

Romans 12 (4-7-11)

IMPRECATORY VERSES

TEXT: Romans 12:14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Since the topic of blessing our enemies continues in these verses, we will spend another week or so, after this introduction, concluding the chapter, and pressing this important subject upon us. This week, we will examine some qualifications, to guard against Satan's crafty misapplications of these commands of the Holy Ghost.

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

Luke 23:33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

Isaiah 53:12 Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and **made intercession for the transgressors.**

1 Peter 2:20 For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye **take it patiently**, this *is* acceptable with God.

21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

23 Who, **when he was reviled, reviled not again**; when he suffered, **he threatened not**; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously:

Acts 7:59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 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.

QUALIFICATIONS:

2 Kings 2:24 And he turned back, and looked on them, and **cursed them in the name of the LORD**. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.

There are several examples such as 2 Kings 2:24 in the Old Testament. But it is important to draw our pattern from the teachings and example of the Lord, and His apostles, etc., *before* using any Old Testament examples as a pattern:

Luke 9:51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

54 And when his disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*. And they went to another village.

Therefore, let us examine the New Testament, where we do find some qualifications in the examples of our Lord and His disciples.

In the Lord, we see His *zeal* in turning over of the tables, and driving men away from the temple with a whip, etc. (John 2:15, etc.):

John 2:15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, **he drove them all** out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

Notice, the verse does not say that He made a "small whip," but that His "scourge" (i.e. whip) was made out of small cords! *Blessing* never means that *all* anger or zeal is forbidden.

In the Lord, we also see many occasions of strong preaching and rebukes, even of political leaders:

Luke 13:31 The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for **Herod** will kill thee.

32 And he said unto them, **Go ye, and tell that fox**, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third *day* I shall be perfected.

John the Baptist had reproved Herod for his adultery (i.e. Herod was an Edomite).

Therefore, the NT command to *bless* does not forbid street-preaching, etc., where strong rebukes and warnings are often necessary when dealing with stubborn or proud people:

Matthew 11:20 Then began he **to upbraid the cities** wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida!...

Matthew 23:32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

33 **Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers**, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!

Such warnings would actually be *blessings*, if they would be received, since they were designed to snatch people from hell-fire:

Jude 1:22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:

23 And others save with fear, **pulling them out of the fire**; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

Matthew 16:23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, **Get thee behind me, Satan**: thou art an offence unto me...

The Holy Spirit in Christ, also filled His holy disciples. Stephen was a man *full* of the Holy Ghost. What Spirit did he possess?:

John 16:8 And when he is come, **he will reprove** the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

John 7:7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, **because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil**.

Stephen, *before* he prayed mercy upon his persecutors, also attempted to *bless* them by pulling them out of the fire, through *sharp reproofs*:

Acts 7:51 **Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist** the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so do ye.

52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; **of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers**:

53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*.

Therefore, in Stephen, we see the same fiery preaching that was in our Lord, and in John the Baptist. Yet, just as His Lord, Stephen was patient in his final martyrdom, and prayed for his enemies. His fiery words were spoken in true love and concern for souls. However, his persecutors did not receive it as love! Like all sinners who continue to reject light, they were *tormented* by his loving words of warning and reproof.

The Devil (who is known for misapplying Scripture - see Psalms 91:12, Matthew 4:6), seeks to misapply the commands for Christians to *bless*, in such a way as to extinguish any reproof of sin, warning, exercise of authority, etc. In this manner, few will be convicted of sin, and deceivers, etc., will not be exposed:

Ephesians 5:11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful **works** of darkness, **but rather reprove them.**

The Apostles (and men of God, such as Stephen) are very helpful in illustrating the extent, meaning, etc., of the commands to *bless* others, including our persecutors, enemies, etc. Notice a few more examples that qualify this command:

Acts 8:19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.
20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

"*Thy money perish with thee*; a formal execration or curse, not only on his money, but also upon Simon himself; but always to be conditional, viz. unless he repented."
(Matthew Poole)

"...that is [in other words], 'Accursed be thou and thy money with thee.'"
(JFB Commentary)

Acts 13:8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

9 Then Saul, (who also *is called* Paul,) **filled with the Holy Ghost**, set his eyes on him,
10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord *is* upon thee, and **thou shalt be blind**, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

Acts 23:2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?

4 And they that stood by said, **Revilest** thou God's high priest?

5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

Proverbs 26:5 Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.

1 Corinthians 16:22 If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, **let him be Anathema Maranatha**.

(i.e. *Let him be accursed, The Lord is coming, or at the Lord's coming*).

Galatians 1:9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, **let him be accursed**.

Galatians 5:12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

2 Timothy 4:14 Alexander the coppersmith did me **much** evil: **the Lord reward him according to his works**:

Notice that Paul (according to his words in Romans 12) did not take vengeance *himself*:

1 Samuel 24:12 The LORD judge between me and thee, **and the LORD avenge me** of thee: but **mine hand** shall not be upon thee.

We also see the same tension in the Book of Revelation, where we have multitudes of martyrs, with the cries of their departed spirits, for vengeance:

Revelation 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar **the souls of them that were slain for the word of God**, and for the testimony which they held:

10 And they **cried** with a loud voice, saying, **How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?**

To add to the tension, while Paul made a man *blind* in the power of God, the Two Witnesses will actually *slay* many of their enemies before they themselves are martyred:

Revelation 11:5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

- OBSERVATIONS:

While some of these tensions can be explained dispensationally and prophetically, there is still a balance that must be maintained (as we have seen with *complacent* love and *benevolent* love). For example, the commands to *bless* our enemies must not be interpreted to mean Christians should not warn sinners.

Even in the Old Testament, love and prayer for enemies was exercised - even in the *imprecatory* examples:

Psalms 109:4 For **my love** they are my adversaries: but I *give myself unto* prayer.

5 And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

7 When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin

Jeremiah likewise showed much love *before* he uttered his cries for God's vengeance:

Jeremiah 15:15 O LORD, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and **revenge me of my persecutors...**

Jeremiah 18:20 Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee **to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them.**

23 Yet, LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay *me*: forgive not their iniquity...

Just as deceivers should not be bidden *God speed*, it is important that wicked men be restrained by God's justice before they hurt others (Psalms 76:10). The very command to pray for the Lord's kingdom to come is in essence a cry for the Lord to come as Judge (Matthew 6:10).

But it would be terribly wicked to desire evil upon someone because of envy, malice, etc.:

Job 31:29 If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him:

30 Neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul.

Exodus 23:4 If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.

Thus we see that rightly dividing this issue is not as simple as contrasting the Old Testament with the New Testament. The Old Testament - though filled with imprecations - also condemns cursing personal enemies (and Jesus and the Apostles quote the so-called Imprecatory Psalms as inspired). And we have seen that the NT contains imprecations.

CONCLUDING VERSES:

Matthew 5:44 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;

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Luke 6:32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.