

Defeating the Devil

James 4:7

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

The above sentence is simple in concept but difficult to accomplish on any regular basis. The reason that this is such a problematic task is that devil is very powerful. 1 Peter 5:8 says it well: *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* He is invisible and does not come down main street in a red suit. He doesn't take a day off. The evil spirits are great in number as shown in Mark 5:9: *He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many"* when Jesus ask for his name.

The verses surrounding the James and 1 Peter texts are supportive and instructive: James 4:8: *Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.* 1 Peter 5:9-10: *Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*

The texts in the paragraph above are certainly very informative, however we need the strength of Jesus to defeat the devil. And, he not only gives himself as an example but also provides the wherewithal to stand up to the devil. Hebrews 4:15-16 tell us *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* Jesus was indeed tempted by the devil after Jesus had fasted for 40 days in the desert and was in weakened condition.

When Jesus was tempted by the devil, Jesus used the Word of God to refute each advance. We have been given that powerful Word for our daily lives. It comes to us in our devotionals, Bible classes and every Sunday at our church services. We have Jesus' body and blood in the Sacrament that provides forgiveness of our sins and strengthens of our faith. Our faith, given to us by the Holy Spirit, is our full body protection as described in Ephesians 6:16. Being empowered by Jesus we can say like he did to the devil: "Be gone!"

God sometimes even provides observable road blocks to keep us from temptation. When we blow right through them and face the hurtful consequences of our actions, he plucks us out the mock of our self-made disaster and forgives us. Through his life suffering, death and resurrection he has the power to not only forgive but also gives us yet another opportunity to serve in his kingdom.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, thank for giving me all need to defeat the devil. Make me wise to the evil one's wiles. Amen.