**Text**: Romans 12:14

**Title:** Bless Your Enemies (and friends too!)

**Truth**: God commands us to bless those who persecute us…and He modeled the same toward us.

**Date/Location**: June 29, 2014 Sunday Morning Worship at FBC

Introduction

The idea of blessing is present in over 450 verses in Scripture. God blesses His people; people bless God; fathers bless their children; people can bless one another.

God promised to bless Abraham (Gen. 12:2). Melchizedek blessed Abraham (Hebrews 7:1). God blessed Isaac (Gen. 25:11). Jacob blessed Pharoah (Genesis 47:10). Jesus pronounced a blessing upon those who are humble and meek and desire righteousness (Matthew 5:3-11). But there is a difficult teaching about blessing, and it is found here in Romans 12:14.

I. The Command: Bless Your Persecutors

A. This is a present active imperative for the whole church.

B. Definition: to bless can mean to speak well of someone, like in Luke 1:64, James 3:9a. That is not really what this passage means. Rather, we are being told here to ask God for favor or benefits on our persecutors; we may also bestow favors or benefits on them ourselves. Those benefits are things they really need, like salvation and blessing from God (1 Timothy 2:1-2), not material prosperity and health, although those things we can pray for one another (3 John 2).

C. The command is repeated for emphasis.

II. The Prohibition: Do Not Curse

A. The Greek dictionary used the word *execrate* to describe “not cursing.” That uncommon word means to feel or express great loathing for someone. It used to be used to refer to cursing or swearing, as in when bad words come out of your mouth.

B. Too often our reaction is opposite of what God would want us to do. James 3:8-12.

C. Matthew 5:38 records our Lord mentioning the *lex talionis*, the “eye for an eye” teaching that was traditional. Such is the natural response—the do-it-yourself vengeance attitude. That is prohibited for Christians.

D. It is a hard task to avoid complaining when we are *not* persecuted. It is even harder to avoid cursing if we *are* persecuted. But Christian virtue is what God defines it to be, not what we say we can do or cannot do because we still live with a sinful nature (aka “flesh”).

III. Things to Keep in Mind About Persecution

A. Do not be surprised at persecution, 1 Peter 4:12.

B. Do not suffer for doing evil and then call it “persecution” 1 Peter 4:15.

Do not overreact to “persecution” as if everything against you is because you are “Christian.” Not everyone is against you because you are a Christian. Maybe they just disagree with you, or maybe you have done something wrong!

C. Understand that suffering can and should bring about spiritual growth, as in James 1:2 and 1 Peter 1:6-7. In this way, persecution is not entirely a bad thing!

D. Those who are persecuted have a special reward in heaven (Matt. 5:11-12).

IV. How can we Bless Our Enemies?

We are told how to bless those who persecute us in Matthew 5:44, by loving and praying for our enemies and those who persecute us.

A. Love them – This is our Lord’s command. See examples of how in Romans 12:20. Do good to those who don’t deserve it.

B. Pray for them – Again, our Lord’s command. Stephen’s example is similar (Acts 7:60). Our Lord didn’t just say to do so, He did so Himself (Luke 23:34).

V. Why Must we Bless Our Enemies?

A. The first answer to “why” is that we are told to do so. We are people under authority, ultimately the authority of God and His word. We are responsible to obey that authority.

B. Another reason why Christians bless our enemies is that it demonstrates that our faith is a “cut above” the norm. Matthew 5:46-47 teaches us that if we do good only those who love us, we are really no different than the world.

C. The third answer to “why” is because God behaves this way and wants His offspring to do likewise. That is, God treats His enemies with remarkable, even surprising, kindness. Most kings do not tolerate their enemies very well. God is different (Matthew 5:43-48).

God wants us to behave like He has modeled for us—perfectly. A son imitates his father (5:45) and so we should bless our enemies.

D. The ultimate example of how God demonstrated love for His enemies is in the matter of salvation. God reconciled people who were his enemies (Romans 5:10) and even chased down those who persecuted him (Acts 9:5) in order to rescue them from the destination that they deserved. Paul was a prime example of this, but you and I are about the same as Paul.

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| **BEFORE** |
| **Paul** | **You** |
| Persecutor of Jesus – Acts 26:9 | An enemy of God – Col. 1:21 |
| Chief of sinners – 1 Timothy 1:15 | None righteous – Romans 3:10 |
| Self-righteous – Philippians 3:4-6 | Similar? – Luke 18:9 |
| Guilty as any sinner and subject to condemnation – Romans 2:1-11 | Due the penalty of death – Romans 6:23 |
| Ran into Jesus – Acts 9 | Urged to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ – Acts 16:31 |

Which God? The Only true and living God, Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.
Who is Christ? The Son of God, equal in deity, who became a man and keeping both divine and human natures, died for sinners.
The third day Jesus rose from the dead, as He predicted.

Christ died for the ungodly – Romans 5:6
God demonstrated love toward us while we were sinners – Romans 5:8
God reconciled enemies – Romans 5:10

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| **AFTER** |
| **Paul** | **You** |
| Realized Jesus was the Messiah and Lord – Acts 9 | Confess the Lord Jesus and believe God raised Him from the dead – Romans 10:9-10 |
| Abandoned all self-reliance and law-reliance – Philippians 3:7-9 | Whoever so calls will be saved – Romans 10:13 |
| Justified by faith – Galatians 2:15-16 | Justified by faith – Romans 3:28 |
| Reconciled to God – 2 Cor. 5:18 | Reconciled to God – Col. 1:22 |

Conclusion

Because of the sacrifice of Christ, God offers to you salvation free through repentant faith. God stands ready to forgive His ungodly, sinful enemies. Make no mistake that every person outside the family of God is an enemy of God and needs the reconciliation and cleansing that only God can provide.

Now that is important. But on top of that, the Lord requires us to follow His example. Do we, like Him, stand ready to bless our enemies, and in fact actually do so? Ultimately the point I am trying to get across is very much like the teaching of Matthew 18:35. If you do not from your heart forgive the sins of others, or are absolutely not ready to bless those who are mean to you, then just what kind of Christianity do you profess? It is not the real kind.

Undoubtedly there is some percentage of us here today who struggle with this in practice. Let’s ask God to help us.

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