

Imprecations

Nehemiah 4:4, 5

INTRODUCTION:

1. In his prayer of Nehemiah 4:4, 5, the governor seems to have a vindictive spirit that is opposed to the spirit of the New Testament.
2. This is problematic for the Bible student, especially when he is confronted by an unbeliever.
3. Nehemiah's prayer takes its tone, form, and expression from the imprecations in the book of Psalms.

DISCUSSION: Recorded imprecations are the result of...

I. The Bible's candor.

- A. God is impartial (Acts 10:34). He tells the good and the bad even about His chosen.
- B. Though the writers may have been unwilling to record their true feelings, God was not.

II. The spirit of the age.

- A. The language may seem harsh because of the time and circumstances in which it was spoken.
- B. To know better what the words express we must be familiar with the customs and habits of the time.

III. The spirit of prophecy.

- A. The prayer may express what would be, rather than indicate the wish that such things should be.
- B. Part...not all.

IV. The feelings of others.

- A. The inspired writer is only responsible for the fairness of the record.
- B. The governor was revealing the general feelings of an entire nation.

CONCLUSION:

1. Can imprecations ever be right?
 - a. David (who recorded most of the imprecations in the Psalms) was a king who represented the nation, the law, and the interests of justice.
 - b. Punishment is right when properly inflicted (cf. Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13, 14).
 - c. A judge who prays that he may discharge his duty in a way that pleases God is not vindictive.
2. Nehemiah 4:4, 5 may simply be a record of what was on Nehemiah's mind, preserved for us as an illustration of the frustrations of one of God's servants. Nehemiah gave vent to his internal emotions.
3. All that Inspiration is responsible for is the correctness of the record.