

In coming to v14, let me remind you that vv9-21 is really an expansion upon v9a—"let love be without hypocrisy"—that is, beginning from v9b—through v21—the apostle provides concrete examples on how sincere love looks—in regards to the brethren, God, and our enemies—thus in v14, he speaks of our enemies, in vv15-16 returns to the brethren, and then returns to enemies in vv17-21...

I trust it's evident—that while loving the brethren can at times be difficult—comparatively speaking—it's much easier to love our brethren than our enemies—but as you know—the Christian ethic—goes beyond loving the lovely—but expects us to also love the unlovely—we are to love God, our brethren, and our enemies...

I. What is meant by bless and not curse?

II. Who are we to bless and not curse?

III. Why are we to bless and not curse?

I. What is meant by bless and not curse?

1. Let me simply state—that to bless and not curse—can mean one of two things—and likely a mixture of both...
2. [1] To speak well of them—that is—to bless and not curse—means we speak well of those who mistreat us...
3. That is—we refuse to repay evil for evil—and speak of them—in the same way and manner they speak of us...
4. 1Cor.4:12—"Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we answer kindly"—that is, we bless and not curse...
5. Thus—blessing and not cursing—imitates our Savior—"who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return..."
6. [2] To desire good for them—that is—to bless is to ask that God would bless or bestow blessings upon them...
7. This—I suggest is the primary meaning of our text—to bless and not curse—is to pray that God would bless them...
8. Now—ultimately this refers to spiritual and eternal good—that God would bless them with grace and salvation...
9. This is in contrast to "cursing them"—that is—desiring their everlasting destruction under God's displeasure...
10. Thus—to bless—it to invoke or ask God—for His eternal blessing to rest upon those who are persecuting us...
11. Hendriksen—"To bless, in this connection, means, 'to invoke God's blessing upon'" Murray—"When we bless persons or things we invoke God's blessing upon them..."
12. Charles Hodge—"The command therefore is, that, so far from wishing or praying that evil may overtake our persecutors and enemies, we must sincerely desire and pray for their good. It is not sufficient to avoid returning evil for evil, nor even to banish vindictive feelings; we must be able sincerely to desire their happiness..."
13. Lk.6:27-28—"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you..."
14. Here our Savior—expressly states what the apostle implies—that is, blessing our enemies is an expression of love...
15. Notice—blessing our enemies, those who persecute and mistreat us, includes two things—do good and pray...
16. [a] Do good to them—"do good to those who hate you"—that is—we are to repay their evil with good not evil...
17. [b] Pray for them—"bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you"—for their salvation...
18. Thus—"to bless"—is to desire God's favor rest upon a person—which ultimately entails—their everlasting salvation...

19. This is in contrast to "cursing them"—or desiring God's curse and wrath to rest upon them—now and forever...
20. 1Peter.3:8-9—"Finally, all *of you be* of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, *be* tender-hearted, *be* courteous; 9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing..."
21. [a] What we are to do, v9—"not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, blessing..."
22. That is—instead of returning evil with evil—return it with blessing—or, with the desire for their eternal blessing...
23. [b] Why we're to do it—"knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing"—in light of what God has given you...
24. Barnes—"Expecting such a blessing yourselves, you should be ready to scatter blessings on all others. You should be ready to bear all their reproaches, and even to wish them well..."

## II. Who are we to bless and not curse?

1. V14—"Bless those who persecute you"—present active verbs—keep blessing those who keep persecuting you...
2. The Gk word rendered "persecute"—literally means—to put someone to flight, to make them flee by pursuit...
3. Fundamentally—it refers to someone seeking the harm of another—because he or she is a Christian person...
4. That is—the persecution spoken about by Paul—is a distinctly religious persecution—experienced by Christians...
5. Let me put it this way—persecution is encountering mistreatment—because of our Christian beliefs or practices...
6. Now—this persecution can originate from various sources—let me give you a few examples to illustrate this...
7. Think of the Christian student—who gets ridiculed by his professor for his "archaic" views on a literal creation...
8. Think of the Christian wife—who gets ridiculed by her extended family—for her biblical views of womanhood...
9. Think of the Christian employee—who gets passed for promotion—because he refuse's to work on the Lord's Day...
10. Think of the Christian neighbor—who gets ridiculed and mocked by their neighbors—for their beliefs and practices...
11. Now—this persecution—at times takes a more aggressive nature—physical abuse, suffering, and even death...
12. Thus—regardless of the degree or intensity of persecution—it originates because of our Christian beliefs or practices...
13. Robert Candlish—"The mode and measure of the persecution may vary. There are different ways of persecuting, with different degrees of intensity, in different ages of the world and different conditions of society. But the ordinary principle and rule of the Christian profession, and the invariable experience of those who truly adopt it is, that, in one way or another, 'all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution'..."
14. Now—what I want to do here—is take a few minutes and examine a few NT texts that speak about persecution...
15. But—specifically—I want to point out—the reasons why Christians can expect persecution within this world...
16. Matt.5:10-11—"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake..."
17. Now—I trust, in the first place, that when we speak about being mistreated—we mean—we don't deserve it...

18. Notice—in the second place, that persecution is often verbal and not physical—say all kinds of evil against you...
19. Thirdly—the reason we are persecuted and mistreated is specifically—for righteousness's sake...for My sake...
20. That is—you are persecuted, reviled, and mistreated, because of who you are—in relation to Me and My word...
21. 1Pet.3:13-17—"And who *is* he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, *you are* blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. 17 For *it is* better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil..."
22. [a] The NATURE of persecution, v13—"harm" v14—"suffer...threats" v16—"defame you...revile you" v17—"suffer..."
23. [b] The REASON for persecution—notice several phrases—"for righteousness' sake...good conduct in Christ...for doing good..."
24. That is—they would be mistreated for no proper reason—they simply did good—as defined by God's word...
25. They were acting righteously—they were loving God, loving the brethren, and they were loving their enemies...
26. Thus—persecution varies in intensity—from mockery to martyrdom—but it all falls under the title of—persecution...

### III. Why are we to bless and not curse?

#### A. Persecution is for Christ

1. That is—persecution is something that Christians endure for Christ—for His name's sake—in union with Him...
2. Throughout the Scriptures—our suffering—is always attributed to our relationship—to our union—with Christ...
3. The reason people mistreat us as Christians—is because they hear or they see—something of Christ within us...
4. Thus—far from cursing people for persecuting us—we should bless God for the privilege of enduring persecution...
5. 1Pet.4:12-13—"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy (Phil.1:29-30)..."
6. Peter speaks about Christians partaking of "Christ's sufferings" not in that we partake of His atoning suffering...
7. [1] Our sufferings are called His sufferings—because when we suffer—He, in union with us, suffers with us...
8. Acts 9:4-5—"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? and he said, Who are You, Lord? Then the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting..."
9. In other words—to persecute Christ's people—is to persecute Christ Himself—as they comprise His body...
10. [2] Our sufferings are called His sufferings—because they resemble His sufferings—that is, people hate us, because they see Him in us...

#### B. Cursing belongs to God

1. That is—cursing is never our responsibility—it's not our place to curse—God Himself alone—has that right...

2. Gen.12:2-3—"I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed..."
3. It's unfortunate—that many today misapply these words to physical Israel—when they meant God's people...
4. 2Thess.1:6-7—"since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels..."
5. Thus—let us refrain from cursing our enemies—and leave that to God—for He alone has the right to curse...

#### C. Blessing imitates our Father

1. That is—whenever we bless our enemies—we are acting similar to our Father—who blesses His enemies...
2. Matt.5:43-46—"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 'But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same..."
3. Thus—blessing our enemies—enables us to resemble our Father's character and thereby confirm our adoption...

#### D. Blessing imitates our Savior

1. That is—when we refuse to curse, but bless our persecutes, we are imitating Christ, who did the same to His persecutors...
2. 1Pet.2:21-23—"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 'Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth'; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously..."
3. Now—here someone may object—this text, describes Christ's actions negatively—in terms of what He did not do...
4. Romans 12:14—is both positive and negative—bless and do not curse—did our Savior positively bless His enemies...
5. Lk.23:34—"Then Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do"—that is—bless them...

#### E. Blessing reflects the gospel

1. By this I mean—BLESSING best reflects the purpose of the gospel—which is to bless and not curse sinners...
2. Now—don't misunderstand me—as I've already asserted—our Savior will curse His enemies when He returns...
3. Blessing best describes the purpose of God in the gospel—and thus the purpose of God in Christ's first coming...
4. Lk.9:51-56—"Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was *set* for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did? But He turned and rebuked them, and said, You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them. And they went to another village..."
5. Rom.5:10—"For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life..."