

Romans 12:14-21
Uncomfortable Contradictions

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” -John 15:13 ESV

“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” -1 John 3:16-18 ESV

“And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.” -Revelation 12:10-11 ESV

1. Taking Down a Wall 14

A. Persecution as a Value?

““Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” -Matthew 5:11-12 ESV

B. Being Like Jesus

“But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,” -Matthew 5:44 ESV

““But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.”
Luke 6:27-28 ESV

“Blessing is a boundary-removing act, just as cursing is a boundary-defining act. Invoking God into one’s relationships was a powerful thing to do.”-Ben Witherington *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*

2. Looking Outward 15-18

A. Celebrating and Grieving 15

Do you even have one person to go to with good things? Do you have one person to go to with tough times?

B. Harmony and not Haughty 16

“Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.” -Acts 4:32 ESV

“When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.” -Proverbs 11:2 ESV

“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.” -Proverbs 16:18-19 ESV

“One’s pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor.” -Proverbs 29:23 ESV

C. A Refund on Payback 17

““You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.” -Matthew 5:38-42 ESV

D. Living at Peace 18

““Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”
Matthew 5:9 ESV

3. Giving to Your Enemy 19-21

A. Against Vengeance 19

““You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.”
Leviticus 19:17-18 ESV

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.” -Romans 1:18-20 ESV

B. Feeding Your Enemy 20

“But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?” -Matthew 5:44-47 ESV

“If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.” -Proverbs 25:21-22 ESV

C. Overcome Evil with Good 21

“And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? **No one is good except God alone.**” -Mark 10:17-18 ESV

“The goodness of God is that which disposes Him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of good will toward men. He is tender hearted and of quick sympathy, and His unfailing attitude toward all moral beings is open, frank, and friendly. By His nature He is inclined to bestow blessedness and He takes holy pleasure in the happiness of His people. That God is good is taught or implied on every page of the Bible...”

AW Tozer

“But when the **goodness** and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Titus 3:4-7 ESV

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, **goodness**, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” -Galatians 5:22-23 ESV

Reflection: Can you see the connection between the self-sacrifice of others and the goodness of God Himself? How are you presenting yourself as a living sacrifice today?

Follow UP in the Word through the Week...

Monday: Romans 12:1,2. On this Memorial Day, think on these two verses and how the Lord would encourage in the ways to offer your life as a living sacrifice.

Tuesday: Titus 3:4-7. When did the “goodness of God” appear in your life? How have you experienced His goodness recently? How are you overcoming evil with good in your life?

Wednesday: Matthew 5:44-47. What do you find most challenging about Jesus’ words? Is there a place in your life where you need to apply these principles?

Thursday: Matthew 5:9. Who are the peacemakers in your life? How do they live that makes them a peacemaker?

Friday: Leviticus 19:17-18. What permission is given here and what restriction is given? Have you seen this practiced well?

Saturday: Galatians 5:22-23. This is an invitation to move beyond the natural to the supernatural. Will you put yourself aside in order to allow these qualities to come from the Holy Spirit?