

Romans 12:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

Analysis

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Paul now turns to Christians' posture toward enemies, echoing Jesus's Sermon on the Mount: 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you' (Matthew 5:44). The command **bless them which persecute you** (εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς διώκοντας, eulogeite tous diōkontas) uses the verb 'to speak well of, invoke good upon'—the opposite of cursing. Diōkō (persecute) is the same verb used for 'pursue' in verse 13; Christians pursue hospitality and are pursued by persecutors, yet respond with blessing. Paul emphasizes the point: **bless, and curse not** (εὐλογεῖτε καὶ μὴ καταρᾶσθε, eulogeite kai mē katasthe)—no retaliation, no return of evil for evil.

This command is impossible apart from the gospel. Natural response to persecution is vengeance; only those transformed by God's mercies (12:1) and renewed in mind (12:2) can bless their enemies. The theological foundation is Romans 5:8-10: 'while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us... when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God.' Christians who were once God's enemies but received blessing rather than curse now extend that same grace to their enemies. Blessing persecutors is participation in Christ's cruciform love.

Historical Context

Roman Christians experienced various forms of persecution: Jewish synagogues expelled Christian converts (John 16:2), employers dismissed workers who refused pagan oaths, neighbors ostracized families who abstained from idolatrous festivals, and occasionally civic authorities executed Christians for political disloyalty. Jesus

had predicted this (John 15:18-20), as had Paul (2 Timothy 3:12). The temptation was to curse persecutors, call down judgment, or retaliate. Paul instead calls believers to imitate Christ, who prayed for his crucifiers (Luke 23:34).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Who has 'persecuted' you (mocked your faith, opposed your witness, caused suffering for Christ's sake), and have you blessed them or cursed them?
2. How does meditating on your own former status as God's enemy (Romans 5:10) reshape your response to those who oppose you?
3. What would 'blessing' a persecutor look like practically—prayer for their good? active kindness? forgiveness?

Interlinear Text

εὐλογεῖτε	τοὺς	διώκοντας	ὑμᾶς	εὐλογεῖτε	καὶ	μὴ
Bless	G3588	them which persecute	you	Bless	and	not
G2127		G1377	G5209	G2127	G2532	G3361

καταρᾶσθε

curse
G2672

Additional Cross-References

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;

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.

Romans 12:21 (Parallel theme): Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

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

Luke 6:28 (Blessing): Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

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.

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.