

October 8, 2017

Series: Authentic: Living Life through the Psalms

Title: Can I be Honest?

Text: Psalms 137 NLT

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*¹ Beside the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept as we **thought of Jerusalem.** ² We put away our harps, hanging them on the branches of poplar trees. ³ For **our captors demanded a song from us.** Our tormentors insisted on a joyful hymn: "Sing us one of those songs of Jerusalem!" ⁴ But **how can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a pagan land?** ⁵ If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget how to play the harp. ⁶ May my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I fail to remember you, if I don't make Jerusalem my greatest joy. ⁷ O Lord, remember what the Edomites did on the day the armies of Babylon captured Jerusalem. "Destroy it!" they yelled. "Level it to the ground!" ⁸ **O Babylon, you will be destroyed. Happy is the one who pays you back for what you have done to us.** ⁹ Happy is the one who takes your babies and smashes them against the rocks!*

This Psalm falls in the category of a Prayer, but it's a very different kind of prayer. It's the kind of prayer that we tell people – NOT TO PRAY – at least not publicly! This is what scholars call an "Imprecatory Psalm"!

That's a word you mess up on the SAT test, right?

Imprecatory means, "to invoke evil upon or to curse one's enemies, usually in a violent way."

So, honestly speaking – this is the kind of Psalm when you read it makes you a bit uncomfortable and when you study it makes you more understanding of why they prayed it.

Also, it's not hard to identify with this type of prayer when you take into account, all the craziness that's happening in our world today. What do you feel about people, systems whose sole agenda is to do harm to others? How do you really feel about your enemies and do you always want to bless them?

David had a few of these prayers in the Psalms and they were very fierce and forceful.

- **Psalms 55:15** – Let death take my enemies by surprise; let them go down alive to the realm of the dead, for evil finds lodging among them.
- **Psalms 69:28** – May they be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous.
- **Psalms 35:6** – May their path be dark and slippery, with the angel of the Lord pursuing them. (v. 1 Contend, Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me.)
- **Psalms 58:6** – Break the teeth in their mouths, O God; Lord, tear out the fangs of those lions!

David's prayers against enemies was not just him asking the Lord to bring justice, but he wanted them tortured for the things they did to the nation and the people of God.

Psalm 137 was written by a man named Asaph, we don't know much about him other than he was clearly a skilled musician and psalmist from the Levitical priestly tribe and had a leadership role in the tabernacle.

In verse 1, we see that it's a Psalm written about their exile in Babylon. A time when they were taken captive, enslaved, suffered many injustices and in some case brutal treatment. Here they are weeping because of this captivity, driven out of Jerusalem by strangers. (Bill Randles – The World of the OT, part 4).

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Versus 2-4 describes the taunting from their enemies who wanted to make them sing happy songs during their time of grief. The writer says, they refused to participate, "**how can we sing the songs of the Lord**" in a **strange land, under these conditions?**

They didn't want to sing? They wanted to curse?

Versus 7-9, is the prayer for God to deal with their enemies in a harsh way.

*⁷ O Lord, **remember what the Edomites did on the day the armies of Babylon captured Jerusalem.** "Destroy it!" they yelled. "Level it to the ground!" ⁸ **O Babylon, you will be destroyed. Happy is the one who pays you back for what you have done to us.** ⁹ Happy is the one who takes your babies and smashes them against the rocks!*

The reference to the Edomites in verse 7, was because as a neighboring tribe they witnessed the atrocities that were committed by the against them by the Babylonians and not only did they stand by and do nothing, they actually joined in their destruction (Obadiah 1:8-15).

***8)** "In that day," declares the Lord, "will I not destroy the wise men of Edom, those of understanding in the mountains of Esau? **9)** Your warriors, Teman, will be terrified, and everyone in Esau's mountains will be cut down in the slaughter. **10)** Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever. **11)** On the day you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. **12)** You should not gloat over your brother in the day of his misfortune, nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction, nor boast so much in the day of their trouble. **13)** You should not march through the gates of my people in the day of their disaster, nor gloat over them in their calamity in the day of their disaster, nor seize their wealth in the day of their disaster. **14)** You should not wait at the crossroads to cut down their fugitives, nor hand over their survivors in the day of their trouble. **15)** "The day of the Lord is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head."*

Now, **verses 8-9 is the real zinger!** One of the things that the Babylonians did included the slaughtering of their children (**Lamentations 2:21-22**).

Rhetorical Question: Can we pray like this? Should we? I mean, David did!

I. Let's be Honest?

Horrible things, evil things are happening around us all the time! Horrible things have happened in the History of the World and in the History of our Nation. Let me give you some examples, in no specific or particular order.

- It's estimated that between 1525 and 1866, which was the entire history of the slave trade that 12.5 million Africans were shipped to the New World, about 10.7 million survived what was called the middle passage, to disembark in North America, the Caribbean and South America. The stain of this sin still rests upon this nation today!
- **Between 1933 – 1945 during the Holocaust, Jews were captured and put in concentration camps and were taken to gas chambers to be executed by the German Government under the leadership of a demonic mad-man Hitler. [PHOTO]**
- In 1973, the Supreme Court of the United States in a landmark decision in the case of ***Jane Roe v. Henry Wade*** extends the right to a woman to have an abortion but restricting that only to the point of viability. Meaning that a fetus, in those days was thought to be unable to live on its own outside the mother's womb only up to the 23 or 24 week! As of **January 2016** its estimated that there have been **58,586,256 abortions** since it became legal. Will God get justice for those babies that have been lost – will He judge America for this sin!
- Let's update and modernize this a bit to just within the last couple years, horrible things:
 - **In February 2015, a demonic group called ISIS kidnapped and executed by beheading 21 Egyptian Christian men in Libya and posted the capture and beheadings online. [PHOTO]**
 - On July 6, 2016, Philando Castile was shot and killed by Jeronimo Yanez, a St. Anthony, Minnesota police officer after being pulled over on suspicion of criminal activity with his girlfriend and 4-year old daughter in the car. Yanez was acquitted of all charges!
 - On July 7, 2016, Micah Xavier Johnson ambushed and fired on a group of police officers in Dallas, TX, killing five officers and injuring 9 others because of his anger over police shootings of black men and stated that he wanted to kill white people, especially white police officers. Johnson was himself killed.
 - In Chicago, at the midyear 2017, 323 people have died in gang violence. Mother's are burying their sons and daughters at an alarming rate at the hands of other blacks.
 - In August of this year, in Charlottesville, VA evil rears its ugly head when White Nationalist, KKK and neo Nazi's gather to protest a protest resulting in 32-year old Heather Heyer, who was a beautiful young White lady, to lose her life.
 - Finally, we wake up on Monday morning last week to reports of a deranged and demonically inspired attack in Las Vegas in which this demonic possessed man opens fire on a crowd causing 59 deaths and hundreds to be injured, what is now the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history.

- *Maybe the problem in its totality isn't a black/white racial issues alone – we are dealing with a demonic release on our land; we are in all out warfare that has visited our Nation in a new way (we've had challenges in the past) and we less spiritually equipped to deal with it.*

Let's be honest, there is enough evil and horror in our everyday that helps you and me to identify with wanting to pray that God would **“let death take some enemies by surprise”** or be **“blotted out of the book of life”** or cause their **“their path be dark and slippery, with the angel of the Lord pursuing them.”**

The simple answer is we are commanded to pray for our persecutors or people who commit evil. Yet, it's more complex than we often like to admit. And, even when we do pray for them, we need an abundance of His grace to help us do so (we would rather be angry and pray vengeance).

Let me ask it again in a more precise way: **Can we pray for God to execute his righteous judgment on evildoers? Perhaps!**

There are certain ways that we can pray that may be useful to us as believers, in the light of these evil events:

1. We must distinguish between cursing our personal enemies ourselves and calling upon God to curse his enemies.

Just because you've been hurt by someone doesn't give you the right to curse them in prayer (*e.g. you baby daddy is refusing to pay child support; your boss is giving you a hard time at work; or your neighbor that you don't like lights up the neighborhood with loud music until 2am*).

In fact, prayers against human (personal) enemies is not justified as New Testament believers. Too many scriptures that teaches us “to bless and do not curse” those who persecute us. (Luke 6:27-28; Rom. 12:20)

Why does God require this ... because we are not God and our execution of judgment will always be imperfect!

Here's the balancer: If you pray that God brings justice and judgment on someone for their sins – then be prepared to receive the same execution of judgment on your sins.

Matthew 7:2 – For in the same way you judge others (people or nations), you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

2. Remember that when David cursed his enemies, it was indicative of the times they were in as a Nation and the fighting against other nations who were God's enemies – not just David's enemies. (Psalms 35:1 – Lord, contend with those who contend against me, fight against those who fight against me!)

Truth is that some battles we fight are battles of our own making – they are not the Lord’s battles! Now, he will help you through your battles that you started – but you might need to repent first!

That aside, as believers, our assignment and mandate is different. Our mission is to care for souls and to take the gospel to all nations with the message of the Kingdom. (Matt. 28:19-20)

God’s grace and love.

- ***On June 17, 2015, in Charleston, South Carolina a historically black church was shot up by another deranged and demonically hate filled man killing 9 people. The reports are that they showed love while the young man showed hate. The families of the 9, found it in their hearts, by the grace of God to forgive the young man – who is now sentenced to death.***

3. We can hate evil and the evil that people do – and we should call out all evil, injustice and inequities. In fact, one of the marks of prophetic ministry to a nation is to *“comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.”*

So, the closest we can get to praying the prayer like David did is this – **We can call evil what it is and ask God to deal with it promptly and specifically.** In Revelation 6:9-10,

9) 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 and the testimony they had maintained. 10) They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?”

Here the heavenly martyrs call out for justice and vengeance. They ask God to avenge ***“our blood upon those who dwell on the earth.”*** This is their cry for God to deal with the enemies on the earth – **to divinely mediate the matter.**

The clear qualification of any prayers for justice is that God is the one who answers that prayer in His own sovereign way. We don’t take justice into our own hands and mouths and behavior or pray specifically for God to do something bad to someone or a group because of their evil.

Truth is... we desire God to get justice for those men who were beheaded at the hands of these ISIS fighters – hopefully, swiftly and completely.

Truth is ... He WILL!

- A friend of mine, close friend, son was shot and killed by some thugs and his body was dumped on the side of the road right at Raytown & I-470. While he deals with the tragic death of his son, he hates the evil, prays for justice but he forgives the evildoers.

2 Timothy 4:1 ... Christ, will judge the living and the dead.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 - Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every act to judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

- Will God judge America as He will all nations.... We may be under some level of divine judgment right now ... (Harvey, Irma, Las Vegas, Nate...)
- Will God judge You
- Will God get justice – yes – of everything in the earth!

I believe that it is our divisiveness that is destroying us quicker than anything else, even among the Christian Church. The enemy has implemented a clear strategy against us **“to divide and conquer.”**

Psalms 137: 5-6 - ⁵If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget how to play the harp. ⁶May my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I fail to remember you, if I don't make Jerusalem my greatest joy.

The resolve, in the devastation was to remember “Jerusalem” their highest joy. It was their calling! They were devoted to it – they were committed to rebuilding it. With everything that going on in our Nation and lives, I believe we should do the same thing!

BIG POINTS:

1. We MUST NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF THE REAL ENEMY.

Ephesians 6:12 - For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

2. We MUST NEVER FORGET OUR ASSIGNMENT on this earth.

2 Cor. 5:20 - We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.