

Psalms of Ascent, part 4

“The Reality of Suffering and the Role of Imprecation”

Is anger on the rise in our country?

My guess is most of your worst moments or deepest regrets are tied to you anger?

What is an effective approach in dealing with anger? Which is one of the seven deadly sins, and how do imprecatory psalms help?

Psalms of Ascent are songs that were used by Jewish pilgrims as they made their way to Jerusalem for the three annual festivals/celebrations of Passover, of Pentecost, and of the Tabernacle.

The themes of these songs can help us on our journey. They can help us press on when we grow tired. They can inspire us when we are tempted or feel discouraged.

The Psalms have been called the prayers and praise of the people. Through the centuries, the Psalms have given voice to the voiceless, prayers to the prayerless, and hope to the hopeless. Where the rest of the Bible is seen as the voice of God, *the Psalms are the voices of people “with” God.*

Psalm 129 The message version

“The psalm might be best understood as a mixed form poetry, thanksgiving, followed by imprecations that end it.” NIV Application Commentary

Psalm 129:1-4 The message version

Remembering their affliction and oppression at the hands of others is something most of us cannot really relate to, but many of us know pain and suffering to some extent in our lives.

“When the Bible says that God sticks with us, the emphasis is on His dependable personal relationship, that he is always there for us...he sticking with us is the reason Christians can look back over a long life crisscrossed with cruelties, unannounced tragedies, unexpected setbacks, sufferings, disappointments, depression—looking back across it all and see it as a road of blessing, and make a song out of what we see!”

Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*

Psalm 129: Verses 5-7 The message version

Imprecatory psalms and writing

Psalm 69:18-25 NIV

Matthew 5:43-44 NIV

Which is it?

Matthew 5:21-22 NIV

“Anger is a spontaneous feeling that comes over our mind and our body when our will is thwarted.”

“Thumos”

“Orgizo”

Cycle of Anger

3 things we can do with our anger:

1. We can act on it...
2. We can deny it...
3. We can give it to God

So how do you stop this vicious and destructive cycle from happening in your personal world, in the world?

Give it over to God...

Hebrews 5:7-8

“One bold message of the book of Job is that you can say anything to God. Throw it at him your grief, your anger, your doubt, your bitterness, your betrayal, your disappointment, he can absorb then all. The spiritual giants of the Bible are shown contending with God. They prefer to go away limping, rather than to shut God out. In this respect, the Bible prefigures a tenet of modern psychology: you can't really deny your feelings or make them disappear, so you might as well as express them.”

Philip Yancey, *Disappointment with God*

Reflect and Practices:

- In what ways do you tend to suppress or deny difficult emotions, anger, sadness, fear—rather than admit them to God and yourself? (journaling)
- What have been the results when you suppress or deny them?
- How does knowing these types of songs/prayer are in the Scripture encourage you?

Prayer:

Father the idea of being emotionally transparent with you—especially when emotions are raw, is very difficult. In fact, it almost seems disrespectful. Thank you Lord, that you love me, the good, the bad, and the ugly, and that your love is without condition. In Jesus' name, Amen