

FAITH'S FIGHT AGAINST SIN

Alfred J. Poirier

A Ministry of
Rocky Mountain Community Church
2832 Broadwater Avenue
Billings, Montana 59102
(406) 259-7811

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ou have an enemy. It is called by many names: the sinful nature, the Adamic nature, the old man, the lusts of the world, the boastful pride of life. Its goal is only and always to oppose God (Rom. 8.7-8). It attaches itself so strongly to the human heart that Paul called it "indwelling sin." So strong and persistent is this principle of indwelling sin that Paul speaks of it as a law: "...I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members" (Rom. 7.23). So foul was this battle that it caused a mighty apostle like Paul cry out in despair: "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7.24).

Yet, Paul does not think that he is or you are obligated to give up the fight, roll over and die. He does not see the Christian as having to resign himself or she to living a defeated life in the face of this constant enemy. His cry of despair is followed by great thanksgiving: Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin (Rom. 7.25).

As you can see, Paul's hope is not in himself or his own efforts. Rather, he hopes in Jesus Christ. Paul understand that he is a new creature in Christ and that as a new creature in Christ he is a slave to God's law. Later, in Romans 8 he says that all believers are God's children. And it is because we are God's children that we have a duty or obligation to fight against sin: "Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation . . . if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Rom. 8.12-14).

Christ has saved us from both the guilt and power of sin. You have died with Christ. You have been united with him in his death to sin and are united with him in his resurrection. You have been born again. You are a new creature. You are justified and set apart now for God's work. You are an adopted son or daughter of God. You are now in God's family, united to Christ's Church. So as a child of God, you have been called to take up arms and fight. And fight you must. You must fight against sin. You must put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature, Col. 3.5-10.

However, before you run off to do battle against sin, you need to know how to fight. The purpose of this booklet is to teach you *how* to fight against sin by faith in Jesus Christ. Once you learn to fight against sin, you will be better able to help your brother and sisters in Christ fight against sin. For you must fight together.

In order to combat sin, there are three fundamental truths you must believe:

- 1. that in Christ you are *dead* to sin (Rom. 6.1-11); and
- 2. that in Christ you are *alive* to God (Rom. 6.11-14); and finally
- 3. that *faith* in Christ and in his Word is the key to joyful obedience and victory (1 Jn. 5.14; Rom. 10.17; Gal. 2.20; 5.6).

As John the apostle says, "This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith" (1 Jn. 5.4). So then, in your fight against sin, you must reckon with (i.e., to believe, to trust in) Christ in terms of these three fundamental truths. You must stand upon the foundation of your new life with Christ.

HOW DID WE COME TO BATTLE SIN?

Have you ever wondered why *now* you wrestle with sin? Why *now* do you sense sin's threat? Why *now* do you fight against sin?

Why are you even interested in reading this booklet? Think back, if you can, to the time before you confessed Christ as your Lord and Savior. Do you remember how once you couldn't care in the least whether you sinned or not? But all that has changed. Why? What has changed in you? What has happened to you?

Before Paul teaches the Ephesians how to fight against sin, he reminds them of their life apart from Christ. Here is how he describes it: "All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath" (Eph. 2.3b).

Before God gave us our new life in Christ, we were naturally (that is, by nature) objects of God's wrath. God cannot respond any other way to sin but to condemn it. And apart from Jesus Christ we were condemned.

Yet, all that has changed, hasn't it? Why? Because God chose to show mercy on you. That is the good news of the gospel. Paul says: "Because of his (God's) great love for us, God who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ. Even when we were dead in transgressions -- it is by grace you have been saved" (Eph. 2.4-5). Do you see? While you were still in sin and loving sin, God already had begun to fight against sin for you! God already declared war on sin!

What should that mean for you as you begin to fight against sin? Simply this – you are not alone or on your own in this fight. Because God is at war with sin, you can now take part in putting sin to death. Remember this: The war with sin is God's battle. Do you understand what I mean? Listen:

Do you know the story of David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17)? David desired to fight against Goliath, but he was no match for Goliath.

Goliath was a giant; David only a young boy. Goliath was a seasoned warrior; David a shepherd boy. David should have run away and hid. But he didn't. He chose to fight, but he was not naïve about the fight.

David didn't take confidence in himself. Nor did David think this fight with Goliath was his fight. David knew better. David had faith to fight against Goliath because he knew that the battle was ultimately God's battle. Goliath's real enemy was not little David but the Lord God Almighty. So David fought *in the name of the Lord Almighty*. He cried out to Goliath:

"You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the **Lord Almighty**... This day the **Lord** will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head... All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the **Lord** saves; for the battle is the **Lord's**, and he will give all of you into our hands" (1 Sam. 17.45-47).

Do you see how you are *not* to fight against sin? If you fight against sin in your *own* power and in your *own* strength, you will lose. But if you enter the fight against sin knowing this is the Lord's battle, then you will be able to put sin to death. For you will choose God's weapons, and you will fight in his strength according to his timetable.

As the Lord called David to fight against Goliath, the Lord calls you now to fight against sin. And as the Lord rescued David from Goliath, he will also rescue you from the sin that wages war against you. The Lord doesn't send you ahead of the army to fight alone. Rather, he precedes us in the battle. He is our shield surrounding us in the battle. He calls us to fight, but it is by following behind him in his footsteps. It is daily taking up our cross and following Christ (John 12. 25-26).

So remember this: *in Christ the great battle has been fought and won already.* That battle took place when Christ died on the cross at Calvary. Our battle now is more like a mop-up operation—subduing Jesus' enemies under his feet. The armor we wear is Christ's armor. The weapons we fight with are his weapons. The strength in which we fight is his strength.

Do you believe this? In the midst of the battle, we tend to forget that God is near, powerful and present. In the midst of the fight we forget the good news! God is for us, with us, and in us, to will and to work for his good purpose, (Phil. 2.12-13). If the Father did not spare his one and only Son but gave him up for us all, will he now withhold from you anything you need to fight against sin? Never! (Rom. 8.32)

Yet, too often we fight against sin as if the fight is by human effort (Gal. 3.1-5). And what have your efforts apart from faith in Christ, achieved for you? Nothing! You fight against sin by making a new list of "New Year's resolutions," don't you? You sin, and then instead of confessing your sin and believing his forgiveness of you, you make a thousand promises to God that you will quit sin. Yet, where has it led you? Despair? Self-resignation? Seeking some magical key that will once and for all have you done with sin?

What you do not do is turn to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet, that is where God's power resides. As Paul says: "I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes," (Rom. 1.16). That power is God's present power. That salvation includes putting sin to death, growing holy and Christlike.

The gospel, remember, means *good news*. And the good news is good news for those who do battle against sin. The gospel reminds us that *God* saves sinners. He is our chief resource. His power and grace support us on the battlefield. The weapons we fight with are of his design. And above all, God is for us in the battle.

Remember, before we came to Christ nothing in us looked "good" to God. We were as desirable as a rotting corpse. So what moved God to save us? Scripture tells us -- His love (see Eph. 2.4ff). What paid for our new life? "The riches of his mercy." And what compels God to continue to supply us with everything we need? His own grace. As the apostle reminds us: "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do," (Eph. 2.10).

So today you are alive in Christ by God's love and mercy, grace and power. And because you are alive in Christ, you can fight *against sin*. Where once you were *dead in sin*, now you are *alive to God in Christ*. That means you are alive to fight against sin. Only the living fight. The dead don't. Only those alive to God can engage in mortal combat against sin.

SIN NO LONGER OUR MASTER

Let's explore this a bit further. Remember that the first truth you must believe is that in Christ you are dead to sin. What does it mean for you to be dead to sin? The preposition "to" is important. It stands directly opposite to being dead "in" sin.

To be dead *to* sin means that God has severed once and for all any claim and obligation we owe to sin (Rom. 8.12-13). To be dead to sin means that God has made a radical break between you and sin. Our new relationship to sin is as a dead man's relationship to the world he once lived in. Do you see why it is unthinkable that you should wallow in sin? Paul exclaims "We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer" (Rom. 6.2)!

Yet, you might ask: when did I die to sin? You died to sin when you were united by grace to Christ through faith in Christ. As the apostle says: "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6.3).

But what does it mean that you died to sin by dying with Christ? Again, Paul gives the answer: "For we know that our old self was crucified with him (Christ) so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin -- because anyone who has died has been freed from sin" (Rom. 6.6-7).

Do you now see *who* it is that died? It is your "old self." What was that old self? It was the self that once was dead *in sin*. It was the self that was controlled by sin. Scripture calls it "the flesh" or "the sinful nature." A good description of it is found in Romans 8.7 "the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." It is this "mind-set" that has died. It is this "sinful nature" that was condemned in Christ (Rom. 8.3-4). So you see, God has condemned sin in Christ. You have been crucified with Christ. You have died to sin. Hence, though sin *remains* in you it no longer *reigns* over you. *Sin is no longer our master*. You have been set free!

To see this we need only compare Gal. 2.20 with Gal. 5.24. In Gal. 2.20 Paul says that of himself "I have been crucified with Christ." Then in Gal. 5.24 he says of us "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires." Such is the triumphant cry of the believer. In Christ our old self has been slain. In Christ the sinful nature has been crucified and condemned. Sin is no longer Lord over us (Rom. 6.14). Christ is Lord! God has severed our old relationship to sin.

That is why Jesus said: "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (Jn. 8.34-36) What benefits do we receive from having died with Christ to sin and being set free? There are two:

- 1. You are *no longer* slaves to sin (Rom. 6.6)
- 2. Sin is *not* your master (Rom. 6.7, 18)

As Christ died to sin "once and for all," so when we died with Christ to sin, we were irreversibly separated from sin ever being our lord and master again.

As our former master, sin ruled over us and we were slaves to it. It told us to sin and we did it. Of course, we were willing slaves to sin. It was a pleasure and delight to sin. We did not obey sin grudgingly. We did not sin out of a sense of duty. Sin was never a chore. Remember this: sin resides (dwells) at the level of *our desires and passions and pleasures*, Gal. 5.16ff; Jas. 1.14ff.

Sin tempts and deceives us by promising that it is good to sin. Sin promises us that we will gain much pleasure from sinning and threatens us that we will "lose out" if we do not sin.

That is why James describes sin as taking root at the level of our desires. "Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desires, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (Jas. 1.14-15).

It is because sin dwells at the *heart* level (i.e., conceived at the level of desire) that God must save us at the *heart* level. God must remove from us our old self, that *heart of stone*, and give us a *heart*

of flesh. And this is exactly what he promises "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws" (Ezk. 36.26-27).

GOD GIVES US OUR BATTLE ORDERS

So what happens when we get a new heart from God? What happens now that we have died to sin and been raised with Christ?

We do mortal combat with sin. Colossians 3.1-5 makes this clear. Paul first reminds us what God has done for us in Christ. We have been raised with Christ! We are new creatures! Having died with Christ to sin, we are now in Christ alive to God.

Only after he directs us to believe the amazing grace we have in Christ, does the apostle gives us our battle orders. Now that we are alive to God through Jesus Christ, we have a responsibility --- To fight against sin! v.5 "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry." Paul continues this list in v.8: "but now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips."

OUR ARMOR AND SWORD

But how do we put sin to death? How does this look in the nitty-gritty of everyday life? How do you fight against sin? What does it look like in practice? An initial answer is twofold: first, put on your armor; second, take up your sword. Let's look at each.

1 Put on Your Armor.



We must *believe* all that God says about our new life in Christ. Paul calls faith in God's good news, our *shield of faith*, *Eph. 6.16*. Faith in God shields us from the lies of sin and Satan.

And what are we to believe? This -- "Keep on counting yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6.11). Another way of saying this is: "Reckon yourself as God reckons you. That is: 1]that you are in Christ Jesus, and therefore 2] you are dead to sin and alive to God."

If we do *not* believe this, we will not be able to fight against sin. Thus, you must lay hold of this truth daily, lest you expose yourself to Satan's major frontal attack—accusing you that you are not united with Christ and that you are still in bondage to sin's guilt and power.

So the first thing you must do is to "count yourself dead to sin." You must believe and trust God in what God has said he has done for you in Christ. He has said that sin's dominion over your life has been severed. God has severed it. You are now under Christ's rule and lordship.

This is your protective armor. This is the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness and the shoes of the gospel. The first cry of any true warrior for Christ is: *Christ is my righteousness!*

2] Take up Your Sword.

If faith in God's good news is our protective armor, God also equips us with *weapons* powerful to combat sin. He has given us his Spirit. "If by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Rom. 8.13-14).

But how do we put to death the misdeeds of the body *by the Spirit*? What does that look like? Surely, part of Paul's meaning must be that the Spirit himself leads us, governs us, and guides us to *obey* the Father. As the Spirit of Sonship, his role is to transform us to be like Jesus (Rom. 8.29).



But Paul also means something more. He means that we put ourselves in a position whereby the Spirit can guide, govern, and help us fight against sin. The clue to what this means is discovered by examining the Christian's *spiritual* armor. *Spiritual* armor means these are the weapons given by the *Spirit* of God. Ephesians 6.10ff lists these. Yet, of the many different pieces of armor, only one is for *offensive* measures -- *the sword of the Spirit*, (Eph. 6.17). What is that? Paul says the *sword of the Spirit* is "the word of God" (Eph. 6.17b).

So we fight against sin by using the Word of God. It is the truth of God that sanctifies us, that is, makes us holy. That is why Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, prayed to his Father: "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (Jn. 17.17).

FAITH IN GOD VERSUS THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN

But how does God's Word help us to fight against sin? God's Word helps us fight against sin by generating faith in our heart. "Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of Christ" (Rom. 10.17). Faith is the heart's confidence in God and all that he has promised us -- that He alone is our Lord and Savior who sets us free from the guilt and power of sin, and helps us fight against it. Faith says this: "O Lord, you are my Lord, apart from you I have no good thing" (Ps. 16.2).

Yet, no sooner have we set our hopes on God than Satan attacks us by seducing us. This is sin's deceitfulness. And it is the more subtle scheme of Satan. He entices us to sin.

Earlier we said that sin *seduces* us by *making a counter-promise* to God's promises. Sin promises us the pleasures of sin. And it does more! Sin *deceives* us even as it promises us. It *blinds* us to the *consequences* of our sin. With each promise that sin makes, it conceals from our eyes God's promises and his threatenings.

Do you remember Satan's deceit in the Garden? Eve saw that the fruit was "good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom" (Gen. 3.6). That is, Satan would have us see evil as good and good as evil. What God says leads to death, Satan counters and claims it will lead to life.

This is one of Satan's great schemes. In every temptation he lies to you about two things: He says: "You will not surely die." Where God says that the wages of sin is death, the devil counters and says the wages of sin is a good life. Satan would have you believe that there are no evil consequences for sin.

Another lie of the devil is to tempt you to not serve God as your Lord, but to be *your own lord -- "you will be like God . . . "* Satan not only blinds you to the evil consequences of your sin, but he *lies* by offering you to be *like God*. This is why sin is called deceitful. Satan wants you to be your own lord and god.

The deceitfulness of sin is its ability to paint the good things of God as evil. It calls the promises of God a lie. It calls the threatenings of God a farce. When we give into sinful temptation, we are believing that sin promises pleasures better than God. Yet, unbelief *in God's promises*, only results in all manner of sin: worry, indifference, lust, covetousness, impatience, pride, hatred, etc.

That is why faith pleases God. As the writer to the Hebrews says: "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." (Heb. 11.6).

The key clause is the last one. Many people believe God exists, they may even believe that he is good, but few believe that God is the *rewarder* of those who earnestly seek him.

True faith casts aside the false promises of sin, and casts itself upon God, seeking its pleasures from *his* right hand. As the psalmist said: "You will make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" (Ps. 16:11).

And what are those eternal pleasures that replace sin's temporary pleasures? They are all the promises of God given to us in his Word--the sword of the Spirit.

It is by the sword of the Spirit that we expose the deceitful lies of Satan. He promises us pleasure if we sin. The Word of God, like a sword, counters Satan's lie and warns as it promises: "A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; but the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life" (Gal. 6.7-8).

So the Word of God generates faith in me to believe God's promises that "apart from him I have no good thing" (Ps. 16.2). The Word of God exposes the true consequence of sin's momentary pleasures -- "The wages of sin is death," (Rom. 6.23).

God's Word shows me that while I may enjoy sin for a brief season, in the end I will reap not the fruit of eternal happiness but of eternal destruction -- *The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction.*

So by God's Word, I must now live as one who believes that God will lead me in the path of life. By faith I know that God will fill me with joy in his presence, with eternal pleasures at his right hand (Ps. 16.11).

This is how the saints of old fought against sin. They loved not their lives even to death because their hearts were set on the inheritance that awaits all who fight the good fight of faith. Let's consider Moses.

MOSES: AN EXAMPLE OF A GODLY WARRIOR

How did Moses live out his life? What choices did he make? Where did he place his faith? Once he too was dead in sin, living in Pharaoh's court, treated to all the pleasures of Pharaoh's riches. But God made him alive and Moses realized that the pleasures of sin were only for a short time. Thus, we are told: "By faith, Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward" (Heb. 11.24-25).

Faith is fed by the Word of God. Faith has an appetite for God's Word. For it is only in God's Word that we hear the extravagant promises offered by God and are warned of the extreme penalty of unbelief.

The Word of God acts like a scalpel to peel away the sinful desires that adhere to our hearts. It also acts like a knife to strip off the coating of sweetness on sin's poisoned fruit. Instead of seeing the fruit of lust as "good for food," we see it as the fruit of death. Instead of seeing the fruit of lust as "pleasing to the eye" God's Word exposes its false face and shows me that lust deceives the eye. Instead of seeing the fruit of sin as "desirable to make one wise," God's Word reveals that sin will blind me, make me foolish enough so that I do not consider the eternal consequences of sin—eternal death.



ACTION STEPS TO FIGHT AGAINST SIN

1. Detect & Renounce Your Sin: Ps. 139.23-24; 1 Jn. 1.8-10; 5.21; Jas. 4.1-3

The first step is the hardest. Why? Because we are *blind* to our sin. The very nature of sin denies it is a sin. Moreover, sin operates at two levels in us. Sin operates as an act and as a desire. The one is *seen*, (e.g., an outburst of anger) while the other remains *hidden* (e.g., our pride). We will not make much headway in our fight against sin until we learn to detect not only the *fruit* but the *root* of sin.

One chief way Scripture speaks of the root of sin is by calling it *idolatry*. What is an idol? An idol is any *counterfeit* God. Everything that God is, an idol attempts to be. One of the chief things God *is*, *is* our *Lord*. As Lord he:

- Rules over us
- Promises to bless us for our obedience
- Threatens to punish us for our rebellion
- Commands us to obey
- Demands ultimate loyalty/love
- Offers as the chief blessing eternal life, joy and pleasure (Ps. 16.11; Mt. 25.34; Mt. 25.21; Jn. 3.36).
- Warns us of the chief threat -- eternal death (Jn. 3.36; Mt. 25.46; Mk. 47.48).

So too, the idols of our hearts rule us, promise us, threaten us, command and demand of us our ultimate love, loyalty, and obedience. How then will we ever detect this hidden root of sin?

No amount of cleverness will reveal to us the idols of our hearts. *God* must reveal it to us. We ought to pray as David did: "*Lord*, *search my heart*," (Ps.139.23-24).



However, as fruit is attached to root, so our *seen* sin is attached to the *unseen* idols of our *heart*. As seen sin operates at the level of deeds, conscious thoughts and spoken words, so unseen idols operate at the level of our *hearts* with its desires, passions, hopes, dreams, expectations, and basic trusts, Jas. 4.1-10. We can then ask these kinds of questions to help us detect the idols of our *hearts*.

- What do I spend my time daydreaming about?
- How do I answer: "If I could only have/do "x"... then my life would be wonderful?
- What desires rule me? What pleasures will I not give up easily?
- What are my expectations and hopes?
- What do I fear most? What easily makes me anxious?
- Whose approval do I seek most? Whose disapproval do I fear most?

When God shows you the answer to these, confess it and know that he will work for you and with you to combat it (1 Jn. 1.8-10).

2. Discern Your Sinful "Ruts: "1 Cor. 10.9-13

Once you have detected your sin (fruit and roots) you must discern your sinful "ruts." Single sins soon become sinful *habits*. We travel over the same sinful thoughts, attitudes and actions like the wheels of an old wagon train cutting deep ruts in a desert road. Spiritual combat has a lot to do with getting out of those ruts. We do this first by discerning what those ruts are. What are common *ways* and *habits* you have formed in responding to specific temptations? Using the "Search Sheet for Fighting Against Sin" can help you here. Most likely there are other sinful strategies not listed on that sheet. But it should give you a place to start. After you have *detected* your *sin*, now you need to *discern* your sinful *strategy*.

3. Determine Your Weak Walls: James 1.13-15

The Scripture's instruct us to "guard our hearts" (Prov. 4.23). God has provided you with the means to do this. I call these means "walls." Sin often gets a foothold in our lives through weak walls. Think of a fortress. If you leave the gate open, the enemy will come in. If there is a hole in a wall, the enemy will break through. So also, you need to guard your heart by determining your weak walls. There are two kinds of "weak walls" in our lives. One is created by our *neglecting* to do what God wants you to do. The other is created by our being *naïve* (*ignorant and immature*) about the dynamics of the Christian life.

For example, if you are *naive* about the power of indwelling sin, you will attempt to fight against it by just trying harder. You will live more on the basis of your new resolutions ("I'll never do that again.") rather than on the basis of faith in God's promises.

Or, if you think there is a secret formula that will give you instant victory over sin, you will forever be *looking* instead of *doing*. You'll be forever seeking a magic formula that promises instant victory over sin. Meanwhile, you will have *neglected* to actually fight against sin as God directs you.

4. Defeat Sin by the Scriptures: Eph. 6.17; Ps. 119.9,11

The fourth way we fight against sin is by the Scriptures. God's Word is the Sword of the Spirit, Eph. 6.16. By hiding God's Word in your heart and meditating on it day and night we defeat sin, Ps. 119.11; 1.2-3. Three sets of Scripture are needed for a sharp sword.



A. God's promises:

We combat sin with the promises of God. There are two kinds of promises to look for: What God has done for us and what God will do for us. One set of promises is on the past and present. The other set of promises is on the future.

--What God Has Done For Us: 1 Cor. 6.19-20 gives us the promises of what God has done (and is doing) for me. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price . . . "

Such a passage helps us resist the devil when he would say that we are not of Christ and that we have no power against sin. Instead, we use such a promise to remind ourselves what God has done for us and in us.

--What God Will Do For Us: 1 Cor. 6.14 tells us what God has yet to do for us and in us. "By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also." No matter how painful discipline is, the end is that we will share forever in God's glory. No matter how painful the suffering is, they are not worthy to be compared to the glory we are to inherit if we continue to persevere in our fight against sin." If I cry out to the Lord, he will deliver us me" (Ps. 50.15). Therefore, I need to always keep my eyes on what God has yet promised to do for all who persevere to the end. I must believe that God is the rewarder of those who earnestly seek him. Why throw away eternity for the cheap, God-denying, temporary pleasures that sin promises?

B. God's Specific Commands:

God's word is our sword not only as promise but as command. God directs, guides, counsels and instructs us (Ps. 32.8). God's commands are of two kinds: what we ought to stop doing and what are to start doing. One kind calls us to *put off* sin. Another kind of command calls us to *put on* right living—godly attitudes and actions.

Ephesians 4.25-32 is a good passage to see how this works. For example, in Ephesians 4.25 Paul addresses the sin of lying. Notice how he gives two kinds of commands. One tells us what to stop doing and the other what we are to start doing.

- 1] **Put Off:** For example, in Ephesians 4.25 Paul tells us: "Put off falsehood (lying) . . ."
- 2] **Put On:** Yet, Paul continues and gives us a "put on" command. ". . . and speak truthfully to your neighbor."

As you can see, we are not simply to stop being bad, doing wrong, we are called to replace sin with godliness.

C. God's Threatenings:

Another way in which God's word helps us fight again sin is by reminding us of the consequences of sin. Sin deceives us as to its consequences. Satan said to Eve "You will not surely die." Therefore, to combat Satan's lie, you need to detect what your sin is promising and expose it as a lie. Moreover, you need to set over and against these false promises of sin and recognize God's dire warnings of the *true* consequences you will face if you give yourself over to this sin, E.g., 1 Cor. 6.9-11; Gal. 5.19-21; Gal. 6.7-8.

Gal. 6.7-8 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

5. Fight Sin by Godly Fellowship



Finally, Scripture teaches us not to fight against sin alone. We must fight against sin with the help, encouragement, counsel, prayer and instruction of others in the body of Christ, especially those whom God has placed over us (elders, deacons, bible study leaders, godly men and women). God has given us the church

and places us under the pastoral direction of elders who are called upon to preach and teach and equip us in the fight, Eph. 4.11-16; 1 Tim. 5.17; 4.10-13; Heb. 13.17.

Here, though, you will encounter two obstacles. First, we live in a society where there is a lot of emphasis upon not submitting to Godappointed authorities. "You can't tell me what to do" is the reasons many Christians live unholy lives. They are not willing to be instructed or confronted by others with respect to their sin. What about your own attitude? Are you willing to seek help from others? Do you surround yourself with flatterers or true friends (see Prov. 27.6)?

Another problem you may encounter is that much of what we call "fellowship" is no more than social chattiness. Do not get me wrong. There is a place for casual conversation, but too often, that is the *only kind* of conversation between fellow believers. What we need is the strong, deep, loving and thoughtful exchange of biblical truth. Listen again to Scripture.

Proverb 27.17 says "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." Lone warriors in the faith are easy targets for sin's deception. Heb. 3.13 instructs us to work together in fighting against sin. "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."

Sin is better fought in a *company of warriors*. So make sure you are united with a local church. Place yourself under its shepherds as they equip you for service through God's Word. Give others permission to hold you accountable for your actions. Ask a brother or sister in Christ to do spot checks on your spiritual walk. Let them come to you and ask: How goes your fight against sin? Be ready to give a truthful answer.

I hope this has been helpful in your fight against sin. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15.13).

QUESTIONS FOR COMPREHENSION

Use these questions to help your comprehension. The page numbers at the beginning of each question shows you where you'll find the answer.

- 1. p.1 What does "indwelling sin" try to do to you? [Rom. 7.21-23]
- 2. p.1 What duty or obligation do you have with respect to indwelling sin? [Rom. 8.12-14; Col. 3.5ff]]
- 3. p.2 What three fundamental truths must you believe if you are to fight against sin?

1]

2]

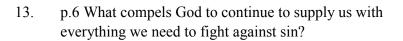
3]

4.	p. 2 What does the Apostle John say is the victory that overcomes the world (of sin)? [1 John 5.4]
5.	p. 3 Who has already declared war on sin?
6.	p.3 Why aren't you alone in your fight against sin?
7.	p. 4 What did David believe in his fight against Goliath? Why could such a young boy fight against such a great giant warrior? [1 Sam. 17.45-47]
8.	p.4 How ought you <i>not</i> to fight against sin?

9.	p.5 What does "gospel" mean?
10.	p.5 Of what does the gospel remind us?
11	n 6 What mayad Cod to gaya ya?
11.	p.6 What moved God to save us?

p.6 What paid for our new life?

12.



14. p.6 What kind of men don't fight?

15. p.7 Take Romans 6.6-7 and put your own name in these verses. (Change the "we" to "I"; the "our" to "my"). Write this out.

16.	p.8 What are the two benefits from our having died with Christ to sin?
	1]
	2]
17.	p.8 At what level does the power of sin reside (dwell)?
18.	p.8 Write out James 1.14-15.
	1

19.	p.8 What promise does God make in Ezekiel 36.26-27 for all who believe in Christ?
20.	p.9 What "battle orders" has God now given you? See Colossians 3.5, 8
21.	p.9 What are some things you must believe if you are to fight against sin?
22.	p.10 What is your protective armor?

23.	p.12 Who helps us fight against sin? [See Rom. 8.13-14]
24.	p.11 What is the "sword of the Spirit?"
25.	p.11 How does God's Word help you fight against sin?
26.	p.11 What does faith say about God?

27.	p.12 With what lies does Satan tempt you?
	The devil tempts you to call evil
	The devil tempts us and says that if we sin we won't
	The devil tempts us to not serve God as our Lord, but to be like
28.	p.13 What does God promise to those who believe and follow him? See Psalm 16.11. Write this out.
29.	p.14 How is Moses an example of a Warrior?
	What did he refuse?
	What did he choose instead?
	What was he looking ahead to?

30.	p.14 How is God's Word like a scalpel?
31.	p.14 How is God's Word like a knife?
32.	p.15 What is one chief way Scripture speaks of the root of sin?
33.	p.15 What does a lord (idol) do?
34.	p.15 What prayer did David pray in Ps. 139.23-24? Write it out.

35.	p.16 What are some good questions to ask yourself to help you detect your "idols" things that rule and direct your life?
	1]
	2]
	3]
	4]
	5]
	6]
36.	p.17 What do we mean by weak walls? Give an illustration.[Hint: Think about a fortress]

Ido.	to do what God wants me to
I am Christian life.	of the dynamics of the
	actions do we need to take in dealing v
. 0	
sin?	
sin?	

p.19 What does Paul warn us about in Gal. 6.7-8?

39.

40.	p.19 What do we reap?
41.	p.19 What will you reap if you sow to please your sinful nature?
42.	p.19 What will you reap if you sow to please the Spirit?
43.	p.19 Can you fight against sin alone? Who do you need?
44.	p.20 What does Heb. 3.13 tell you to do?

MY STRATEGY FOR FIGHTING AGAINST SIN

Use This Sheet to Plan Your Strategy for Fighting Against Sin

1.	DETECT & RENOUNCE YOUR SIN: Ps. 139:23ff;
	1 Jn. 1.8-10; 5.21; Jas. 4.1-10

a.	My sin's <i>fruit</i> is:
b.	My sin's <i>root</i> (idols of my heart) is:
	view page to help you detect your idol. re are those idol-detector questions:
•	What do I spend my time daydreaming about?
•	How do I answer: "If I could only have/do then life would be wonderful?
•	What desires rule me? What pleasures will I not give up easily?
•	What are my expectations and hopes?
•	What do I fear most? What easily makes me anxious?
•	Whose approval do I seek most? Whose disapproval do I fear most?

2. DISCERN YOUR UNBELIEVING STRATEGY: 1 Cor. 10.9-13

Check the boxes that best describe the unbelieving strategy you adopted when tempted in this sin.

Blame-shifting					
□ Blaming God ("God, you aren't helping me overcome this sin").					
☐ Blaming others ("She/he provoked me").					
☐ Blaming your environment (I sin because I am living in a bad situation).					
Accusatory or critical spirit (you sense others' sins, mistakes, and deficiencies more than your own). If it leads to contention, often it is due to guilt in the contentious person.					
Making excuses ("I can't bear this test/temptation. It is too hard for me").					
Making "new year" resolutions ("I just won't do it again").					
Denial, hiding (not admitting it).					
Despair, resignation, giving up ("I can't take it any more").					
Despair, ("Well, I've already sinned in my heart. There is no reason not to complete it in act").					
Diminishing ("It is not really that bad of a sin. Its not as if I did \dots ").					
Pity-playing ("Poor me. This testing of my faith is unique to me. Nobody knows the trouble I've seen").					

3. DETERMINE YOUR WEAK WALLS: Jas 1.13-15

- □ *Neglect*: Worship & Fellowship, Heb. 3.12-13; Col. 3.16; Eph. 5.18-21
- □ *Naivety*: Not fleeing from sin ("I don't know why I fell into sexual immorality again after I visited that brothel"), Heb. 12.1-3; 1 Cor. 6.18

Neglect:

- □ Prayer about this particular sin, Jas. 4.7-10; 5.16
- □ Lack of storing Scripture, Eph. 6.17a; Ps. 119.9, 11; Ps. 1
- □ *Naivety* about the strength of indwelling sin, Rom. 7.14-25; James 4.1f
- □ *Neglect:* Not considering the example of Christ (We must suffer for the sake of righteousness. I must obey even if I don't like it), 1 Pet. 2.20-25; 4.12-19
- □ *Naivety* about the Necessity to Suffer in Our Fight Against Sin, Heb. 12.3-12

4. DEFEAT SIN BY THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT --THE SCRIPTURES

A. What Does God Promise Me as Resources in the Fight (Who I am in Christ and Who is For Me)? Rom. 6.11; 1 Cor. 10.13; Eph. 1.3-14; 2.1-10; Rom. 8.13-17, 31-39; Heb. 4.14-16

1] What Has God Already Done for Me?

Make a list and then use them to express your praise and thanksgiving as you worship the Lord.

2] What Does God Promise He'll Do For Me?

Make a list of God's promises for you and use them to express your praise and thanksgiving as you worship God.

- B. What Scriptures Give Specific Commands About This Sin? Heb. 2.1-3; 12.14; Col. 3.5-8
 - 1] "Put Off:" (Telling Me What I Am Not To Do). *Make this list items for prayer*.

2] "Put On:" (Telling Me What I Am To Do).

Make this list items for prayer.

5. FIGHT SIN BY GODLY FELLOWSHIP, HEB. 3.12-13; 10.24-25; PROV. 27.17

A.	With whom and when can I share these new truths about Faith's Fight Against Sin?				
	1]	Person:			
	2]	Time:			
В.		can I ask to pray for me as I fight against rticular sin/idol?			
	1]	Person:			
	2]	Person:			
C.		whom can I confide in about these matters ow them to hold me accountable?			