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Walter E. Keller

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Psalm 109
To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.
(RSV)

- 1 Be not silent, O God of my praise!**
2 For wicked and deceitful mouths are opened against me,
speaking against me with lying tongues.
3 They beset me with words of hate,
and attack me without cause.
4 In return for my love they accuse me,
even as I make prayer for them. ^(a)
5 So they reward me evil for good,
and hatred for my love.

- 6 Appoint a wicked man against him;**
let an accuser bring him to trial. ^(b)
7 When he is tried, let him come forth guilty;
let his prayer be counted as sin!
8 May his days be few;
may another seize his goods!
9 May his children be fatherless,
and his wife a widow!
10 May his children wander about and beg;
may they be driven out of ^(c) **the ruins they inhabit!**
11 May the creditor seize all that he has;
may strangers plunder the fruits of his toil!
12 Let there be none to extend kindness to him,
nor any to pity his fatherless children!
13 May his posterity be cut off;
may his name be blotted out in the second generation!
14 May the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD,
and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out!
15 Let them be before the LORD continually;
and may his ^(d) **memory be cut off from the earth!**
16 For he did not remember to show kindness,
but pursued the poor and needy
and the brokenhearted to their death.
17 He loved to curse; let curses come on him!
He did not like blessing; may it be far from him!
18 He clothed himself with cursing as his coat,
may it soak into his body like water,
like oil into his bones!
19 May it be like a garment which he wraps round him,
like a belt with which he daily girds himself!

- 20 May this be the reward of my accusers from the LORD,**
of those who speak evil against my life!

- 21 But thou, O God my Lord,
 deal on my behalf for thy name's sake;
 because thy steadfast love is good, deliver me!**
- 22 For I am poor and needy,
 and my heart is stricken within me.**
- 23 I am gone, like a shadow at evening;
 I am shaken off like a locust.**
- 24 My knees are weak through fasting;
 my body has become gaunt.**
- 25 I am an object of scorn to my accusers;
 when they see me, they wag their heads.**
- 26 Help me, O LORD my God!
 Save me according to thy steadfast love!**
- 27 Let them know that this is thy hand;
 thou, O LORD, hast done it!**
- 28 Let them curse, but do thou bless!
 Let my assailants be put to shame;^(e) may thy servant be glad!**
- 29 May my accusers be clothed with dishonor;
 may they be wrapped in their own shame as in a mantle!**
- 30 With my mouth I will give great thanks to the LORD;
 I will praise him in the midst of the throng.**
- 31 For he stands at the right hand of the needy,
 to save him from those who condemn him to death.**

Footnotes:

- a. (v.4) Syr: Heb *I prayer*
- b. (v.6) Heb *stand at his right hand*
- c. (v.10) Gk: Heb *and seek*
- d. (v.15) Gk: Heb *their*
- e. (v.28) Gk: Heb *they have arisen and have been put to shame*

Psalm 109 like others we have prayed, is the lament of someone who is being hounded by his enemies. He prays for them, yet they return his love with hatred. So the Psalmist prays to God for help and salvation. The boxed verses 6-20 should probably be viewed as David's quoting of the curses of his enemies, rather than David's cursing those enemies. Note that in the New Living Translation and the New Revised Standard Version, verse 6 begins with "They say" which the Hebrew of the consonantal Masoretic Text of the Old Testament lacks. Then in verse 20, David, referring to these curses says, "May that be the reward of my accusers from the LORD, ...")

It is easy to hear Jesus praying this Psalm, who, though innocent, was persecuted by his enemies. Nevertheless he did not retaliate; he prayed for his enemies and commended himself into the hands of the heavenly Father. Here again we learn to hear the voice of Christian martyrs as they cry out to God in lands where these fellow-members of the Body of Christ must suffer for their faith in Christ. And we learn again to pray for and with them.

Prayer to accompany Psalm 109:

Lord Jesus, on the cross you blessed those who cursed you and prayed that the Father forgive those who nailed you there. Teach us to despise hatred and not those who hate, to detest the sin and not the sinner, and to forgive the offenses of others as we have been forgiven by you, our Savior and our Lord. Amen