**Exhortation**

**Overcome Evil With Good**

READING: Romans 12

We’ve been talking this weekend about resolving Conflict

Conflict is common in our lives

We’d like to look at Conflict not solely as a painful experience, but rather as an

 opportunity to us to act like Christ and thereby grow spiritually

Hopefully you have some good notes and ideas to follow the next time something

 Comes up

But before I go, I want to talk a little bit about what happens if it doesn’t go as easily as

 we’d like it to

Sometimes you just can’t make peace with someone

I think it’s kind of fitting that we talk about this during the Memorial Service, as we are here to remember someone who couldn’t make peace with his accusers

Someone who was attacked and killed

Ultimately not because he was wrong, but rather because they didn’t want to accept

 the truth that he had for them

Sometimes people become entrenched and stop any efforts to be reconciled

Paul gives us some clear advice in Romans 12 on what to do when someone is acting

 this evil way against us

His plan is simple

1) Don’t be overcome by their negativity

2) Overcome their sinfulness with righteousness

If we truly are followers of Christ, then we should always work towards helping

 someone who is hurting

Let’s look at Paul’s advice in Romans 12, specifically lets look at verses 14-21

Romans 12:14-21

 14) Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

 15) Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

 16) Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

 17) Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

 18) If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

 19) Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

 20) To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.”

 21) Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

I’m a believer in the idea that the best defense is a good offense

The Bible doesn’t teach a passive response to evil

God wants us to actively try to win over our opponents and help them to see the truth

Romans 12 shows us five components that we can use to overcome evil with good

1) Control your Tongue

Romans 12:14

 14) Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

Don’t gossip about them, especially if they are saying critical things about you

Have your speech full of grace by focusing on what is true and helpful

Speak well of them whenever possible

2) Seek Godly Advisors

It’s difficult to be alone

Romans 12:15-16

 15) Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

 16) Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

Look to your Godly friends for encouragement

A “Godly Friend” is one who is willing to correct and admonish you when they see that

 you are wrong

You might get discouraged and tempted to stray from God

Surround yourself with spiritually mature people who will encourage you to stay on a biblical course

3) Keep Doing What is Right

Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody

Romans 12:17

 17) Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

He isn’t talking about worrying about the opinions of others

He is talking about act properly so that any reasonable person who is watching you will

 acknowledge that what you did is right

I like what Peter says in 1st Peter 2:

1st Peter 2:12

 12) Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak

 against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Don’t get bogged down in their negativity and start acting negatively yourself

This is good advice for someone in a deteriorating relationship - Don’t start treating

 them like they treat you

4) Recognize Your Limits

Romans 12:18

 18) If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

IF IT IS POSSIBLE...

When dealing with difficult people, it’s good to know your limits

Do all you can to be reconciled, but remember that you can’t force others to do what is right

If you have done everything “as far as it depends on you”, then you have fulfilled your responsibility to God

If circumstances change, then begin your efforts again, but in the meantime you don’t have to continue to spend your time and resources on someone who doesn’t want to reconcile

God simply asks us to be faithful, not successful

We plant, and God gives the increase

And don’t get upset and try to get revenge on them…

Remember, that is not your job

It’s God’s job, and He does a very good job of it

Romans 12:19

 20) To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.”

 21) Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

5) Use the Ultimate Weapon

Romans 12:20-21

 20) To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.”

 21) Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

If they are hungry, feed them, if they are thirsty, give them something to drink

The Ultimate Weapon is Deliberate Focused Love

Instead of reacting spitefully to someone who mistreats you, Jesus wants you to figure

 out what their deepest needs are and do all you can do to meet those needs

AND, actively loving someone will protect you from be defeated by anger, bitterness or

 revenge

Do to others what you would have them do to you

Applying these principles can be difficult, but it is always worth the effort

Hopefully, we’ve all learned a lot over the past few days

Conflict is an opportunity to solve common problems in a way that honors God and benefits those involved.

When confronted with a conflict people either attack, escape or seek peace

Be the kind of person that strives to seek peace

Be the Peacemaker

Because we are commanded by God to live at Peace - Peace with God, Peace with

 Others and Peace with Ourselves

We are commanded to trust in the Lord and do good

This requires us to be convinced that God is not only Sovereign, but he is GOOD

Remember to ask yourself, “Is This Really Worth Fighting Over?”

Define the issues clearly and decide if your attitude is correct

We learned that Conflict Starts in the Heart

James taught us that we have Desires that can grow into Demands, and cause us to

 punish the people who thwart us getting what we want

But we can repent

Confession Brings Freedom

Repentance is the first step in gaining freedom from conflict in our lives

Matthew 18 taught us that it starts out Just Between the Two of You

The most challenging way to help others in the midst of conflict is to help them see

 where they are wrong and need to change

We’re reminded to Speak the Truth in Love

Use the Gospel, not the Law - Don’t talk about what they have failed to do, but instead

 focus on what God has done for them

If that doesn’t work Take One or Two Others Along

If “Effective Confrontation” doesn’t work, then involve as few others as possible

AND Forgive as God Forgave You!

We need to forgive

Forgiveness is not a Feeling, it’s a Decision

Imagine what Jesus was feeling…

Luke 23:33-34

 33) And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they

 crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.

 34) And Jesus said, **“Father, forgive them,** for they know not what they do.”

I got into quite an upsetting conflict with a brother in my meeting recently…

He thought that the stairs in the backyard of the hall should go straight down, and I

 thought that they should flair out on both sides in a more architectural look

And once! I really got into with another member of the Tidings Committee

He was a firm believer in the Oxford Comma and felt that we should use it in the

 magazine, and I was dead set against it

Yes, some strong words were used in those conflicts!

Luke 23:33-34

 33) And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, **there they**

 **crucified him**

We may think that we are in a bad conflict

It might even be the worst thing that we’ve even seen

But think about Jesus

Hebrews 12:1-4

 1) Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

 2) looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

 3) **Consider him** who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

 4) **In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.**

Jesus gave his life for us

Jesus gave his life to forgive us

We can forgive others to resolve our conflicts with each other