

Jeremiah 18:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yet, LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me: forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee; deal thus with them in the time of thine anger.

Analysis

The prayer's climax: "Yet, LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me." Despite the conspiracy's secrecy, God knows all—nothing escapes His omniscience. This knowledge grounds Jeremiah's confidence in divine vindication. The petition "forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight" asks God not to pardon impenitent rebels. "But let them be overthrown before thee" requests their downfall under divine judgment.

"Deal thus with them in the time of thine anger" asks God to act in His own timing. Jeremiah doesn't specify when but trusts God's judgment will come. The phrase acknowledges divine prerogative regarding timing—Jeremiah submits to God's schedule, not demanding immediate action. This demonstrates mature faith that trusts not only God's justice but His timing.

The prayer's severity reflects the seriousness of rejecting God's word through His prophet. To oppose God's messenger is to oppose God Himself (Luke 10:16). Yet we must read this through the cross's lens—Christ prayed "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34) for those killing Him. The imprecatory psalms can be prayed against sin and Satan while we extend mercy to sinners, knowing Christ's blood provides forgiveness even for His enemies (1 Tim 1:15-16).

Historical Context

This concludes a series of Jeremiah's laments or confessions (Jer 11:18-12:6, 15:10-21, 17:14-18, 18:18-23, 20:7-18). These personal prayers reveal the prophet's inner struggles, doubts, and appeals to God amid persecution. They became models for later Jewish and Christian prayers of lament, showing that honest wrestling with God is appropriate when facing opposition. The prayers were ultimately vindicated when judgment fell as Jeremiah prophesied.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does knowing that God sees all secret plots against you provide comfort and confidence?
2. What does it mean to submit to God's timing for justice rather than demanding immediate vindication?
3. How do you hold in tension prayers for justice with Christ's command to forgive and love enemies?

Interlinear Text

עַל־עַצְמָתָם וְאַתָּה יְדַעַת־אֶת־כָּל־אֶת־כָּל־עַצְמָתָם

H859 H3068 H3045 H853 H3605 H6098 H5921

וְמִטְאַת־מִשְׁעָנָם לֹא־תִּתְכַּפֵּר אֶל־לְמֹת־זֶה

against me to slay me forgive not their iniquity their sin

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לְפָנֵי יְהָנָם מִקְשָׁלִים אֶל־לְפָנֵי יְהָנָם

before neither blot out but let them be overthrown before

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בְּעֵת אַפְּגָן עֲשֵׂה הָבָה:

thus with them in the time of thine anger thee deal

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Additional Cross-References

Psalms 35:4 (Parallel theme): Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt.

Isaiah 2:9 (Parallel theme): And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not.