

## Psalm 101: Considering the "Hate" Psalms 11-17-19 PM

Psalms can be beautiful praises of our God. They can also be heartfelt pleadings and prayers. But the most difficult Psalms tend to be a group of Psalms with an altogether different message. The "Imprecatory" Psalms are perhaps the most difficult Psalms to digest in the Bible. Imprecatory means to call out curses; they include Psalm 69, 109, 137 as messages which petition God to bring wrathful vengeance on enemies and to bring merciless slaughter to opponents. Too, there are Psalms (such as Psalm 101) that declare a hatred of sinners; perhaps none stronger than this declaration in Psalm 139:21-22: *"Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with the utmost hatred; they have become my enemies"*.

These are difficult because they seem to be in conflict with Jesus' teachings, such as *"I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you"* (Luke 6:27). Some would say this is an Old Testament vs. New Testament issue; that this marks a change in the mind of God towards men. But we are told repeatedly that God does not change, and that the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. Indeed, there are imprecatory statements in the New Testament; curses are brought out in places like Galatians 1:8 and 1 Corinthians 16:22.

Perhaps the main issue here is that we fail to appreciate the meaning of the words used in the Bible. For example, if we ask someone in the world what "love" is, they are likely to describe an emotion, or to describe the idea of acceptance. Yet the Bible defined love as seeking the best for someone else. This means that, for example, Paul telling the Galatians they had fallen from Grace was an act of love that they interpreted as being hate (Galatians 4:16). Jesus defined hate as putting something in a second place (Matthew 6:24), or to love it less (Luke 14:26). Perhaps understanding this idea of "hate" helps us to understand the meaning of the "hate" Psalms. These Psalms tell us that a Godly person will choose God over all other things; we will "hate" everything that is not of God.

But the "hate" Psalms also teach us how important it is to reject ungodly things. We are to have a loathing of certain things, to reject certain people, and to stand in opposition to evil ideas.

God requires us to oppose sinful things. James warns us against friendship with the world in James 4:4. We must reject (or love less) those who hate God (Romans 1:30-32), those who turn away (Jude 23), those who love evil (Psalm 97:10) and those who teach evil (Revelation 2:6).

Second, we must remember that we are in a desperate struggle against evil. Jesus said that because we are His, *"the world hates you"* (John 15:19). The world is in opposition to us as much as we are to it. The world deceives and lies (1 Corinthians 6:9). Our adversary seeks to devour us by using the world against us (1 Peter 5:8). In this war there can be no compromise (Ephesians 5:11).

Perhaps we need to see that wanting God's vengeance is not evil, as suggested in Revelation 6:10. There the (figurative) blood of martyrs cried out for vengeance, as does all innocent blood. We are told that we must leave room for God's wrath (Romans 12:19) because God's vengeance is important (Hebrews 10:30).

To be clear, the imprecatory and "hate" Psalms are not easily understood, yet they reflect an inspired message that is in harmony with the teachings of the New Testament. David would not compromise with evil men; He stood with God. If they were God's enemy, they were his too. This is important to us; we should stand with God like David and be repulsed by evil.