

The Question:

The Bible tells us not to curse others (Romans 12:14). Yet in some of Paul's letters—particularly to the Galatians and Corinthians—he uses language that sounds very strong, even as if he's cursing someone. So, did Paul contradict the teachings of Christ and the apostles by cursing people?

Let's take a closer look.

The Verses in Question

Galatians 1:8-9

"But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!"

1 Corinthians 16:22

"If anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be cursed! Come, Lord!"

These verses raise questions. Is Paul issuing a personal curse? Is this consistent with the New Testament ethic of love, grace, and forgiveness?

Context: What Was Paul Responding To?

Paul was fiercely defending the purity of the gospel—that salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, not by works or the Law.

Ephesians 2:8-9

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

In Galatia, some Jewish Christians were teaching that salvation required faith in Christ plus adherence to the Law of Moses, especially circumcision. Paul saw this as a serious distortion of the gospel—one that could destroy people's faith.

So when Paul says, “let them be under God’s curse,” he’s not personally cursing anyone. He’s stating that anyone—human or angelic—who preaches a different gospel has already placed themselves under God’s judgment.

This isn’t an emotional outburst.

What Does “Curse” Mean Here?

The Greek word Paul uses is “anathema”—which means someone or something devoted to destruction or set apart for divine judgment.

So Galatians 1:8 could be paraphrased:

“Even if I, or an angel from heaven, preach a different gospel,

they should be considered as someone under God's judgment."

This is a statement about God's justice, not human revenge. Paul isn't calling down a curse—he's warning of the inevitable spiritual consequences of abandoning the true gospel.

But Didn't Paul Tell Us Not to Curse?

Yes, and he practiced what he preached.

Romans 12:14

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

This verse, written by Paul himself, makes it clear that believers should never personally curse others. Instead, we are to show love even to those who oppose us.

Furthermore, Paul expressed deep compassion and sorrow for those who were lost:

Romans 10:1

“Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.”

Even when people were far from the truth, Paul’s response was prayer—not revenge.

So What Was Paul Actually Doing in These Verses?

He was making a theological statement, not pronouncing a personal curse.

Paul was warning that those who reject or distort the gospel are already under God’s judgment, unless they repent.

This aligns with what he wrote elsewhere:

Galatians 3:10

“For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’”

In other words, anyone trying to be justified by the Law rather than by faith is putting themselves under a curse—not because Paul cursed them, but because they’re stepping out from under God’s grace.

What’s the Application for Us Today?

We live in a time when false teachings and gospel distortions are still common. Like Paul, we must be clear and bold in defending the truth of the gospel. But we must also be careful not to take Paul’s strong language as permission to curse others.

Instead, we’re called to:

- Preach truthfully (2 Timothy 4:2)
- Pray for those in error (1 Timothy 2:1–4)
- Warn without hate, and correct with humility (Galatians 6:1)
- Speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15)

Did Paul Curse Them?

No, Paul did not curse the Galatians or the Corinthians. He warned them that turning away from the true gospel places a person under God's judgment. His motive was love, not condemnation.

As followers of Christ, we are not called to curse anyone. Instead, we should pray for those in error and urge them back to truth—while still warning them of the real consequences of rejecting the gospel.

2 Peter 3:9

"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise... He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

May the Lord bless you as you stand firm in the truth, and extend His grace to others.

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