

evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."

- 4) We are to bless and not to curse those who persecute us for our faith in Christ. Albert Barnes comments that, "This is one of the most severe and difficult duties of the Christian religion; and it is a duty which nothing else, but religion will enable people to perform." I think we would all agree.

b. With God's help, we must answer supernaturally.

- 1) God can enable us to **bless** our persecutors instead of cursing them. Being a command, it is not an option.
- 2) To **bless** is to ask God's blessings on the persecutor. It is to speak well of the person. It is to wish good upon him.
- 3) God commands us to wish blessings on those who are persecuting us. We, who know the Lord, are forgiven and have a home in heaven. Those who persecute us for our faith have no Saviour, no forgiveness, no home in heaven, and no hope. As hard as it may be, we are to bless them.
- 4) When Jesus said, (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;**" this included much more than just being persecuted for our faith. We have no excuse for bitterness toward anyone who has hurt, abused, misused or persecuted us in any manner. Since God commands us to bless our persecutors who may threaten our lives, certainly this applies to lesser offences as well.

Conclusion: God wants us to respond to persecution with right **Actions**, right **Attitudes**, and right **Answers**. We are to bless and not curse. Now let's also apply this principle to everyday life. When your **spouse** mistreats you – bless, don't curse. When your **parent** is harsh – bless, don't curse. When **someone** cheats you, talks bad about you or is unkind to you – bless them, don't curse them. Treat others as Christ treats you.

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A Godly Response to Persecution

11 September 2022 AM – Romans 12:14 – Rom2022 – Scott Childs

Introduction: In 1 Samuel 24 and 1 Samuel 26 God records two incidences when David, being pursued and persecuted by King Saul, had the opportunity to kill Saul, yet both times he spared his life. David rewarded him good for evil. He blessed Saul rather than cursing him.

Read Romans 12:14. The word translated **persecute** means to drive away, to pursue, to hunt, or to harass. It is "to prosecute, persecute, pursue with repeated acts of enmity." ^{Zodhiates} Many Christians have suffered persecution because of their faith in Christ. Persecution may be as mild as a mocking comment or as severe as execution.

Transition: When faced with persecution, God wants us to respond in three godly ways.

1. God wants our **Actions** to be right.

a. Our actions should not be criminal

- 1) Those who do wrong must expect to suffer for their wrong. That suffering is not persecution.
- 2) There is no praise in suffering for doing wrong. (1 Peter 4:15) "**But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.**"

b. Our actions should not be carnal

- 1) Suffering as a **busybody** (i.e., one who meddles in other people's matters) is an example, (1Pe 4:15).
- 2) There is no glory in suffering for our faults (1Pe 2:20).
- 3) There is no honour in suffering for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:17) "**For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.**"
- 4) **As a child, when I did wrong and received a spanking for it, that was not persecution; it was deserved chastening for my good. Persecution is suffering for doing right.**

c. God wants our actions to be Christ-like.

- 1) Christ's actions were not criminal nor carnal; they were right in every respect.
- 2) Those who hated Christ, hated Him, not because of things He did wrong, but **because His right actions convicted**

them. Of Christ Peter wrote, (1 Peter 2:23) **"Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:"**

- 3) Suffering as a Christ-like Christian is not shameful, but commendable. (1 Peter 4:19) **"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."**

2. God wants **even our Attitudes** to be right.

We do not naturally have right attitudes towards persecution. In our flesh, we would choose praise over persecution any day. Persecution is painful, either emotionally or physically, and that is not pleasant.

a. God said we should expect persecution.

- 1) Scores of Old Testament prophets suffered and died because of their preaching.
- 2) **Jesus** said, (John 15:18) **"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."** (John 15:25) **"... They hated me without a cause."**
- 3) All of Jesus' disciples, except Judas, suffered greatly for their faith; and tradition states that all but John died as martyrs.
- 4) Paul reminded the Thessalonian believers of this fact. (1 Thessalonians 3:4) **"For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know."**
- 5) To the church at Philippi, he wrote (Philippians 1:29) **"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;"**
- 6) Writing to Timothy, Paul said, (2 Timothy 3:12) **"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."**
- 7) We ought to have the attitude that persecution is to be expected for those who live for Christ.

b. We should rejoice to suffer for Christ.

- 1) Jesus commended this. (Matthew 5:11-12) **"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and**

shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

- 2) The apostles had this attitude. (Acts 5:41) **"And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."**
- 3) (1 Peter 4:14) **"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."**

c. We should also anticipate God's honour.

- 1) Jesus preached, (Matthew 5:10) **"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."**
- 2) Again, Jesus said, (John 12:26) **"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, **him will my Father honour.**"**
- 3) Once again, Peter states, (1 Peter 1:7) **"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto **praise and honour and glory** at the appearing of Jesus Christ:"** We find similar promises often in Scripture.
- 4) If our attitudes are right, our answers are more likely to be right.

3. God wants our **Answers** to be right.

a. We must not answer naturally.

- 1) Naturally, we may curse. This word **curse** means to doom, to wish evil upon, or to pray that the persecutor may perish.
- 2) The grammar here implies that we are to **stop** cursing. This may be our natural, carnal, sinful response toward those who are cruel to us, **but it is not right**.
- 3) When someone persecutes us, it is easy to become bitter, angry, hateful or revengeful. **Our flesh wants to return to them as much, if not more, hurt than they have done to us.** On this, Peter exhorts, (1 Peter 3:9) **"Not rendering**