

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME

BLESS THOSE WHO CURSE YOU

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

Stephen was led out of town by members of the Sanhedrin to be stoned to death. They did this because Stephen had confronted them and their fellow Jews for having rejected Jesus and for putting Him to death. As his persecutors were hurling stones at him and literally as he was dying, he prayed, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." (Acts 7:60)

Jesus taught: "I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:44-47) At this same occasion Jesus said, "I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you." (Luke 6:27-28) Jesus did this very thing when He prayed to His heavenly Father from Calvary's cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34)

The English word bless comes from the Greek word *eulogeō*. From this Greek word comes the English word eulogize. This means to speak well of a person, to tell about their admirable traits, to praise them. Jesus says to love those who mistreat you because you speak well of Him, proclaim the Gospel, and profess your faith and trust in Him. The context here is much like what happened to Stephen, isn't it?

Peter encourages that you follow Jesus' example in how you handle the insults, derogatory comments and even persecution because of your faith in Him. Peter says, Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. "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." (1 Peter 2:21-23)

Prayer: Lord, fill me with Your Spirit to speak boldly of You, but always in love and with care and concern for all entrusting myself to You in all I say and do. In Jesus' name. Amen.

My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
No merit of my own I claim But wholly lean on Jesus' name. Refrain:
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.

When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace;
In ev'ry high and stormy gale My anchor holds within the veil. Refrain:

His oath, His covenant and blood Support me in the raging flood;
When ev'ry earthly prop gives way, He then is all my hope and stay. Refrain:

When He shall come with trumpet sound, Oh, may I then in Him be found.
Clothed in His righteousness alone, Redeemed to stand before His throne!
Refrain:
(LSB 575)