

Tyndale Thought for the Day

31st August 2020



“Do not repay anyone evil for evil... If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all... if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink... overcome evil with good” (Romans 12.17–21, NRSV).

Paul was writing to Christians in Rome at a time when they were facing persecution by the Roman authorities. A few years before, Jews and Christians had been expelled from the city by Emperor Claudius. A few years later, Emperor Nero would make Christians the target of his wrath in a widespread persecution that, according to tradition, claimed the life of Paul himself. Live peaceably with the Roman authorities, Paul writes...

I was reading these verses as the TV news played the video of Jacob Blake being shot in the back by white police officers in Kenosha, Wisconsin, USA. Amid the peaceful protests that followed, some chose violence – choosing to repay evil with evil. This seems to be an all-too-common news cycle recently. Live peaceably with the authorities?

To love your enemies, to repay evil with good, these are some of the most difficult ideas in the Christian faith. They are also the most central, the most Christ-like. Flogged by the Roman governor, Jesus gave no answer to the unjust accusations against him. Executed on a cross, Jesus prayed “Father, forgive them”. No retaliation. No angels raining down fire from heaven.

But overcoming evil with love.

Ian Waddington