

Victory Over Sin: Priorities and Goals

Colossians 3:1-5 (Part 2)

Colossians 3:1-5 - *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. ⁵ Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."*

Background Notes

False teaching that included Gnostic thinking was circulating around Colossae. We learned about Gnostic thinking in our early studies on Colossians. Gnostic thought had not yet penetrated the Colossian church, but it was around, and Paul wrote this letter to warn the Colossians.

Gnostic thought included the idea that you could do whatever you wanted with your body. Your body didn't matter - only your spirit and your soul counted. In this great epistle, the apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said that it **does** matter what you do with your body. If you make Christ supreme and all-sufficient in your life, then you will have victory over sin, including the sins of the body.

Verse 5: *"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."* How do you get victory over the sins of the body? That's what Colossians 3:1-5 is all about. We want to know this today, just as much as Paul wanted the Colossian believers to know it.

Doctrinal Point

The biblical method of victory over sin is the "RAM" method.

"RAM" is an acronym, using the first letters of the following principles:

R – **Realize** your position in Christ

A – **Aspire** to the things of heaven.

M – **Mortify** your members on earth

You will never have triumph over sin by sheer willpower. You've got to use the three step biblical method that is taught in Colossians 3.

Step 1. Realize your position in Christ.

In our last session, we talked about the first step in the RAM method – the “R” – **realize** your position in Christ. God sees us as having died with Christ and having risen with Christ. That's our spiritual position. We're raised with Christ, and we have new life in Christ. We're not just forgiven sinners - we actually have divine life! The first step to gaining victory over sin in our lives is to realize these truths.

Suppose you're in debt, but suddenly you get word that your rich uncle died and you've become a millionaire. You now have two choices: you can go on living in debt, with all the financial problems, even though you're a millionaire - or you can pay your debts and be relieved of all the financial problems. What is step one? It's to realize that you're a millionaire! You really are, and you have to act on that truth and that knowledge.

In the same way, in the matter of dealing with sin in our lives, Step One is to **realize** the truth that our position in Christ really does provide us with power to gain victory over sin in our lives. But let's move on to Step 2.

Step 2: Aspire to the things of Heaven.

“Seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth”(v1-2). That's aspiration!

To “aspire” means to seek something high or great. “Setting our minds on things above” is not the idea of being so heavenly minded that you're no earthly good. Aspiring to the things of Heaven is not the idea of walking around with your head in the clouds and not fulfilling your earthly responsibilities. And it's not the idea of an out-of-the-body mystical experience. Aspiring to the things of Heaven has to do with setting our **priorities** and our **goals** in this life - getting our priorities and goals in line with our spiritual position and new life in Christ. See what verse 1 says: *“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above.”*

We're not only to **be** what we are, but we're to **think** what we are. Set your mind on things above. Setting the right goals and getting your priorities straight really does begin with the thought life. 2 Corinthians 10:5 says we are to bring every thought into obedience to Christ. Are we doing that? That's aspiration!

Where are our priorities? What are our goals? If we're preoccupied with getting ahead in this life (gaining the best this world has to offer), or if we're preoccupied with earthly things (getting rich or getting the most pleasure out of life), then we're not practicing the Step 2. We're not setting our mind on “things above.” We're setting our minds on earthly things.

“Set your mind on things above” doesn’t mean you’ve got to quit your job and give all your money away. That’s not the point. It means setting your priorities properly, in line with our position in Christ. (For example, how much time do you spend each day with the Lord in His Word, and speaking with Him in prayer?) The point is that setting our minds on heavenly things really is a step toward getting victory over sin in our lives.

We’ve all got to admit we struggle with sin, but if we’re going to make Christ supreme and all-sufficient in our lives, we’ve got to start conquering sin. We’ll never become sinless in this life - but we are to sin less. Aspiration is a necessary step.

Here’s an illustration: Think of the moments when you have been in close fellowship with the Lord - maybe a devotional time, or a time when you were outdoors enjoying God’s wonderful creation. Did you feel like sinning then? No? Why not? It’s because you were “setting your mind on things above” - and that’s part of gaining victory over sin. The more you think of “things above,” the more you’ll have victory over sin.

But what if you don’t often have those special times of fellowship? That’s where Step Three may become very important.

Step 3. Mortify your members on earth.

Verse 5: *“Therefore, put to death...”* That’s the idea in the word “mortify.” The word “mortify” comes out of the King James Version.

“Mortify” means “to put to death.” It doesn’t mean to commit suicide or mutilate your body. It means to *“consider your earthly members to be dead,”* as some translations say. Dead bodies don’t sin. By definition, mortification is a ruthless rejection of all habits and practices that we know are wrong. That action is consistent with our position in Christ.

In Matthew 5:29-30 the Lord Jesus said, *“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off.”* Did the Lord mean that we should literally mutilate our bodies? No! What He meant was that sometimes we need to take drastic action against sin. The verb tense that’s used here means to take **decisive action** against sin. Do it! Be done with it! Put it to death!

Not too long ago a man was trapped under a huge log that was lying on his leg. Rather than bleed to death, he cut off his leg with a penknife, made his way to a tractor, managed to get to a hospital, and his life was saved. That’s an illustration of mortification – of taking drastic action to bring about a life-saving result.

Putting to death the sinful, earthly things that lurk within us is not easy. Many times it’s very painful. It’s going to affect the way we live our lives. It’s going to affect what TV programs and movies you watch. It’s going to affect the literature you read, and the places you go for entertainment. It is going to affect your relationships with certain friends. Maybe some of you will need to break a off a romantic relationship that you’re involved in, if it’s a relationship that isn’t pleasing to the Lord.

Sometimes drastic action is required - but the RAM method really does work!

Practical Application

Let's practice the "RAM" method!

One way to "force" yourself to practice the RAM method is to get involved in Christian service. For example, I haven't been involved in a lot of sin in the last few hours. Why not? Because I've spent hours in the Word of God as I've been preparing this Talk!

The RAM method really does work, especially the "A" - aspiring to, or seeking, the things of Heaven. The more you're involved in the seeking the things of the Lord, whether it be preparing Bible studies or talks, or personal study of the Word, or helping someone who's in need – whatever it may be - the less you're going to sin!

So get more involved in Christian service! Teach a Sunday school class, for example. You will find the RAM method at work, helping you gain victory over sin. Studying to teach the class, you'll be practicing and realizing your position in Christ, and you'll be aspiring to the things of Heaven. Knowing your responsibility to be a model to your students will help you get on with putting to death your sinful habits.

The "RAM method" sounds a little trite, but it really does work - because it's **biblical**. You, too, can have **more** than forgiveness of sin - you can have **victory** over sin! That's what the Lord wants to see in our lives. Let's practice "RAM!"