

How to Slay Sin, Part 3

Scripture: Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12

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Let's take a look at step three in slaying sin: **Fill your mind with Scripture.**

John Bunyan, author of the classic *Pilgrim's Progress*, wrote in the cover of his Bible, "Either this book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book." Bunyan understood what many in the war against sin don't—the Word of God is *the* weapon you simply cannot neglect.

Have you ever considered some of the symbols the Bible uses to describe itself? Scripture is called a light, hammer, fire, rock, mirror, milk, seed and water. Each highlights a unique characteristic of God's Word, but by far the most memorable metaphor of the Bible is a sword (Ephesians 6:17). Any idea why?

God's Word is sharp and able to penetrate effectively through thick layers of sin and hypocrisy. It can effortlessly slice through soul and spirit, laying bare the thoughts and intentions of your heart (Hebrews 4:12). It serves dual purposes in battle—deflecting blows from the enemy and inflicting wounds of its own (Matthew 4:1-11). As you handle God's Word and experience more of its power, both your skill and confidence will increase (Hebrews 5:14). See the parallels?

Here's one more you may not have considered. In the Bible, a sword often symbolizes execution (Matthew 26:52; Romans 13:4,). It's an instrument of *death*—a *killing* device. Before the electric chair, the gas chamber, or lethal injection, governments would use a *sword* to carry out the death sentence. The imagery is powerful.

If you want to carry out the death sentence on your sin, you need God's help. Lay aside your puny, inadequate human weapons (2 Corinthians 10:4) and take up God's mighty *sword of the Spirit* (Ephesians 6:17). Remember, this battle is spiritual and you can kill sin only "by the Spirit" (Romans 8:13). You're no match for sin, but sin is no match for the Holy Spirit. God's Word is sufficient to the task. It's the greatest spiritual resource you have, Christian, and it boasts of an utterly unique identity. The Holy Spirit authors it (2 Peter 1:21), empowers it (1 Thessalonians 1:5), and interprets it (2 Peter 1:20). Scripture is your quintessential spiritual weapon, forged by God Himself.

Since God's Word is the single most powerful weapon you possess, to neglect or ignore it is absurd:

A pilot without his chart, a scholar without his book, and a soldier without his sword, are alike ridiculous. But, above all these, it is absurd for one to think of being a Christian, without knowledge of the word of God and some skill to use this weapon. - **William Gurnall**, *The Christian in Complete Armour*

Consider the central role God's Word must play in a life of the godly: The psalmist began his book on worship by contrasting the godly man with the ungodly. What set them apart? Consider the godly man. "His delight is in the Law of the LORD, and in His Law he meditates day and night. He will be

like a tree firmly planted by streams of water” (Psalm 1:2-3). Here are some other familiar verses from the Psalms, “How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it, according to Your Word” (Psalm 119:9); “Your Word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You” (Psalm 119:11).

Does that describe *your* life? Are you *firmly* planted; is your way *pure*? Delighting in, meditating upon, treasuring up, and keeping God’s Word are what separate those who are killing sin from those who are being killed by it.

John MacArthur has said:

No believer has excuse for not knowing and understanding God’s Word. Every believer has God’s own Holy Spirit within Him as his own divine teacher of God’s divine Word. Our only task is to submit to His instruction by studying the Word with sincerity and commitment. We cannot plead ignorance or inability, only disinterest and neglect. -Ephesians, MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 372.

You can’t escape the New Testament’s various charges to be saturating your mind with the Word of God: “Let the Word of Christ dwell richly within you” (Col. 3:16). “Like newborn babes, long for the milk of the Word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation” (1 Peter 2:2). “Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21). “Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Ephesians 5:18-19).

Only Scripture is said to be profitable for “reproof, correction, and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It’s the hammer that smashes rocky hearts; the fire that purifies tainted motives. Unleash Scripture on your sin, Christian. It knows exactly what to do—*search* and *destroy* (Psalm 139:23-24).

Filling your mind with Scripture is the most powerful measure you can take against indwelling sin. It will help you:

- Anchor your hope in the gospel (1 John 1:9; 2:1)
- Behold the beauties of Christ (Philippians 2:5-11)
- Consider the horrors of hell (Matthew 5:29-30)
- Set your sights on heaven (2 Timothy 4:8)
- Cultivate a hatred for sin (Hebrews 3:12-13)
- Understand the will of God (Ephesians 5:17)
- Recall God’s promises of deliverance (Psalm 46:1)

So, let God’s Word fill, enrich, renew and control your thinking—or let sin. Either Scripture will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from Scripture.

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