

THE THEOLOGY OF IMPRECATORY PRAYER AND ITS EFFECTS
ON BAPTIST CHURCHES

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ABSTRACT

The essay is titled 'The Theology of Imprecatory Prayer and its Effects on Baptist Churches. Prayer is one of the Christians' duties and responsibilities. For such important doctrinal injunction, the Bible teaches on it's essence and how to go about it acceptably. The general observation of various approaches, practices, utterances in prayer most especially enemy related prayers in the churches which calls for concern made me set on this study.

Jesus encourages His people to pray and He never leave anyone in doubt on it's essence. The pattern of Jesus prayer is to be seriously followed by Bible believing Christians. Some of which are: forgive and not curse, forgive to be forgiven, love and bless the enemy and not to curse the enemy. It is to be noted that Christian prayer is informed with concept of forgiveness and not retaliation, trusting God for deliverance and not to fight enemy.

Most prayers prayed in the church today is informed by the cultural setting of the people rather than what Jesus teaches on prayer, therefore many people in the church still remain unbelievers in the way they pray. This is because the church has refuse to follow the instruction of Jesus on how the church should pray.

Conclusions

Obviously, the churches have made and they are still making their necessary impacts especially in the areas of their persistent emphasis on prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit through effectual fervent prayers to wrought wonders. Nevertheless, the kind of prayer that Christians engaged in which is actually directing their focus from the worship of God is given some Christian scholar in Baptist setting a lot of concern.

It is observed from the study that cultural background of the fear of enemy had influenced very many people to pray and act the way they do. It is obvious that no one can live in this world without getting offended by people, or without getting into disagreement or misunderstanding with people. Another thing that I realized that people did not take note of is that it is clear that the Devil does manipulate people to achieve his own disastrous purposes and then set people at confusion one to another, even in the church. But it is good for a Christian to realize that there is no point trying to tag fellow humans as enemies for any conflict experience which can be settled amicably.

It is also observed in the study that many people in the church knows the Bible pattern of prayer and what Christ taught about prayer but will deliberately not act according to His teaching because of the strong believe they have about the enemy. This is revealed through the response of the respondents to statements four, seven and eight. The statements state that one should pray against enemy until they see their ends. Surprisingly, virtually all the churches disagreed with the statement; even churches that major in praying against their enemies and that will never pray for forgiveness or repentance of enemy. It shows that people know what is right but are not ready to do what is right.

From the responses received from the respondents, it also suggests that imprecatory prayers are selfishly and carnally used by people in the contemporary churches and societies. It is used indiscriminately.

The study reveals that most spiritual leaders like Pastors, Evangelists Apostles, Bishops etc. lead their congregations to pray imprecatory prayers. This suggests a question in the heart that how many times did Jesus teach or lead His disciples to offer such prayer? The leaders are, therefore, to watch and imitate Jesus who is the author and finishers of our faith (Heb. 12:2).

On the use of imprecatory prayer the study reveals that imprecatory prayer are used as expression of anger, hatred, bitterness, etc. against human enemies. Thus, it is particularly bad most especially when the names of the enemies are specifically mentioned and imprecatory prayers are brooked upon them. There was a case of a prophet witnessed by C.O Ogunkunle which he shared in one of his right up, about a prophet in a church who reported his grievances against a member of the church to another prophet. This other prophet, in response, said that a member who does such a thing to him cannot go free. Left to him, he would ruthlessly deal with the individual with the use of imprecatory prayers.

The study also reveals that imprecatory prayer has been patronized by some Christians who usually turn to them whenever they have problem(s) rather than turning to and focusing on the Lord Jesus. The responds to statement seven and eight reveal thus in the study. It is also reveals that Christians, especially those in leadership position, are yet to carefully search the scriptures to understand issues raised in the Bible, particularly on imprecation in the light of all that are happening in the churches today.

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Another important thing that the study reveals is that Christians are yet to differentiate between incantation, imprecation and curse. This explains why many people are found in the use of such prayer against their enemies. If incantation are used by some set of people and they get result, some Christians see imprecation as Christians incantation.

Recommendations

The issue of cultural background (belief in enemy) influencing the way we pray and even making many Christians in African to offer imprecatory prayers. We have to know that it is impossible to live in this world without getting to offend people or getting offended by people, conflict is inevitable. But what matters is how one is able to handle that very situation. Two wrongs do not make a right, and being inimical to or keeping enmity with people is dangerous to a Christians. Therefore, since we know that it is dangerous we must recognize the differences in ourselves (individual differences) as no two persons are exactly the same. One should avoid comparing between persons. Similarly, other people's interests should be recognized, as everyone tries to claim his right or her right. Also, it is necessary for other people's opinions or ideas to be given consideration. Also, past issues in a similar way should not be brought into the present.

Christians must know that it is what we ask according to His will that He will answer. Christians that know the truth about what Jesus taught about prayer and fail to practice it, their prayers will not be answered. Most prayers we offer against witch and wizard to die before the day break, how many of them are answered by God? We are, therefore, advised to pray the Bible way that we may receive answers to our prayer.

It is recommended that every Christian who want to use imprecation should use it in the Bible way. It is noted that each servant of God that used imprecation in the Bible was led by the spirit of the Lord. None of them used imprecation arbitrarily and indiscriminately. (Mostly they did so in the light of the word of God). In fact, David with all His imprecations, his love for enemies, his forgiving spirit and his psalm of praise and thanksgiving stand out clearly in all the scriptures.

It is recommended that imprecatory prayer should not be hastily and impatiently used against human enemies whenever there is a little misunderstanding. Imprecatory prayer's should not becloud ever sense of love for sinners.

It is equally recommended that a Christian should not idolize imprecatory prayer as where to turn to in time of trouble. But rather we should turn to God. Psalter should not be taken as a magical book rather the book should help an individual to demonstrate his faith in God.

Christian must know that the Bible cannot contradict itself. Christians must erase the erroneous idea that imprecation is the only thing found in the Old Testament. It is good to know that the Old Testament has the same high standard for love and forgiveness even as the New Testament. Therefore, all that we need as Christians is the spirit of illumination to understand every passage of the Bible.