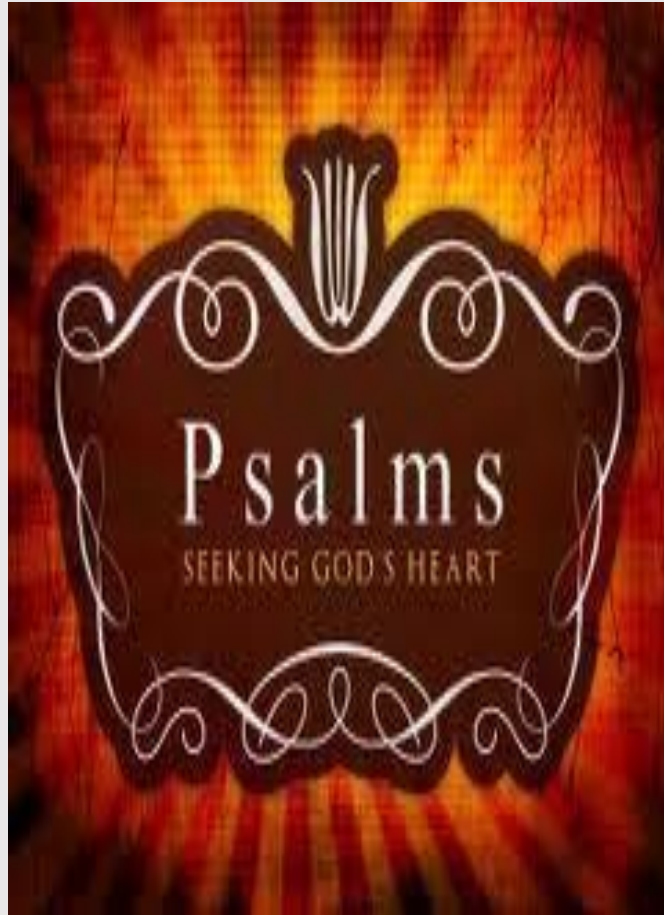


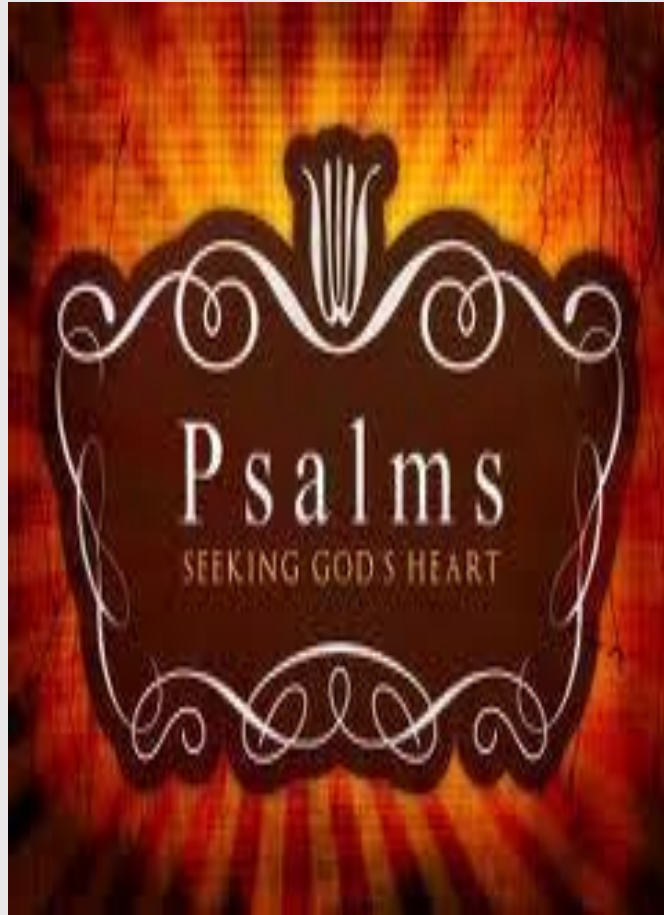
# Imprecatory Psalms

*(Cursing Psalms)*

Moses N. Maka, PhD



**The book of Psalms  
is one of the most  
profound and most  
interesting books in  
the entire Bible**

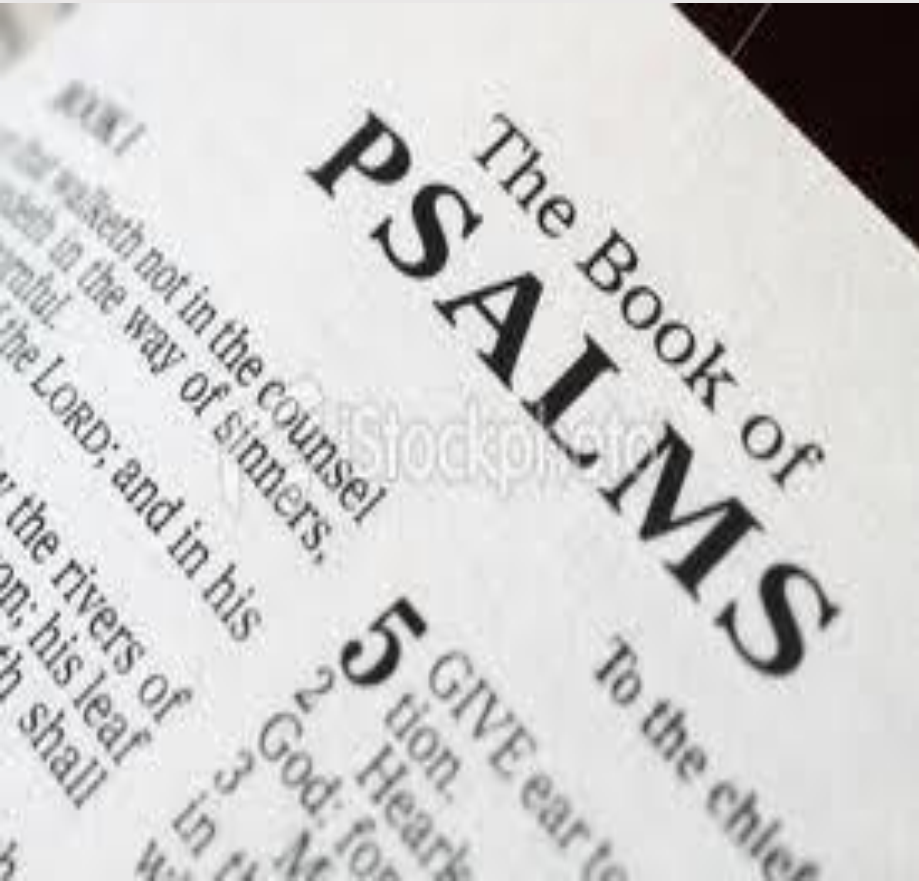


**It is a composite book comprising of diverse Psalms and spanning almost 1000 years of humankind's interaction with their God**

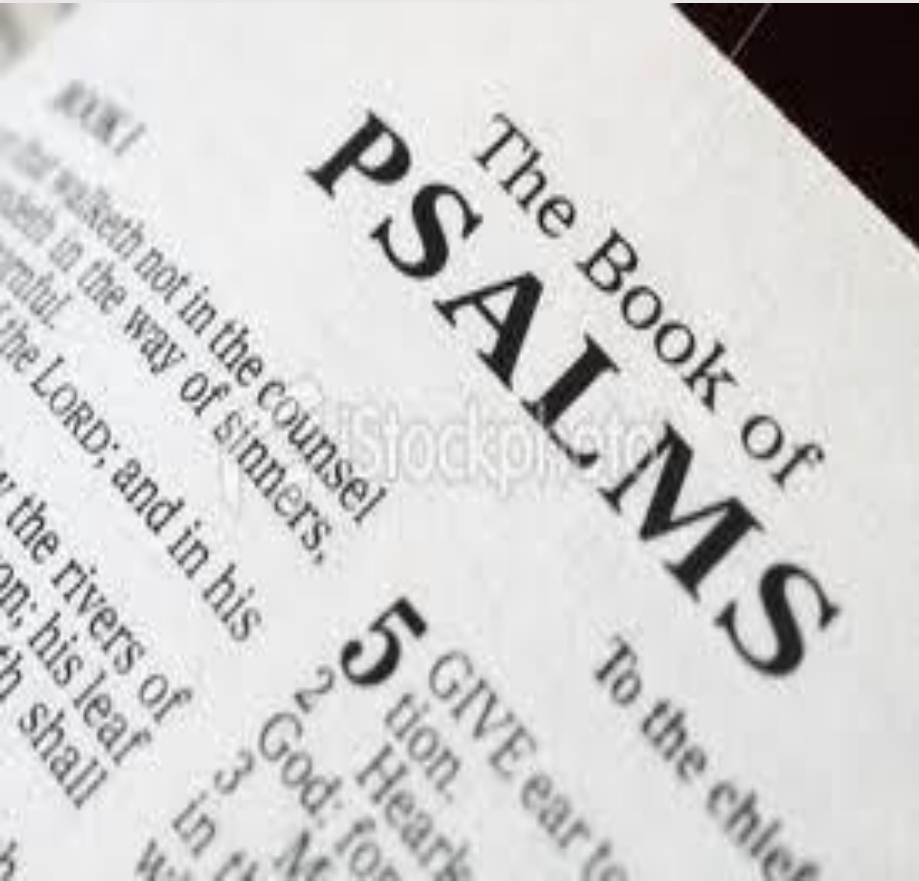


Unlike other Scriptures that were written by prophets in dreams and visions, the Psalms were written from man to God

- Psalms not authored from heaven's throne room (*thus saith the Lord*) but from the experience of the community of faith.
- The Psalms record the most diverse, profound, and candid responses and experiences of man to God



**When you come to the book of Psalms, you come face to face with an honest, candid and straight forward worshipper before his God.**



**With the Psalmist, there is no pretense or hypocrisy in his address to God.**

**The Psalmist does not hide thoughts and feelings of hurt, frustration, disappointment, sorrow, happiness or joy.**



**When the Psalmist is HAPPY  
he will visibly show it and  
audibly tell it out: Hallelujah,  
praise the Lord, Give thanks  
to the Lord, Sing to the Lord,  
Dance to the Lord, etc.**

Praise the LORD! I will  
praise the LORD with my  
whole heart, In the  
assembly of the upright  
and in the congregation.

Psalm 111:1



**Similarly, when the  
Psalmist is unhappy,  
confused, disappointed, he  
will tell it out to the Lord  
without mincing words.**

**My eye wastes away because of affliction. LORD, I have called daily upon You; I have stretched out my hands to You. Will You work wonders for the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise You?**

**Psalm 88:9-10**

Shall Your lovingkindness be  
declared in the grave? Or Your  
faithfulness in the place of  
destruction? Shall Your wonders be  
known in the dark? And Your  
righteousness in the land of  
forgetfulness?

Psalm 88:11-12

- **Bible students have identified & categorized various types of Psalms in the Psalter:**

- ✓ Complaint Psalms
- ✓ Lament Psalms
- ✓ Penitential Psalms
- ✓ Thanksgiving Psalms
- ✓ Hymnic Psalms
- ✓ Torah Psalms, □
- ✓ *et-cetera*

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# Imprecatory Psalms

Cursing Psalms





# Imprecatory Psalms

Cursing Psalms





**Imprecatory Psalms,  
also called cursing  
psalms are those  
psalms that contain  
prayers or curses for  
the punishment of the  
enemies of the Psalmist**

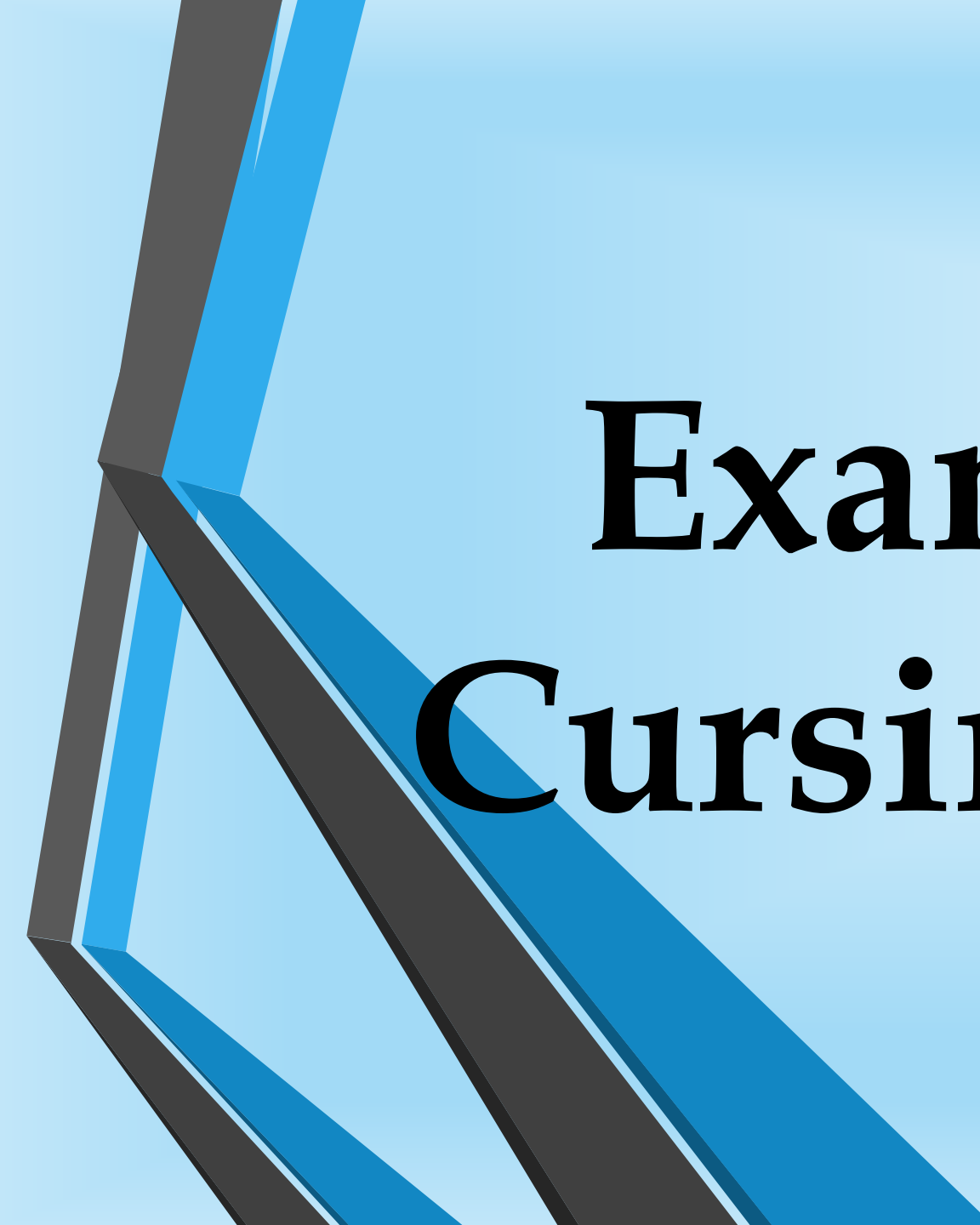
- Have you ever had a person who crosses your way and you feel like hitting them or doing something terrible to them?
- Have you ever been annoyed to the extent of wanting to hit or inflict pain upon some one?
- Have you had someone who messes you up that you felt should get the full wrath for their action?





**Cursing Psalms are those Psalms that deal with one's enemy; one's adversary or foe.**

**They calls upon terrible curses and punishment upon that person**

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# Examples of Cursing Psalms

Contend, LORD, with  
those who contend with  
me; fight against those  
who fight against me.

Psalm 35:1

Take up shield and  
armor; arise and  
come to my aid.

**Psalm 35:2**

Draw out the spear and  
javelin against those who  
pursue me! Assure me  
with these words: “I am  
your deliverer!”

Psalm 35:3



May those who seek my  
life be disgraced and put  
to shame; may those who  
plot my ruin be turned  
back in dismay.

**Psalm 35:4**

Let them be like chaff  
before the wind, with  
the angel of the LORD  
driving them away.

**Psalm 35:5**

Let their way be dark  
and slippery, And let  
the angel of the  
**LORD** pursue them.

**Psalm 35:6**

Let destruction come upon  
him unexpectedly, And let  
his net that he has hidden  
catch himself; Into that very  
destruction let him fall.

**Psalm 35:8**

And my soul shall be  
joyful in the LORD; I  
shall rejoice in your  
salvation.

**Psalm 35:9**



# Psalm 55:15-16

Let death take my enemies  
by surprise; Let them go  
down alive into hell, For  
wickedness is in their  
dwellings and among them.

Psalm 55:15



As for me, I will call  
upon God, And the  
LORD shall save  
me.

**Psalm 55:16**



# Psalm 69:21-27

My enemies gave me  
poison for food, and for  
my thirst they gave me  
sour wine to drink.

**Psalm 69:21**

May the table set before  
them become a snare;  
and when they are at  
peace, let it become a  
trap.

**Psalm 69:22**

Let their eyes be  
darkened, so that they  
do not see; And make  
their loins shake  
continually.

Psalm 69:23

Pour out your fury  
upon them, and let  
your burning anger  
overtake them.

Psalm 69:24

May their dwelling  
place be desolate;  
May no one live in  
their tents.

Psalm 69:25



Charge them with  
crime upon crime; do  
not let them share in  
your salvation.

**Psalm 69:27**

Charge them with  
crime upon crime; do  
not let them share in  
your salvation.

Psalm 69:27

May they be blotted out  
of the book of the living,  
And not be written with  
the righteous.

Psalm 88:9



# Psalm 109:5-14

They have repaid  
me evil for good,  
And hatred for my  
love.

Psalm 109:5

Set a wicked man over  
him, And let an accuser  
stand at his right hand.  
While he is judged, let  
him be found guilty.

Psalm 109:6-7

May his days be few;  
may another take his  
place of leadership [let  
another person take their  
office].

Psalm 109:8



May his children  
be fatherless and  
his wife a widow.

Psalm 109:9

May his children be  
wandering beggars  
[vagabonds] May they seek  
their bread also from their  
desolate places.

Psalm 109:10

May a creditor seize all  
he has [his property];  
may strangers plunder  
the fruits of his labor.

Psalm 109:11

May there be no one to  
extend kindness to him  
or take pity on his  
fatherless children.


Psalm 109:12

May his descendants  
be cut off, their names  
blotted out from the  
next generation.

**Psalm 109:13**

May the iniquity of his  
fathers be remembered  
before the LORD; may the  
sin of his mother never be  
blotted out.

Psalm 109:14



# Psalm 137:8-9

O daughter of Babylon,  
you devastated one, How  
blessed will be the one  
who shall repay you for  
what you have done to us.

Psalm 137:8



Blessed shall he be  
who takes your little  
ones and dashes them  
against the rock!

Psalm 137:9

# Qn. 1: of Reconciling texts

- Mat. 5:44 “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”
- Luke 6:27 “Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you.”
- Luke 6:29 “If someone slaps you on the, turn and offer the other cheek also”



# Qn. 2: of Confusion

- ➡ “If all the Bible is inspired, how do we explain Imprecatory Psalms which seem to seek judgment, punishments, revenge and curses upon one’s enemies?”
- ➡ We all have enemies. Can we also pray such prayers for them? Are such Scriptures still relevant to present-day Christians, or not?



# One Interpretations

- Many Christians believe that Imprecatory Psalms are out of date.
- They reflect a lower standard of OT ethic that is sub-Christian.
- “We follow the NT and Jesus Christ,” they argue.



# Another Interpretations

- Others claim that the composers of these Psalms speak in the indicative mood (the “explanatory” mood), and not in the imperative mood (the mood of command” or “request”).
- That is, they merely were stating what would happen to the wicked; they were not actually asking God to destroy the wicked.



# Another Interpretation

Still, other circles of Christians argue that these Psalms are a mere out bursts of people who lost their cool under the pressure of hurt or persecution and that there is no divine approval for their sentiments and God was not obliged to grant their petitions.

# Caution for Biblical Interpretation:

**All Scripture is Inspired  
(breathed) by God thru the Holy  
Spirit, and is profitable for  
teaching, reproof, correction, and  
for instruction in righteousness.”  
(2 Tim.3:16).**

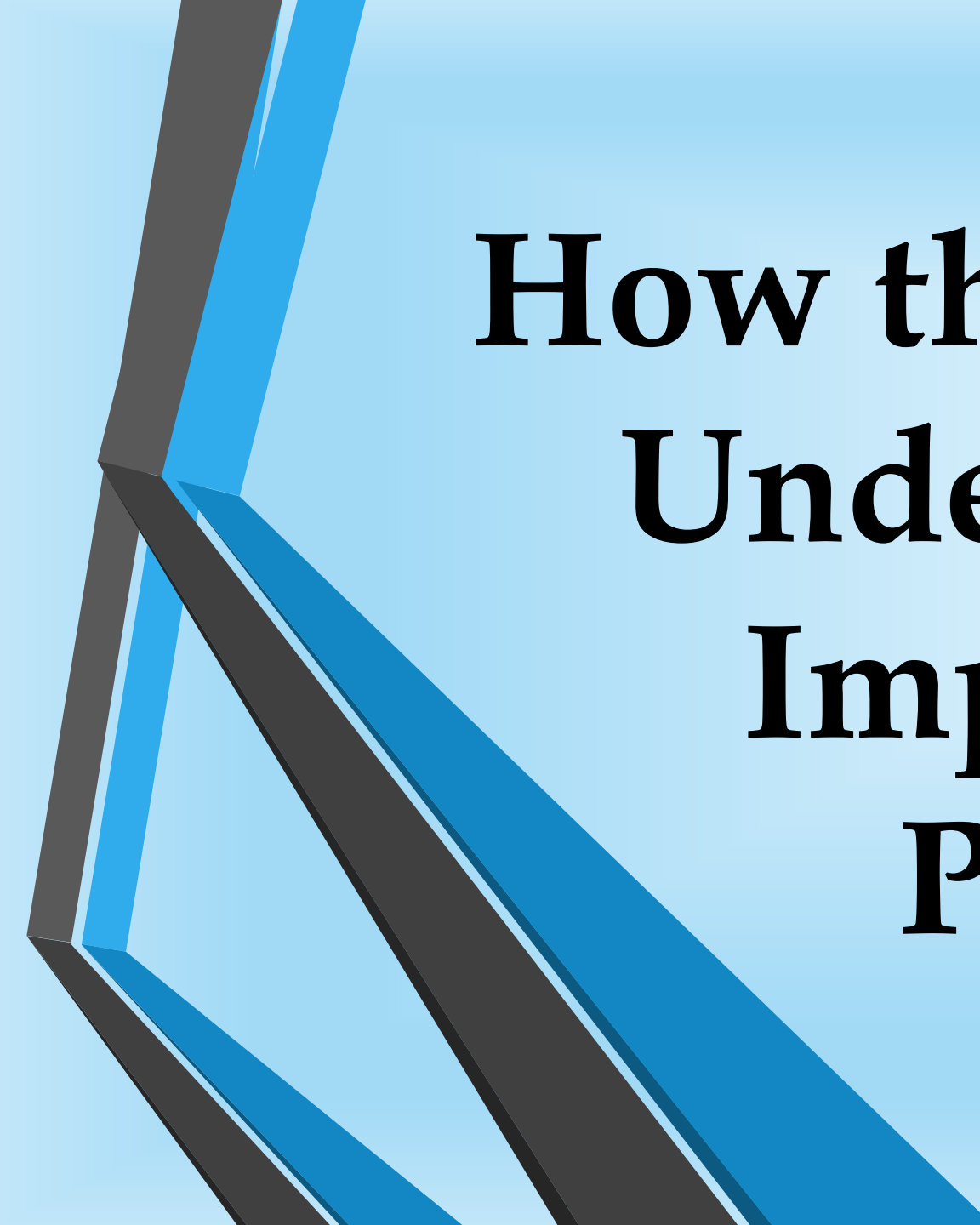
# Another Caution:

- It is not up to us to discriminate or select which Scriptures in the Bible we are comfortable or uncomfortable with.
- Instead, let Scripture inform us; rather than we informing Scripture.



# Some More Caution

**We should also remember that any difficulty that may exist in our coming to understanding of Scripture is on our human part and not with Scripture. It is we who can go wrong and not the Word of God. Therefore, let us seek further understanding**

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**How then are we to  
Understand the  
Imprecatory  
Psalms?**

## Principle No. 1

□ The Psalmist is a sincere, honest worshipper who 'calls a spade a spade.' He is free with his feelings before God. He opens his heart and feelings before God who discerns hearts.

□ The Psalmist is not hypocritical with God as some of us behave in our Christian Walk:


## Principle No. 2

- ☐ The Psalmist is not praying to God because he is agrieved. He is talking to his friend and confidant in a soul-to-soul conversation.
- ☐ He is careful to take his whole issue to God from the depth of his heart. He has no one else.
- ☐ He is requesting: “GOD, ACT ON MY BEHALF!” And God has promised He will do it.

☐ The Psalmist recalls what God says,  
“Vengeance is mine; I will repay and judge all  
people.” (Heb.10:30).

☐ “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but  
leave room for the wrath of God, for it is  
written, ‘It is mine to revenge; I will repay,’  
says the Lord.” (Rom. 12:19).

☐ The Psalmist is very consistent with the NT



**The Psalmist discovered  
and found a real personal  
FRIEND in God and this  
changed his prayer life  
and conversation with  
God**

☐ It is true there are times when I feel like beating, strangling, and even kill someone. That feeling is natural.

☐ If you are sincere and honest to yourself, you have felt like the Psalmist before.

☐ The Psalmist is saying: Are you annoyed? Are you hurt? How are you feeling? Do you feel like crying? Are you frustrated or disappointed with someone? Do you feel like resigning or giving up? Are your enemies mistreating you? How are you feeling?

☐ Vent it out. Tell it to God as it is. Do not hide anything for He knows your inner soul and all that you are going through, and He will understand. It is healthy.



☐ Do not do anything foolish. Leave your cares and trouble to God. Do not fight; He will fight for you. Do not destroy; He will do it for you. And he will do it best.

☐ Are you tempted to sin? Is your heart overburdened to a point of giving in or giving up? Don't hide it from Him; Tell it to Jesus as it is

☐ What are you going through today? Is it good or bad? Are frustrated by God? Tell it to Jesus.

☐ When someone annoys you, or hurts you, or your loved one. When you feel like beating or hurting someone in revenge, just go into your closet and tell it to Jesus.

☐ **Please Note: We will fight and over come many temptations if we develop a habit of telling God our every cares.**

☐ **Has someone troubled you up the level of feeling like doing something terrible to them?**

☐ **Are you tempted to do anything bad or evil? Tell it out to God, and you will find victory. Tell Him because he knows what you are in and about to do, and all that you are going through.**

**“Come to Me, all you  
who labor and are  
heavy laden, and I  
will give you rest.”**

**Matthew 11:28**

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

**Philippians 4:6**

and the peace of God,  
which surpasses all  
understanding, will guard  
your hearts and minds  
through Christ Jesus.

**Philippians 4:7**

Are you weary are you  
heavyhearted, tell it to Jesus,  
tell it to Jesus

.  
You have no other such a  
friend or brother; Tell it to  
Jesus alone