

1 Peter 3:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

Analysis

Peter addresses retaliation. "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing" (mē apodid ontes kakon anti kakou ē loidarian anti loidorias)—don't repay evil with evil or insult with insult. The command echoes Jesus (Matthew 5:38-42). The alternative: "but contrariwise blessing" (tounantion de eulogountes)—respond to evil and insults with blessing, prayer, well-wishing. The reason: "knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing" (eidotes hoti eis touto eklēthēte hina eulogian klēronomēsēte). Christians are called to bless rather than curse, promised that this behavior results in receiving blessing—from God and sometimes even from transformed enemies.

Historical Context

In honor-shame culture, retaliation for insults was expected—maintaining honor required responding to slights. Jesus and Peter radically challenge this, commanding blessing instead of revenge. This supernatural response distinguished Christians from surrounding culture. Early church's non-retaliatory response to persecution perplexed observers and sometimes shamed persecutors into repentance. The promise that blessing others results in receiving blessing demonstrates kingdom economics—giving produces receiving, loving enemies defeats them more effectively than revenge.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What specific situations tempt you toward retaliation rather than blessing, and how can you respond differently?
2. How does knowing you're 'called' to bless (not curse) change your response to insults or mistreatment?

Interlinear Text

μὴ	ἀποδιδόντες	κακοῦ	ἀντὶ	κακοῦ	ἢ	λοιδορίας	ἀντὶ
Not	rendering	evil	for	evil	or	railing	for
G3361	G591	G2556	G473	G2556	G2228	G3059	G473
λοιδορίας	τοῦναντίον	δὲ	εὐλογοῦντες	εἰδότες	ὅτι		
railing	contrariwise	but	a blessing	knowing	that		
G3059	G5121	G1161	G2127	G1492	G3754		
εἰς	τοῦτο	ἐκλήθητε	ἵνα	εὐλογίαν	κληρονομήσητε		
thereunto		called	that	blessing	ye should inherit		
G1519	G5124	G2564	G2443	G2129	G2816		

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 20:22 (Evil): Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

Romans 12:17 (Evil): Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

Romans 12:14 (Blessing): Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

1 Thessalonians 5:15 (Evil): See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

Matthew 5:44 (Blessing): But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Proverbs 17:13 (Evil): Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.

Ephesians 4:32 (Parallel theme): And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Matthew 5:39 (Evil): But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

1 Peter 5:10 (Parallel theme): But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

Romans 8:28 (Parallel theme): And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.