

When in Rome: Bless Don't Curse

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 September 2026

Preacher: Kent Dixon

[0:00] So welcome here for this Sunday, September 20th, 2026. My name is Kent Dixon, and it is my joy to be the pastor here. So I want to take some time for a brief recap.

I did this a bit last Sunday as well. But to remind us some of these concepts that we've looked at together so far, just in Romans chapter 12. In Romans 12, 1 and 2, we are called to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, acceptable to God.

To be transformed by the renewing of our minds. To prove, some translations say test or demonstrate, what is God's good, acceptable, and perfect will.

And over the course of this series so far, we've explored how a transformed life in Christ should prompt us to live without hypocrisy. To hate things that are evil.

To love our brothers and sisters in Christ with family affection. Hopefully you love your family and can model that to the church as well. Respecting and cherishing others who follow Jesus.

[1:31] We're called to serve the Lord actively and with passion. We're to be people who rejoice in hope, are patient in difficult times, and are committed to prayer.

And then last week, we recognized that we're called to see the needs of others. To share what we have, what God has given us, to bless others. And then above all, to make room for people in our lives, just as God and others have made room for us.

Our passage this morning is Romans 12, verse 14. And that passage says, feel free to flip or you can listen. It'll be over before you blink.

Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse. Our sermon this morning today is titled, Bless, Don't Curse.

And it gives us another important instruction that should become evident to us if our lives have truly been transformed through Christ. Blessing someone who has effectively cursed or seriously mistreated you?

[2:46] How are you doing with that in your life? I don't often do that well with someone who cuts me off in traffic. I'm not saying, bless you. Have an excellent day.

Right, dear? No comment. But that concept sure seems to go against human nature, doesn't it? Blessing someone who has just ticked you off or mistreated you. The world would consider a normal response to get even at the very least, right?

Level the playing field. Make them hurt the way you did. Even better, hurt the other person so viciously in response that they won't ever dream of doing that to you again.

But to respond to someone who has hurt or mistreated you with the extreme opposite of how they've treated you? Man, that requires a transformed life.

[3:49] Let's take a closer look at what the Bible says about this. And that, I believe, should help us understand why this is part of God's perfect will for us. So let's start by defining this directive.

To bless. I always have phonetic spellings. It comes from the days when I was a speechwriter. So I'd write speeches for someone in government and always have to do phonetic spellings of tricky names so ministers didn't go, uh, what is this word?

It's Smith, sir. Right? So, but the Greek word for to bless is eulogio. And it looks like eulogy.

E-U-L-O-G-I-O. Strong's Concordance gives us this definition of it. To praise or celebrate with praises.

To invoke blessings. Fits with the concept of eulogy as well, doesn't it? The Barnes Bible commentary says this. The word bless here means to speak well of or speak well to.

[4:58] Not to curse or to slander, but to speak of those things that we can commend in an enemy. Or if there's nothing we can commend, to say nothing about him.

That's what Barnes commentary says. Thumper's mom, anyone? Say it with me. If you can't say something nice, don't say nothing at all.

That's right. Bambi wisdom. Horses and duckies. Another commentary I read gave an example of this, of the meaning as to pray for them, to bless rather than curse an enemy, or wish well to them. And then we see that same directive given both by Jesus and Peter. Matthew 5, 44, during his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says this. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Imagine during the Sermon on the Mount, I feel like there was probably some people in that crowd that went, what? That's so contrary to what people would have understood, right?

[6:10] Jesus gave that message again in Luke 6, 28, which says, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Takes a transformed life, I think.

The Apostle Peter also gave the directive, the same kind of directive, in 1 Peter 3, 9, which says, do not repay evil with evil, or insult with insult.

On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called, so that you may inherit a blessing. So, we can see in our passage this morning, our short little passage, that Paul gives the direction to bless twice in there.

He emphasizes what we're called to do, and we've talked about this over the years as well. What does repeating, repetition mean in Scripture? It means emphasis.

Pay attention to this, it calls us to do. So, what about cursing? Now, I'm not talking about expletives, although that can be a variation for sure.

[7:20] The Greek word for this is kateroomai. And so, it's k-a-t-a-r-o-m-a-i.

And you know how much I love language. Do you see cataract in there? Interesting, right? And I don't think that's by chance. So, there's a Greek common root there.

And Strong's Concordance defines cursing as, to curse, doom, or imprecate evil upon. Barnes, again, going back to Barnes' Bible commentary, says this for context.

To implore a curse from God to rest on others. Wow. To pray that God would destroy them. In a larger sense still, it means to abuse by reproachful words.

I don't know what calumniate means, but this was in there. I should have looked up the actual definition or a synonym. To calumniate, it says. To express oneself in a violent, profane, and outrageous manner.

[8:26] It's not a good look, right? Are you getting a sense of that? Another commentary I read said this. When he, meaning Paul, saith curse not, he means wish no evil to your enemies.

So despite the fact that we recognize when we started this morning, blessing those who have done evil is not only contrary to human nature, but likely very difficult to do.

So fortunately, we have some examples from the Bible that, fear not, demonstrate, show to us that this is possible. So let's look at the directive on display here.

First, in the character of Job. Job 1 verse 8 says, Then the Lord said to Satan, Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him.

He is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. Job is described by God himself as a blameless and upright man.

[9:35] Later we read in Job 31, 29 and 30, that Job then says, If I have rejoiced at my enemy's misfortune and gloated over the trouble that came to him, I have not allowed my mouth to sin by invoking a curse against their life.

Job declared that he was innocent of cursing his enemies, despite, you know, the story of Job. He probably had every right to be bitter, hurt, angry, rejected, all of those things.

But through Job's actions, we see in spite of all that happened to him, he remained loyal. He remained focused on God. We also see this in Jesus' crucifixion.

We read in Luke 23 verse 34, Jesus said, you know this, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

As Jesus hung on the cross, he literally prayed for the people who were mocking him, the people who had tortured him, those who would ultimately murder him.

[10:53] Continuing in that passage then, in Luke 23, 35 to 39, we read this, The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him.

They said, he saved others. Let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the chosen one. The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, If you are the king

of the Jews, save yourself.

There was a written notice above him which read, This is the king of the Jews. One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him. Aren't you the Messiah?

Save yourself and us! Despite the abuse and mockery and the, honestly, outright blasphemy of his enemies, Jesus still sought to bless them and not curse them.

We also see this on display in Christians in the early church. Referring to Stephen and his eventual persecution and stoning, Acts 7, verse 60, you'll remember this from our study in Acts, tells us this, Then he, Stephen, fell on his knees and cried out, Lord, do not hold this sin against them.

[12 : 16] When he had said this, he fell asleep. In 1 Corinthians 4, 12, Paul tells the church in Corinth, We work hard with our own hands.

When we are cursed, we bless. When we are persecuted, we endure it. Paul and the other apostles, we know this from Scripture, were so often mistreated and imprisoned, or worse, for their beliefs and their ministries.

But they persevered. So while the directive we've been reminded of this morning might be difficult, no question, we know it's possible. We know it's possible to obey this.

And so knowing that it's possible, how should we or how can we seek to live it out? What does the directive look like when it's delivered?

Why should we seek to bless and not curse? Well, it is quite simply what we are called to do. 1

Peter 2, 21-23 says this, To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.

[13 : 39] He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate. When he suffered, he made no threats.

Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. Friends, we've been called to follow in Jesus' footsteps, to follow in his example.

1 Peter 3, verse 9 says, Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing.

Because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. We have been called to bless and not curse.

So recognize that in doing this we'll inherit a blessing ourselves as we just heard there in 1 Peter 3, 9.

2 Peter 1, 2-4 says this, Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

[14 : 56] Go, Peter, go. Peter continues, His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Through these he has given us very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature. Having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. I was digging into this a little bit more. So we've been called to participate in, Scripture says, the divine nature. One commentary I read said, let's be clear, this is not we are going to become God, we are going to become God-like.

If that's your interpretation, it's incorrect. So hear that. So what does that mean though? Well, to participate in the divine nature means sharing in God's moral character.

It means sharing in, seeking to follow Christ in his example, to seek to be holy as God is. And then to pursue a spiritual life through Jesus Christ.

[16 : 13] My friends, it may be human nature to respond to evil with evil. But we have a higher calling. Why should we seek to bless and not curse?

Well, do you think it's needed in the world right now? We can respond with blessing in any and every potentially hurtful or negative interaction we have.

If you need to count to ten first, do it. At work or at school, when employers or fellow employees spread rumors and gossip about us, when classmates make fun of us or hurt us in some other way, at home, spouses say or do hurtful things to one another.

We are human. maybe sometimes sibling rivalry in families rears its ugly head as well. Even with brothers and sisters in a church community, we hurt each other.

James 4 verse 11 says this, brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister, judges them, speaks against the law and judges it.

[17 : 39] When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. 1 Peter 3 8 and 9 says, finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate

and humble, do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult.

On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called, so that, Peter says again, you may inherit a blessing.

Even within church communities, it's sad to recognize that this happens all too often among Christians. When I was thinking about it, every church community I can remember being in throughout my life, there has been issues, there has been conflict, there has been gossip and slander that goes against the message that we're hearing today.

Blessing someone else when they have said or written bad things about us, email stinks, when they're misrepresenting us to others, do you ever have something come back to you and you think, wow, that hurts, I thought I knew that person.

Whenever someone seems to be questioning our character or our motives, especially not to our face, now I want to pause for a second, don't think I got hurt by somebody this week, so I'm pounding this message home.

[19:23] This is where this message landed in our series. I am not a bully pulpit pastor. I will never stand at this pulpit and say, now they're going to get it.

Never. It's easy, though, when you've been hurt to react in anger or revenge, but we are never called, remember I said we're called, we're never called, though, to curse someone else, to get even, to hurt them like they may have hurt us.

And not just for the sake of our faith, but whenever we're mistreated by someone else in any circumstance, even in life, day-to-day life.

Friends, we've been reminded by Paul in our passage today that despite someone else's cruel, unkind, or even downright malignant treatment towards us, we're called by God through his word and the actions of many examples of people in the Bible to bless not curse.

Let me be clear, I'm not calling us to be passive Christians who just grin and bear it, right? Give that other cheek, boy that one, first one is still stinging, give the other cheek.

[20:51] When someone has been unkind to us in any way, I'm not saying grin and bear it, especially when it's become completely unwarranted or unjustified or downright hurtful.

I'm not suggesting that you somehow toughen up and develop a thicker skin. You gotta learn how to take it, because that's what church is all about. No, it's not.

Being treated badly hurts, right? I think we can all attest to that in some way or other in our lives.

And it usually says more about the character of the other person than it really says about you at all. However, where your character and your commitment to God comes into play is what you do next. Bless, don't, curse.

Can you see what seeking to bless someone else, despite the circumstances, can do for you? It takes the focus off you and your feelings, or somehow perceived mistreatment, and gives it where it belongs to God.

[22:07] Paul reminds us in Romans 12, 19, that we have been called to administer mercy. It's a powerful two-word combination. And to leave vengeance to God, getting even, hurting back, it's not God's will for you, or for your life.

Maybe you've heard that saying, hurt people hurt people. So in other words, it's most often the people who have their own inner pain or unresolved issues that seek to share their pain by spreading it around.

So instead of seeking to focus your anger or pain or frustration on someone else, seek to focus, if you're the herter, seek to focus on genuinely being kind, being thankful that God loves them, even if sometimes you feel you can't, and praying for them.

It may seem counterintuitive and often difficult, but when you lift someone up in prayer, even when they've hurt you and don't seem to give a second thought to what they've said or done, friends, it actually frees you from the ways that bitterness and anger can pollute your life and drain your joy. Pray and ask God to help you faithfully carry out your calling to do two things. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse, and not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

[24:14] My brothers and sisters, I believe this is one of the best ways that a transformed life behaves contrary to what the world expects or assumes.

And I also believe that living that way, contrary to expectation, can lead people to Jesus and a true transformation of their own.

Amen.