



**DAILY SCRIPTURE & PRAYER RESOURCE for the
WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY
20 MAY – 27 MAY 2012**

DAY 4—WEDNESDAY 23 MAY

Changed by the Lord's victory over evil

Scripture

Exodus 23:1-9 Do not follow the majority in wrongdoing

Psalm 1 Happy are those whose delight is in the law of the Lord

Romans 12:17-2 Overcome evil with good

Matthew 4:1-11 Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only

Overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21)

Reflection

In Jesus we learn what 'victory' really means for human beings - that is, happiness with one another in God's love through his overcoming of all that keeps us apart. This is a sharing in Christ's victory over the destructive forces that damage humanity and all of God's creation. In Jesus we can share in a new life which calls us to struggle against what is wrong in our world with renewed confidence and with a delight in what is good.

The words of the covenant given in Exodus give a categorical warning against engaging in wrongdoing and injustice. The attitude of the majority must not in any way provide an excuse. Neither do wealth nor other situations in life entitle a person to do wrong.

Psalm 1 draws attention not only to the need to observe the commandments, but especially to the joyful fruits of doing so. A person who loves the law of the Lord above all else is called happy and blessed. The word of God is a sure guide in adversity and is the fulfilment of human wisdom. Meditating on the word of God *day and night* enables a person to lead a life full of fruitfulness for the good of others.

In Paul's admonitions in Romans 12 we find encouragement to *overcome evil with good*. Only good can interrupt the endless spiral of hatred and the human desire for revenge. In the struggle for what is good, not everything depends on human beings. However, the apostle Paul calls for every effort to be made to maintain peace with others. He understands our continuous struggle against our instincts to harm those who hurt us. But Paul appeals to us not to let ourselves be overcome by these destructive feelings. Doing good is an effective way of combating wrong-doing among us.

The gospel reading describes the Son of God's struggle with the temptations of Satan – the personification of evil. Jesus' victory over these in the desert is fulfilled in his obedience to the Father, which leads him to the cross. The Saviour's resurrection confirms that here God's goodness ultimately wins: love overcomes death. The risen Lord is near! He accompanies us in every struggle against temptation and sin in the world. Christ's presence calls Christians to act together in the cause of goodness.

The scandal is that because of our divisions we cannot be strong enough to stand against the evils of our time. United in Christ, delighting in his law of love, we are called to share in his mission of bringing hope to the places of injustice, hatred, and despair.

For reflection/discussion

1. "In Jesus we learn what 'victory' really means for human beings - that is, happiness with one another in God's love through his overcoming of all that keeps us apart." Is this a good definition of 'victory'? Is it helpful for you?
2. What is 'evil'? Where do we see evil in our own lives?
3. In what way can our faith in Christ help us to overcome evil and the Evil One? When have you seen faith in Christ help to overcome evil?
4. When should we struggle, and when should we patiently wait (Day 2)?
5. What can we learn from situations in our community where division has given way to reconciliation?

Prayer for the Day

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for your victory over evil and division. We praise you for your sacrifice and your resurrection that conquer death. Help us in our everyday struggle against all adversity. May the Holy Spirit give us strength and wisdom so that, following you, we may overcome evil with good, and division with reconciliation. Amen.



**National Council of
Churches in Australia**
Faith and Unity Commission