

“Getting even God’s way”

Romans 12:14-21 NIV

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

“¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.

“²⁰ On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’
²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Thesis:

We win by loving and blessing those who persecute us.

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.”

This advice sounds nice—like something that Jesus—and a few extraordinary people would do.

But in real life, it seems unworkable, doesn’t it?

“We can’t be blessing our enemies.

That never works; they’ll run all over us.”

“They’ll crush us like bugs under a big boot!”

Aren’t we supposed to stand up for ourselves?



This matter needs clarification.

What do Scriptures mean that tells u to bless those who mistreat us?

Some visualize blessing as the Pope standing before people and waving his hand over them.

It’s fine with me if the Pope or anyone chooses to do something similar to that.

But our text does not describe that type of blessing.

In Bible times, when people blessed or cursed others, the declaration carried reality.

Imagine placing a hex on someone and it actually harms the cursed person.

I’ve mentioned before the woman who came to my office thinking she was under a voodoo curse.

She writhed and screamed at times declaring that her curser was piercing he with needles.

Ancient people thought curses equally potent.

A blessing conveyed the opposite of a curse.

Bless meant more than wishing good for someone.

Bless entailed wishing good for another.

The English word "eulogy" comes from the Greek term translated "bless" in our Bibles.

Eulogize means to say good things about a person.

At funerals we try to *eulogize* the deceased, i.e. say good things about the departed.

That's not always easy.

The wife of one deceased man could find nothing good to say about her husband.

The wife of another man ordered me not to say anything good about her late husband, she said, **"because he was a total hypocrite."**

Bless means to wish well and also to say good things about a person or thing.



Note another fact about "bless."

Remember when Jesus blessed the bread at the Last Supper?

Jesus gave thanks for the bread.

He asked God to make it special.

Blessing our enemies isn't simply smiling at them and beatifically waving our hands over them.

Blessing includes wishing enemies well, saying pleasant things about them, truly desiring God to give them good things, and giving thanks for them.

Of blessing their enemies, some people say,

"I can't do that. It just won't work."

Many of those, whom I have advised to pray for their enemies, angrily responded: "No way!"

Do you have misgivings about blessing enemies?

Consider the following:

Though few will admit it, I think many of us sense that the Lord's way of blessing maybe right after all.

Day after day, news reports present abundant evidence that the opposite of blessing does not work.

We daily see the failure of cursing.

It's not that we blessed our enemies and that approach failed.

We mostly see cursing of enemies and people taking vengeance.

Morning, noon, and night newscasters report the tragic outcomes of cursing and vengeance.

"That group (or person) slighted me; they must pay."

"Tony Campolo told about a Philadelphia man who killed a driver who cut in front of him. The murderer explained that expressway traffic slowed as it was being funneled into a single lane. He claimed that he waited in line for more than a quarter of an hour to enter the flow of traffic. As he was about to do so, another car passed him on the shoulder of the highway and cut in front of his vehicle.

“As though that were not enough, the driver laughed and made an obscene gesture at him. It was too much for him to handle. When traffic later stopped because of congestion, he removed a gun from his glove compartment, got out of his car, walked up to the side of the car of the man who had taunted him and shot him to death. The injustice of what had happened was bad enough, but being laughed at and taunted was more humiliation than he could tolerate.”



Among all types of people, similar stories are oft-repeated around the globe.

Young and old imitate role models society creates.

Computer games magnify and glamorize vengeance. Technology and mobility give nearly every person ability to get even.

Unforgiving people violently restate, “Make my day!” too many days.

We pay horrendous prices for not blessing our enemies and those who persecute us.

We Christian adults must bless and forgive.

How?

Godly parents and grandparents must model forgiveness and blessing for our children.

Many Christians want schools to take care of their kids’ problems for them.

The Lord holds parents responsible for teaching their children about Him.¹

Of the students who take vengeance on classmates and/or teachers:

Do you wonder how many of those kids ever saw their parents bless their enemies?

Consider three positive reasons to bless others.

1. Imitating Jesus puts us under God’s protection.

When the Lord led Israel to the Promised Land, the people traveled through wilderness areas and also through land that belonged to distant cousins called Moabites and Midianites.

Though Israel offered to reimburse Moab and Midian, the M & M’s refused Israel’s passage.

They hired a curse professional named Balaam to cast an evil spell on Israel.

Three times Balaam tried to curse Israel.

Balaam not only failed; he ended up blessing Israel because the Israelites were God’s people.

Balaam & the M & M guys failed because God protected Israel.

No one is powerful enough to go against God.

¹ See Deuteronomy 6, Ephesians 5, 6, Colossians 4, 1Peter 2-4

“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them (the enemy), because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”²

When we do things God’s way, he protects us.

2. Blessing our enemies ends the escalation.

Our persecutors may keep it up for a while, but if we truly bless them, they often stop.

It’s usually when we seek vengeance the situation worsens.

- **Do things God’s way, he’ll protect you.**
- **Blessing our persecutors usually ends the escalation.**

3. Sometimes persecution is a test.

At times, God allows us to suffer persecution as a faith analysis.

“The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.”³

Persecution separates the real from the false.

Though David seemed to have ample justification for retaliating against King Saul, he left vengeance to God.

When we trust God in Christ instead of taking vengeance, the Lord promises:

“Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”⁴

Endure now; God has something better for you.

**In the meantime,
we glorify God;
share his Good News of forgiveness in Christ;
tell His great news that Jesus overcame death;
and patiently wait for God to judge.**

**If we take vengeance now,
we’ll likely be standing
in the wrong crowd on Judgment Day.**

God bless you with His merciful Love!

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1 John 4:16

² 1 John 4:4 NIV

³ Matthew 13:21 NIV

⁴ Romans 8:17 NIV