

Luke 6:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

Analysis

Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

This verse continues Jesus' radical ethic of enemy love with two specific applications. "Bless them that curse you" (eulogeite tous katarōmenous hymas, εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς καταρωμένους ὑμᾶς) commands responding to cursing with blessing. The verb eulogeō (εὐλογέω, "bless") means to speak well of, to invoke divine favor upon, or to praise. It compounds eu (good) and logos (word)—literally "good word." The verb kataaraomai (καταράομαι, "curse") means to invoke harm, speak evil against, or pray for calamity upon someone.

The second command, "pray for them which despitefully use you" (proseuchesthe hyper tōn epēreazontōn hymas, προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐπηρεάζοντων ὑμᾶς), specifies intercession for those who mistreat us. The verb epēreazō (ἐπηρεάζω) means to abuse, threaten, insult, or treat spitefully. The preposition hyper (ὑπέρ, "for" or "on behalf of") indicates praying for their benefit, not merely about them. Jesus commands praying for the welfare of those who abuse us.

These commands require supernatural grace—they are impossible in human strength. Natural response to cursing is counter-cursing; natural response to abuse is retaliation or avoidance. Jesus demands transformation at the level of speech (blessing vs. cursing) and heart (intercession vs. bitterness). This ethic reflects God's own character—He blesses those who curse Him and sends blessings even on rebels (Romans 5:8-10). Prayer for enemies is particularly

powerful because genuine intercession for someone's welfare gradually transforms the pray-er's heart, making it increasingly difficult to harbor hatred.

Historical Context

These commands formed part of Jesus' teaching to disciples who would soon face intense persecution. The early church experienced systematic opposition from both Jewish religious authorities and the Roman state. Christians were cursed in synagogues, excluded from Jewish community life, brought before courts, imprisoned, beaten, and eventually martyred. Jesus' words prepared them for this reality and provided a distinctly Christian response.

The Apostle Paul embodied these commands, writing, "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat" (1 Corinthians 4:12-13). Stephen, the first Christian martyr, prayed for his murderers as they stoned him: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60), echoing Jesus' own prayer from the cross (Luke 23:34). This pattern of blessing persecutors became a defining characteristic of early Christianity.

First-century Jewish and Greco-Roman ethics generally endorsed cursing enemies and invoking divine vengeance. The imprecatory Psalms (Psalms 35, 69, 109, 137) prayed for God's judgment on enemies. Some Dead Sea Scroll texts included curses against the "sons of darkness." Jesus doesn't abolish these prayers—God will indeed judge wickedness—but He forbids individuals from pronouncing curses and commands them instead to bless and intercede. This distinction acknowledges God's prerogative to judge while prohibiting personal vengeance.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How can believers genuinely bless and pray for those who have deeply wounded them without minimizing the harm done?
2. What is the relationship between praying for enemies and seeing their transformation through the gospel?
3. How does blessing those who curse us reflect the gospel message itself?
4. In what ways does interceding for abusers protect believers from bitterness while maintaining appropriate boundaries?
5. How should this command shape Christian responses to persecution, opposition, and cancel culture?

Interlinear Text

εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς καταρωμένους ὑμῖν καὶ προσεύχεσθε
Bless G2127 G3588 **them that curse** G2672 **you** G5213 **and** G2532 **pray** G4336
ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐπηρεαζόντων ὑμᾶς
for G5228 G3588 **them which despitefully use** G1908 **you** G5209

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 3:9 (Blessing): Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

1 Corinthians 4:12 (Blessing): And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

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

James 3:10 (Blessing): Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

Luke 23:34 (Parallel theme): Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

Matthew 5:44 (Prayer): 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;

Luke 6:27 (Parallel theme): But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

Acts 7:60 (Parallel theme): And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Luke 6:35 (Parallel theme): But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

Acts 14:5 (Parallel theme): And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,