

Each of us knows *someone* we need to apply this verse to.

"Have you done so?"

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

Romans 12:14 (NIV)



Some have described this as the most difficult command in the Bible.



But it's part of what it means to "follow" Jesus.

JESUS TELLS US TO FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE.

Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing.

Luke 23:34a (WEB)

It's part of what it means to "follow" Jesus.

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

John 15:20b (WEB)

You must *forgive* from the heart and *bless* them!



JESUS FOLLOW

Important Definitions

"FOLLOWING" Jesus' example:

DOES NOT MEAN: "Go get killed on a cross."

DOES MEAN: "Have the same attitude and values – here referring to love and forgiveness for those who persecute you."

"BLESSING" one's persecutors:

DOES NOT MEAN: "Pronounce religious-sounding phrases over them."

DOES MEAN: "Desiring good for them, and (when able) making it happen."

It's part of what it means to "follow" Jesus.

You must love from the heart and bless them!

2 FACTS

WE NEED TO KNOW

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

Romans 12:14 (NIV)

#1 – ALL who have chosen to follow Jesus have been given:

- ✓ The DESIRE to obey this command.
 - > Because of the PRESENCE of the Holy Spirit within them.
- ✓ The ABILITY to obey this command.
 - > Because of the POWER of the Holy Spirit within them.

IF WE HAVE CHOSEN TO FOLLOW JESUS...

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

Romans 12:14 (NIV)

WE WILL BLESS THEM FROM THE HEART... BUT IT WON'T BE EASY.

#2 – Desiring good for people who have wronged us goes contrary to the desires of the sinful nature.

- > But we will do it, if God's Spirit is at work within us.

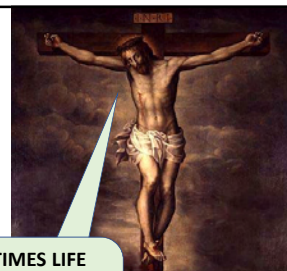
WHO? HAS WRONGED YOU?

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT HIM ... HER ... THEM ...

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT PEOPLE WHO HAVE WRONGED YOU...

- Do you desire them to be blessed? Or cursed?
(Do your actions back-up what you claim you desire?)
- How do you respond if they are rewarded or praised?
(... even though you get mistreated and must suffer because of what they did to you.)

JESUS TELLS US TO FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE.



It's part of what it means to "follow" Jesus.

SOMETIMES LIFE SEEMS UNFAIR. LOOK AT WHAT YOU DID TO ME!

I STILL WANT YOU TO BE BLESSED!

How is all this related to SALVATION?

THOSE WHO FOLLOW JESUS RESPOND DIFFERENTLY THAN DO THOSE WHO ARE NOT FOLLOWING JESUS.

THOSE WHO FOLLOW JESUS...

- Their old (sinful) nature will fight any obedience to this command.
- They learn it is impossible to obey this command without relying on God's power.
- Since they know that any other "option" is NOT an option, they choose to rely on God's power to change them... so that they can obey this command.

THOSE WHO ARE NOT FOLLOWING JESUS...

- They may make excuses for not obeying the command; they may dismiss it as an "impossible ideal."
- Whatever the reason... this blessing of one's enemies just won't happen.

Your Mission...

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
Romans 12:14 (NIV)

TAKE SERIOUSLY THIS COMMAND.

Your eternal destiny is related to the way you respond to it!

Credits (1)

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Your Mission...

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

Romans 12:14

Do I *really* need to bless them?

THE ISSUE... THEY WRONGED ME!

- They have wronged me! That's all there is to it!
- I like the saying, "What goes around, comes around!" And I hope it happens to them! Considering all the evil they did to me, I want them to get paid back! It's even tempting for me to wish them *eternal* harm!
- It's not easy watching good things happen to them! Especially if the good is being done by *me*! It would be much easier to watch them get punished - *and much more enjoyable*!

THE ISSUE... JESUS REQUIRES ME TO BLESS THEM!

- Jesus requires me to bless them, in spite of all they have done to me. He also requires me to *forgive* them. And he keeps telling me that there is a relationship between my willingness to do these things ... and my salvation.
- This is not just an isolated command or two. It's a common theme that can be found in many Scripture passages.
- In addition to all the *commands*, the Bible gives me *examples* to follow. Consider Jesus' own example, when he was dying

on the cross. I can also learn from the lives (and deaths) of the apostles and other faithful followers of Jesus!

THE ISSUE... IT'S NOT EASY! BUT I WILL DO IT!

- This willingness to bless (and to forgive) one's persecutors must be pure and must be from the heart. Otherwise, it will be hypocritical and fake! It must come from a *humble* spirit - one that has submitted to the will of God.
- How can I bless them, when it's *so much* easier to hope that something bad happens to them? How can I *ever* want them to be forgiven?
- Jesus, I *can't* do it. But you say it *must* be done! Is this *really* what it means to "follow" you? (I *know* it is.)
- All this conflict in my heart shows how terrible my sinful nature really is! Only *sin* could desire your blessings for *myself*, and then not want to share them with *others*!
- Jesus, I want to be like you. I want to follow you! I *will not be satisfied* until my attitude changes and I begin to follow your example!
- You've told me that, if the Spirit is in me, I have the power to obey you. Do I believe you? Or am I like Old Testament Israel? They *talked* about following you; but every time an issue came up, they did not trust you. And they perished in their sins.
- If I am saved, I have both the *ability* and the *desire* to bless my persecutors. Even if the ability and desire are buried somewhere deep under my emotions.
- *So what am I waiting for?* I want to trust you. You have given me power to bless them. Help me to rely on you, as I take the initiative to do what you command. I *must* do it, because I want to be like *you*, and not like the *fakes*.