

# Jeremiah 18:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and let their men be put to death; let their young men be slain by the sword in battle.

## Analysis

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Jeremiah's imprecatory prayer: "Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword." This harsh petition asks God to execute the judgment Jeremiah has prophesied. The comprehensive curse—"let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and let their men be put to death; let their young men be slain by the sword in battle"—encompasses all ages and both genders, matching the totality of threatened covenant curses (Deut 28:15-68).

Such imprecatory prayers trouble modern readers but reflect:

1. confidence that God will indeed judge the wicked
2. alignment with divinely revealed judgment
3. personal restraint from revenge while committing justice to God
4. prophetic authority to pronounce covenant curses.

Jeremiah doesn't take personal vengeance but asks God to fulfill His own word. These are covenant curses for covenant violation, not personal spite.

Under the new covenant, Christ taught loving enemies and praying for persecutors (Matt 5:44), yet also pronounced woes on hypocrites (Matt 23) and will execute

final judgment (Rev 19:11-16). The tension: God's people long for justice while extending mercy, knowing all deserve judgment but some receive grace. Imprecatory psalms can be prayed against spiritual enemies (Satan, demons, sin) while we show mercy to human opponents, recognizing that we too were once enemies whom God reconciled (Rom 5:10).

## Historical Context

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Covenant curses in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26 included precisely these judgments—famine, sword, bereavement, widowhood. Jeremiah's imprecation aligns with revealed divine will for covenant-breakers. The Babylonian invasion fulfilled these curses literally (Lam 2:20-21, 4:10, 5:3, 11). Ancient Near Eastern treaty curses similarly invoked comprehensive disaster on covenant violators, demonstrating the cultural context of such language.

## Related Passages

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**Psalms 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

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1. How do you balance desire for God's justice with Christ's command to love enemies?
2. What role do imprecatory prayers have in Christian spirituality when directed against spiritual enemies (sin, Satan)?
3. How does recognizing that you deserved the judgment Christ bore affect your prayers regarding others' judgment?

## Interlinear Text

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לָכֵן H3651	תִּי   H5414	אֶת H853	בְּנֵיהֶם H1121	לָרֶעַב H7458	וְהִגַּרְם H5064	עַל H5921
Therefore deliver up			their children	to the famine	and pour out	
יְדֵי H3027	בְּרֶבֶץ H2719	וְתִהְיֶה H1961	נָשִׁיהֶם H802	וְנִשְׁכָּלוּ H7909		
their blood by the force	by the sword		and let their wives	be bereaved		
וְאֶלְמָנֹת H490	וְנָשִׁיהֶם H376	וְיָהִי H1961	וְיִשָּׂם H2026	לָמוֹת H4194		
of their children and be widows			be put	to death		
בְּחִירֵיהֶם H970	יִמָּכּוּ H5221	בְּרֶבֶץ H2719	בַּמִּלְחָמָה H4421			
let their young men	be slain	by the sword	in battle			

## Additional Cross-References

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**Jeremiah 9:21** (Parallel theme): For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets.

**Jeremiah 15:8** (Parallel theme): Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the seas: I have brought upon them against the mother of the young men a spoiler at noonday: I have caused him to fall upon it suddenly, and terrors upon the city.

**Exodus 22:24** (Word): And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

**Deuteronomy 32:25** (Word): The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs.

**Amos 4:10** (Word): I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your

horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

**Lamentations 5:3** (Parallel theme): We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows.

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