, and walk humbly with God (Mic 6:8). He deserves punishment (cf., Ps 10).

The thought of this man's sinfulness triggers more curses in verses 17-20. To summarize them, David asks the Lord to give this man what he deserves. In verse 20, David concludes by addressing the whole group of accusers, not merely the ringleader saying, "Let this be the Lord's payment to my *accusers*, to those who speak evil against me" (20, my emphasis).

While it's hard to imagine praying things against one's family, remember that David's prayer is based upon Old Testament principles and practices. For example, God said that the sins of the fathers would be visited on the children to the third and fourth generations of *those who hate Him* (Ex 20:5; Deut 5:9; see also Prov 3:33, 17:13). God warned that the unrepentant would be punished. Since God gave such promises, His people weren't wrong in petitioning Him to fulfill them.

Further, we should remember that when we read verse 9 "Let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow," the Psalmist is harking back to God's word in Exodus 22:22-23, "You must not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, they will no doubt cry

to Me, and I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will burn, and I will kill you with the sword; then your wives will be widows and your children fatherless” (cf., Deut. 27:19). David was reminding God to be true to His promise. And such a concept also magnifies God’s love for the poor and powerless.

Moreover, the execution of the wicked was also for Israel’s protection. In God’s love, He protected His people, from whom the Messiah would eventually come.

More practically, notice David’s example of presenting this matter to God, instead of inflicting personal vengeance. We should learn to ask God to act. We should ask God to execute justice on the wicked, or that He would change their hard hearts and convert them. The apostle Paul was present at Stephen’s martyrdom, approving of an innocent man’s death, but the Lord changed Paul’s heart. It’s right to pray for justice to be executed against terrorists groups, and it’s also right to pray for God to convert such Paul-like individuals. Further, this mention of the accuser of accusers should also make us long for the day of Christ, the better David, to return and cast Satan into the lake of fire forever (Rev 20:10). For right now, the accuser is deceiving many, and he deserves every curse we could imagine.

Believe it or not, you will have enemies in this life! How will you respond? Pray for God to execute justice or change them by His mercy. Pray for God to act. Leave your enemies to God in prayer. Be patient, for Christ will bring total justice in the future.

3. Appeal to, and Rest in, the Character of God (109:21-29). When falsely accused, meditate on God’s character. In these verses, we find David appealing to and resting in God’s justice and God’s faithful love, as he confesses his own weakness.

In the context of judgment, David asks the Lord to “deliver” him, and “help” him (21, 26). He turns his attention to the character of God with an emphatic contrast, “But You, Yahweh my Lord” (21a). David considers the greatness of God’s sovereignty, the righteousness of God’s judgment, and the steadfastness of God’s love, to find strength in time of need. If we find ourselves wrongly accused or persecuted, we too do well to meditate on the character of our God. Hear Keller apply this prayer:

Lord, I thank you that your reality changes *everything*. I am weak – O, but you ... I deserve nothing – O, but you ... I don’t see any way out of this – O, but you ... My life seems to be derailed – O, but you ... I don’t know how to pray. Ah, but you will help me. Amen. (*The Songs of Jesus*, 289)

Pondering who God is changes everything! It allows us to rest. It gives us confidence. It gives us strength.

After shifting his attention to God’s character, David goes on to pray, “deal kindly with me because of Your name; deliver me because of the goodness of Your faithful love” (21b). David seeks God’s help for his own good, and ultimately for God’s glory. This spirit is at the heart of our prayers for the Lord’s return, that His people may have peace and blessing, and that Christ may receive the glory that He is due.

After praying for the Lord to deliver him, David asks the Lord to consider his broken condition, which gives the reason for his desperate plea for deliverance. He tells the Lord that his heart is wounded (22), that his life is fading (23), that his knees are collapsing (24a), that his body is emaciated (24b), and that his accusers are scornful (25; Lawson, 189). He casts his insufficiency on God’s self-sufficiency. Out of his weakness, he turns to God for strength. And he finds strength by meditating on the character and purposes of God.

David then offers the following petition to God:

Help me, Lord my God;
save me according to Your faithful love
so they may know that this is Your hand
and that You, Lord, have done it.
Though they curse, You will bless.
When they rise up, they will be put to shame,
but Your servant will rejoice.
My accusers will be clothed with disgrace;
they will wear their shame like a cloak. (109:26-29)

Verse 26 is another desperate plea for God *to save him*. Verses 27-29 are a plea for God *to shame them*. Again, he desires for God's name to be honored. This must be at the heart of our prayers.

When you feel weak and defeated, discouraged and beaten, broken and wounded, follow David's lead and say, "But You, my Lord." He is our unchanging rock. He is our refuge. He protects and He delivers. He strengthens the weak.

4. Keep Praising God (109:30-31). In the final section, David finishes with a confession of faith and vow to praise God. He says:

I will fervently thank the Lord with my mouth;
I will praise Him in the presence of many.
For He stands at the right hand of the needy
to save him from those who would condemn him. (109:30-31)

So David ends where he began, with praise to the God of justice and mercy. He commits to praise God *passionately* (30a). David's not speaking about routine, mindless praise, but heart-felt thanksgiving. He also commits to give God praise *publically* (30b). Everyone will know that He loves his God. It's right to glorify God passionately and publically.

Don't let false accusations, and enemies keep you from magnifying the Creator and Redeemer. Praise God through the affliction, like Paul and Silas did in the Philippian prison.

Verse 31 contains two reasons to praise God, which point us ahead in the biblical narrative to the Savior. David says that God is worthy of passionate and public praise because (1) God stands with the needy, and (2) He saves the condemned.

This phrase "at the right hand" (31a) appeared back in verse 6, referring to his enemy's accuser. Now here, *God* is pictured of standing at David's right hand, in a position of support. In the New Testament, we read how the Spirit (the *parakletos*) comes alongside to help us (Jn 16:7), and how Jesus advocates and intercedes for us (1 Jn 2:1; Rom 8:34). What support the Christian has! Jesus is at our Father's right hand, praying for us. The Spirit is with us to counsel and help us. I'm reminded of Stephen's martyrdom, where an innocent man suffered. Luke tells us that before Stephen breathed his last breath that he saw Jesus standing at the Father's right hand (Acts 7:56). Jesus was in the position of intercession. Let's remember we're not alone when we're afflicted and persecuted.

Jesus' path to this position came through the cross. At the cross, Jesus took the curses that we deserved (Gal 3:13-14). We deserved God's wrath, but that wrath fell upon the greater David, Jesus. At no fault of His own, Jesus was betrayed, mocked, made the object of lies, and crucified shamefully on a cross. He took the punishment that was due us. In Christ, we are saved. The wrath of God will not fall upon us. Psalm 109 should help us see how much we need a Substitute.

And because we know the Savior, and have the Savior interceding for us, we have the strength we need to love our enemies, and the strength to leave vengeance to God.

My friend Afshin grew up in a Muslim family. His family fled Iran because of conflict and settled in Houston. By God's grace, Afshin became a Christian. One day, over dinner, Afshin was talking with his Muslim father (who had disowned him for a period of time before accepting him back), and his high-school brother. A ringleader of a group at school had recently beaten up his brother. His brother boldly announced that he was going to retaliate and beat up his attacker. Afshin tried to talk him out of such violent action. He said to his brother, "Either you can (1) disfigure this guy for the rest of his life, or (2) forgive him (and possibly change him for the rest of his life)." His brother rejected the second option completely. Afshin's dad then defended his brother, based upon his understanding of Islam. As the awkward conversation continued, Afshin thought about Mel Gibson's new movie *The Passion of the Christ*. He had wanted to ask his dad to go see it. So Afshin asked his father, and his father said, "Sure. Tonight?" Afshin was like, "Sure!" Then Afshin's dad asked Afshin's brother to go as well. He agreed too, and so all three of them got in the car and went to the theatre. There they sat together, and with Afshin in the middle, watching the story of the cross, the story about the innocent sufferer dying for His enemies. That story radically challenged the worldview of his father and brother. It's a radical message. But it's the message the whole world needs to hear.

The cross should change the way we relate to our enemies. It should incite gratitude in our hearts because Jesus loved us while we were enemies. It can give us *strength to love* our enemies. And it can give us *strength to wait* for Jesus to return and execute perfect justice.

Reflect and Discuss

- How have you seen people reflect the human desire for justice?
- What was your first reaction upon reading Psalm 109? Why?
- Explain David's trials. Why is he so troubled?
- What does this Psalm teach us about pouring out our heart to God?
- How does Judas' relationship to Jesus relate to this Psalm?
- How should we pray for our enemies?
- In verse 21, David shifts his attention to the character of God. Why is this important?
- How does David express his weakness to God?
- Why does David desire to continue praising God (30-31)?
- Take a few moments to pray in light of this Psalm, and in light of Jesus' work on the cross.