Called to Bless Those Who Persecute Us

We open God's Word at Matthew chapter 5 and read verses 38 to 48. *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.' 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; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."* Amen. Let us repeat verse 48: *"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."* Amen.

It is well known that the word *"perfect"* speaks of completeness, of perfection; and here these ten verses are essential and need to be understood in depth. They belong to a heavenly teaching, not an earthly one. Verse 38 seems to reflect an earthly teaching: *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'"*

Why are we told these things? Let us focus on one particular teaching and ask ourselves: Why does the Lord Jesus give us teachings that seem so hard? If we put them into practice, we can expect suffering or trials. Why does the Lord Jesus want us to go through such trials? Is there a purpose in them? In other words, has He picked out certain situations so that we would be persecuted, and is that His aim? Or do these teachings point to something deeper?

Let us think carefully about why the Lord Jesus gives us these teachings and what their purpose is. We will also turn to the Gospel of John, chapter 3, and focus on verse 12, which says: *"If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?"*

In Matthew chapter 5, the Lord Jesus spoke to us about heavenly things, things that are foundational in the Kingdom of God. Anyone who gains access to the Kingdom of God, who sees it and enters it, must live by these teachings.

The conclusion of this chapter is expressed in the words: *"Be ye therefore like your Father, be ye as He is"* in heaven, just as the Lord's Prayer teaches us, which is a simple prayer: *"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."*

In heaven there is no resistance, is there? We become citizens of heaven through the new birth, when all things are made new. We no longer resist; we put away from ourselves this instinct to resist. And yet we still live on earth, among the people of this earth.

And what are these people like? Are they heavenly people or earthly people? Well, we already have a heavenly character. All things have become new, and that is why we must live this way, so that we may be like our Father. The heathen love too, and the publicans love too, but whom do they love? Those who love them. And they apply the rule *"an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."* But we must not be like that. We must love even those who hate us. Because we no longer love by the rules of the world. When someone does us harm, do we feel like loving them naturally? No. But we are called to love. Because what prevails in the Kingdom of God? Evil? Hatred? Malice? Or love? Only love exists there.

Let us stop at the teaching in verse 44 to understand why we must do these things. In *Matthew 5:44*, and in the verse before it, verse 43, the Lord Jesus draws a parallel between what was said in the past and what we must do now: *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy."*

Many of you may know the Bible quite well and remember the moment when David, before leaving this world, gave his son Solomon certain instructions. Among them, he asked him not to forget Shimei and Joab. One may ask whether these requests of David's were about love or about applying the principle of *"an eye for an eye."* What had Shimei done?

Although he had done nothing against David, he cursed him, calling him a *"bloody man, a man of Belial."* What feelings did David have in his heart? Did he follow the law of the Lord Jesus or the law of the Old Testament? The Lord Jesus came to change the teaching, to urge us to *"put on love"* and to transform our nature. In the Old Testament it was said, *"Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy,"* but the Lord Jesus taught us something else.

What is happening in the world today? People love their neighbours, their families, their children, and are ready to lay down their lives for them, but what about their enemies? Usually enemies are hated, and out of that hatred come murders and other evils. The Lord Jesus urged us to change our thinking, to replace worldly things with *"heavenly things,"* because earthly principles do not exist in heaven. What would happen if I, Peter, got into the Kingdom of God and applied the rule of *"an eye for an eye"*? The Lord Jesus taught us to love our enemies.

It isn't easy to love even our neighbour; often we find it hard to love even those in our own home. And yet the Lord Jesus told us: *"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 is how we become children of the Father.

If we do not follow these teachings, we cannot be counted as His true children. God knew that His Son would be killed, and still He sent Him to earth. When His Son, the Lord Jesus, was crucified, He did not ask for revenge but spoke the words: *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."* What a great honour it is that the Lord Jesus should pray for me and ask the Father in heaven to forgive me. *"Forgive Peter,"* the Lord Jesus might say.

The question arises: Does God hear the Lord Jesus, or not? The answer is that the Lord Jesus was heard because of His godly fear, and He urges us to walk the same road. *"Bless them that curse

you."* This is the teaching we are stopping to study, so that we understand what it means to bless someone.

First we will explore the biblical texts to see whether the apostles carried this teaching forward, whether we too are urged to do the same, and then we will try to understand what blessing and cursing mean. Cursing can be replaced by other expressions, such as speaking evil or slander. When Balak summoned Balaam, he asked him to slander, to speak evil, to say bad things about the people of Israel, with a particular purpose in mind.

Let us turn our attention to the Epistle to the Romans to read about blessing and to examine where we ourselves stand. We want to bless, because those who bless are recognised as children of God. But those who curse, can they be children of God? *"Bless, and curse not"* is the principle that stands against cursing.

Romans 12:14–21: *"Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not."* This is a very high standard. We are not called to bless only those in our own home, but also those who persecute us. That is where the challenge lies. In the very situations where we are persecuted, mocked and spoken against, that is where we are urged to bless.

It can be hard to bless when you feel you have been wronged, when you are tempted to talk about the harm that has been done to you. But God calls us to bless even in those moments. *"Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not."* This is the teaching of the Lord Jesus that we must always keep in mind.

We are often tempted to judge the one who persecutes us, and then we remember the words: *"Judge not, that ye be not judged."* Even in the moments when we feel the urge to condemn, we must remind ourselves of another warning: *"Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned."* When it comes to condemning, think of how a court works: before condemning, the judge examines the case, tries it, and then, if warranted, pronounces a sentence, for example three years in prison.

In everyday life we do not have the authority of an official judge; we are more like judges without a seal of office. We cannot literally send someone to prison, but can we not send them into a metaphorical *"prison"* through cursing or slander?

For example, Balak wanted to curse God's people by using Balaam. The aim was to make God reject His people. In the same way, our accuser, Satan, tries to slander us before God, pointing out our faults to Him in the hope that God will reject us. Had Balak's plans to destroy the Jewish people succeeded, the prophecies concerning the Lord Jesus would not have been fulfilled, and that was Satan's ultimate aim: to prevent God's plan from being fulfilled.

Are we called to be like Satan, to frustrate God's plan for our neighbour? Our neighbours are not just our friends but our enemies too. Everyone needs salvation, even our enemy. God loved all people, as Scripture says: *"He gave his Son"* for how many? *For all.* If we want some people to go to hell, whose plan are we carrying out? Let us be aware that someone else may be behind our actions, and the Lord calls us to be very careful.

It's hard to bless someone who gossips about you, isn't it? It's very hard, because there seems to be no reason to do it, apart from the Word of God, which urges us to love and bless even those who do us harm. He urges you to bless that person now. *"Lord, but I can't. Look what he did to me. I can't. He speaks evil of me, he gossips about me, he does all sorts of bad things to me."*

Verse 17 says: *"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay,' saith the Lord."* Therefore, if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink, for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Amen.

Let us remember the seven churches in Revelation, which at the end are each urged to overcome; and here we are told to overcome evil with good. How did the Lord Jesus overcome? He overcame evil with good. He blessed even on the cross. Did Balak summon Balaam to ask God to forgive his people, or to punish them? There's a big difference, isn't there? *"Recompense to no man evil for evil."* Don't do him harm. Let us not fall into the temptation of doing harm, but repay with good.

What should our hearts be like if we are in the Kingdom of God? Full of hatred or full of kindness? God is full of goodness. We know that He sends rain on the evil and on the good. If He applied strict justice, the wicked would get no rain. *"Look, his wheat didn't come up. It didn't come up because he's a bad man."* That way we would make God partial. But God is not like that; He gives rain and wheat to the wicked and to the good alike. And by doing this, God shows us that He is complete in love, perfect in love.

We should all be of one mind, having compassion one for another, loving as brethren, being pitiful and courteous. We should not render evil for evil or railing for railing, but on the contrary, bless, because we were called to this, that we should inherit a blessing. Let us also read about blessing in 1 Peter, chapter 3, from verse 8 to verse 14: *"For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."*

If we are zealous for what is good, who can harm us? Even if we suffer for righteousness' sake, we are happy. We need not be afraid or troubled. Amen.

There are two kinds of people: those who do evil and those who do good. Those who are merciful, who love and feel for others, do not render evil for evil or railing for railing. This is the teaching of the Lord Jesus as set out in Matthew 5, and it was taken to heart by the apostle Peter, and also by the apostle Paul, who spoke to us about it in the Epistle to the Romans. All the apostles embraced the teachings of the Lord Jesus.

Often we cannot pay back an equally great harm when someone wrongs us. The harm we can do is to slander someone, to despise them, to humiliate them, to say bad things about them. People do bad things, don't they? And we do the same. And the devil slanders us before God. If he does that and we do the same, what excuse do we have before God?

We are called to bless, because that is what we were called to. Many are called, but few are chosen. This is what we were called to: to bless and to inherit the blessing. What is in the Kingdom? Blessing. Everyone there will bless. Do we have to learn to bless, or are we born with this ability? Think back to your childhood: when another child hurt us, how did we react? Did we bless him?

When we were at school and someone hurt us, we would complain to the teacher, saying, *"Look what he did to me!"*

We will also turn to the Epistle of James to see this, but for now let us focus here. We do not render evil for evil or railing for railing. *"He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil."* What do we understand by evil in this context? It means slander, cursing. *"Let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile."* We ask ourselves whether words can deceive. The answer is yes. We often hear people say, *"I'm only telling the truth."* But it is important to stop gossiping, to stop speaking evil of others, even when we think we are telling the truth.

We remember the people in the wilderness and their wicked deeds. In the Old Testament, God says of them that they *"tempted me now these ten times,"* and that He was grieved with that generation. But we human beings are not called to judge. The Lord Jesus asks, *"Who made me a judge?"* It is not easy to refrain from judging, from condemning and from slander, which are the fruit of judging. We are called to bridle our tongue.

When we feel like saying bad things about someone, we must hold back. Whoever wants to see good days and loves life, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile, let him turn away from evil and do good, and pursue peace. *"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous,"* and if we bless, the eyes of the Lord are upon us. Although it may sometimes seem wrong to bless a sinner, Scripture urges us to do so: *"The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers."*

If we want God to hear our prayers, we must consider how we behave: whether we slander or bless. In the Kingdom of God we are urged to bless, even if it means suffering because we live righteously. *"Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled."*

In the Epistle to the Romans we read about how important it is to live righteously and not to be driven by fear or anxiety. We learn to bless and to pray, knowing that God pays attention to our prayers.

Chapter 12 teaches us: *"Avenge not yourselves… Vengeance is mine."* It is our duty to do our part, which is to *"bless them which persecute you"* and do good to those who hate us. If our enemy is suffering from hunger, we must not rejoice in his suffering but do our part, which may

look strange in the eyes of the world but is in keeping with the principles of the Kingdom of God, the kingdom of His dear Son.

In 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul describes his experiences in chapter 4, beginning at verse 11: *"Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we intreat."* Amen. Paul is not lying; he shows that he practises the Word of God, being called to bless when reviled, to endure when persecuted, and to pray for those who speak evil of him, asking not for vengeance but for their forgiveness.

The martyr Stephen, described in Acts chapter 7, verse 57, is another example of someone following the teachings of the Lord Jesus. In his final moments, as he was being stoned, Stephen prayed, *"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,"* and then, kneeling down, he cried out, *"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,"* and he died with these words on his lips. There was no hatred or malice in Stephen's heart, only kindness and forgiveness, as he followed the example of the Lord Jesus, whom we too are called to follow.

In the Gospel of Luke, chapter 23, we are given an important lesson that all of us, you and I included, should learn. It is essential to be always watchful and to keep ourselves from evil words and deceitful speech. We often consider ourselves in the right and are tempted to think we can speak on God's behalf, even to claim that God has cursed someone. But we must ask ourselves: who is God, and who are we? God wants us to be transformed into His image, but to reach that point we must first strive to be like Him. And if we look at the Lord Jesus, we must acknowledge that He was not the one who did the crucifying.

In Luke chapter 23, we read from verse 32 to verse 34: *"And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'"* Amen. *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."* In these words the Lord Jesus brings out a painful reality: those who crucified Him killed the truth and chose to spare a robber. Yet the Lord Jesus chose to pray for them, to intercede on their behalf.

This attitude should be an example for all of us. It is well known that many are called but few are chosen, and this is because few choose to bless. We should strive to bless always, even when we are reviled or persecuted, because these are the height of the evil done to us. In such moments we face suffering at its peak, as the Christian martyrs did. Stephen, for example, had the same spirit as the Lord Jesus, praying in the same way that He had prayed, *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."* This is a pattern of perfection, just as we are told: *"Be ye therefore perfect."*

Before we talk about blessing in more detail, it is important to understand its opposite as well, slander or cursing, and to see what the consequences are for those who slander. Let us turn to 1 Corinthians, chapter 5, to understand who belongs to the Kingdom of God and who is shut out.

This is not something to joke about; it is a matter of great importance.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 5, we read verses 9 to 13: *"I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world."* These verses urge us to keep our distance from immoral behaviour and to preserve our spiritual integrity. Paul goes on: I have told you before not to keep company with anyone who, though he calls himself a brother, lives immorally, being a fornicator, covetous, an idolater, a railer, a drunkard or an extortioner. With such a person you should not even eat. In fact, it is not my business to judge those outside our fellowship. Is it not your role to judge those who are inside? As for those outside, God will judge them. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person. Amen.

This *"wicked person"* covers various kinds of unacceptable behaviour, and slander is among them. The slanderer is the one who speaks evil of others, thinking he is doing good by exposing the truth. He says, *"Look what the neighbour did, look what so-and-so did, look what the government is doing, look what the town council is doing, look what the mayor is doing, look what the president is doing."* But are slanderers loved by God? Does He accept them into His Kingdom? No, He doesn't, does He? The Word of God urges us to give up our sins. God overlooked the times of ignorance, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 9 and 10, we read: *"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."* Amen. This is no joke. These will not inherit the Kingdom of God. We might think, if we don't bless, well, we just don't bless. But here we are told plainly that we will not inherit the Kingdom of God. It is a very serious matter.

Let us also read from Titus, to round out the teaching on blessing. It is hard, because the people around us tend to slander and blame their neighbours. In Titus chapter 3, verses 1 to 3, we find the following: *"Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."*

Verse 3 shows us our past, reflecting on how we once were, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But what comes out of hatred? Out of it are born slander, judging and condemning. In contrast, verse 2 urges us *"to speak evil of no man."* The words *"no man"* include everyone without exception: your wife, your children, your neighbour, the government, the authorities, the doctors. We must be aware that slanderers will not inherit the Kingdom of God, and we must help one another avoid going astray.

We live among people who, even if they don't slander or gossip excessively, still let slip a few spiteful words. The Proverbs tell us that the words of a talebearer are like tasty morsels that seem pleasant to the taste but carry great danger. That is why it is essential to keep company with spiritual people who don't give themselves to such practices, not with worldly people who slander at every turn. *"Have no company with them,"* we are told, so that we may avoid the wrath of God.

Idle words include slander too, for it is useless talk. In the Epistle of James, chapter 3, we look for a clear picture of slander and of how serious it is in God's eyes. We are urged to avoid slander and to seek the Kingdom of God, where blessing is found. Let me read from verse 2 to make this clear: *"For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."* We remember that, as we read in Peter's epistle, we must refrain our tongue from evil and our lips from speaking guile. Self-control is an important fruit of the Spirit. It is essential to work on this, for as Scripture says, *"If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man."* Stumbling in our speech can lead to slander, and we are called to blessing. For example, *"we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body."* In the same way, *"behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth."*

The tongue is a little member, but it *"boasteth great things."* *"Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"* The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, which *"defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."* Though *"every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind,"* the tongue can no man tame. It is an unruly evil, *"full of deadly poison."* *"Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God."* Out of the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. *"Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?"*

"Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh." This shows us that we cannot bless and at the same time fail to control ourselves. God only blesses, and whatever is of God only blesses. So, since He has called us to blessing, bless and do not curse, so that we may inherit the blessing, for this too is what we were called to. Only blessing must come out of us. May the Lord help us!

And if someone is overtaken in a fault, we who are spiritual must *"restore such an one in the spirit of meekness,"* taking care that we do not fall ourselves. We must be aware that instead of blessing, we sometimes gossip. We drop a spiteful word about someone here or there. Reading from *chapter 4, verse 11*: *"Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?"* Who are you? Are you the lawgiver? Do you have the power to decide how things ought to be? Or is that God's prerogative? You see? *"Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine; I

will repay, saith the Lord.'"* So let God take vengeance. I hope this message has come across clearly.

Now let us move on, but let us pause for a moment to go into the Old Testament and talk about blessing, so that we understand what it means to bless, because we may be confused about this as well. When we think about blessing, often the only thing we know to say is *"God bless him."* But there is more to it than that. We ourselves must bless others, not just ask God to do it. God is, of course, very good. But we too must bless.

Let's read in the book of Numbers first. We will read in Numbers, *chapter 6, verse 22*. The heading is *the blessing*, and we will read it from verse 22 to verse 27. *"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 'Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.' And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them."* Amen.

Here we also find the phrase *"The Lord bless thee,"* when we express a sincere wish from the heart. *"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee."* Is it important that God should keep us? It is very important. *"The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee."* There is a blessing here. The prayer of Stephen and of the Lord Jesus was that God would have mercy on the people who were taking their lives. Did God have mercy on Saul, or not? Saul was there and had a part in Stephen's death. And Saul became one of the Lord's greatest apostles, the apostle to the Gentiles. God had mercy, because Stephen prayed for him. I could say, *"The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."* This is a pattern of blessing.

Let's read some more from Numbers, chapter 23, verses 7 and 8. Balaam took up his parable and said: *"Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, 'Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.' How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?"* Notice, this is Balaam speaking. Balaam declares that he cannot speak against God's will. And here Balaam shows faithfulness to God. How should we put it? *"How can I slander if God does not slander? How? If God does not slander, be perfect, as your Father is perfect."* Bless, so that you may be children of your Father's blessing. *"How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?"*

And now he speaks a blessing. Let us think about this blessing too. *"For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"* Amen. Is that a blessing or not? Balaam blesses: the people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations. *"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"*

We read verses 11 and 12. Balak said to Balaam, *"What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether."* And he answered and

said, *"Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord hath put in my mouth?"* And what does the Lord put in our mouths? Blessing is put there by the Holy Spirit, who must dwell in us; He is meant only for blessing, not for cursing. He does not allow us to curse or to slander. Yet here we are dealing with both cursing and slander. After Balaam had blessed Israel the way he did, Balak said to him, *"I took thee to curse mine enemies,"* and you remember what was said of old: you have heard that it was said, *"hate thine enemy."* Balak made no such distinction. Israel was Balak's enemy, and Balaam was blessing them.

Let's read some more from Numbers, chapter 23, from verse 20: *"Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, 'What hath God wrought!'"* Amen. He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it.

And one very interesting thing we read here is that God has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor seen perverseness in Israel. If we read the rest of the Old Testament, we may ask ourselves: did God see it or didn't He? Well, it seems He did. But when it came to God judging His people, it was not the business of the nations to meddle in what God was doing with His people, was it? Was it the nations' business or not? Our children have their problems in our home too, don't they? They do. But when they are out in the world, they are still our children; they don't become our enemies.

Let me read some more from chapter 24, still about blessing, so we understand what a blessing looks like, what we should say when we bless. Not just *God bless you*. We read from verse 5, chapter 24: *"How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters."* Amen.

That's beautiful, isn't it? Beautiful, the kind of words to bless someone with. *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!* May the Lord show His mercy upon your house, may the Lord strengthen you. May His eyes watch over you.

God's blessing is something extraordinary, and in Deuteronomy chapter 28 we are shown what happens when God blesses. It is important to ask for His blessing, because when God blesses, wonderful things follow. Verse 1 tells us: *"And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth."*

This is the beginning of a whole series of blessings that will come upon the one who obeys the voice of the Lord. You will be blessed in the city and in the field; the fruit of your body, the fruit of your ground, the fruit of your flocks, your basket and your store, all these will be blessed. The Lord will give you victory over your enemies, who will flee before you. The blessing will be with

you in your storehouses and in everything you set your hand to. The Lord will make you plenteous in goods and will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to send rain in its season, and He will bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow. You will be the head and not the tail; you will be above only and never beneath, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God without turning aside from them. Amen.

These are just a few of the many blessings mentioned. Notice that when we say *God bless you*, we are actually expressing a specific wish for blessing: that He would bless the work of your hands, the fruit of your body, the fruit of your flocks. This blessing is with you both when you come in and when you go out. That is the message we pass on when we say *The Lord bless you*. The Lord will bless you; may all of God's blessings come upon you.

It is important to understand these things and to strive to live differently from the way we have lived until now. We must change, because we are called to bless. *Many are called, few are chosen.* There are different callings: we are called to be saints, called to the peace of Christ, and also called to suffer. There aren't many callings, but although many are called, few respond.

Let us ask the Lord to help us enter into this obedience and to leave cursing in God's hands, for He has the power. He created us. And let us remain as the Lord Jesus was on earth: *"Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?"* He condemned no one, but said: *"Neither do I condemn thee: go."* Remember these words.

May the Lord help you and me to live according to the Lord's teachings, and to bless. Amen.

Source: *Called to Bless Those Who Persecute Us* — Unmodified Word
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