

"For You Have Died . . ."

Have I? Have I died with Christ in God? The apostle Paul reminded the faithful brethren at Colossae that they were to be intently seeking heavenly things where Christ is because they had died - "*you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God*" (Colossians 3:3). This is not referring to physical death when a person's spirit departs from the body and the flesh is then buried, but a spiritual one necessary to be alive in Christ.

Death is a sobering concept - a strong word. There is such a finality with it. It entails an ending of something, a drastic change, a separation. In the letter to the Hebrews, the Spirit stated that "*it is appointed for men to die once*" (Hebrews 9:27). Thus Christ the Savior died once, sharing with man in life and in death.

In sin all men are dead - separated and alienated from God. Jesus did not partake of this death because He did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). As long as a man practices sin - walks in darkness, he is "*dead*" in his "*trespasses and sins*" (Ephesians 2:1). The ones who are dead in transgressions are not the faithful ones who have died. They are still obeying sinful lusts instead of the Son of God. Sin is reigning over them.

A spiritual dying, though, has to take place before a new life can be hidden with Christ. A definitive end and conclusive separation must occur. When death comes, it is final - not intended to be repeated. That life is halted. Everything before death is no more. Becoming a Christian - a true disciple of Christ - calls for a believer to choose a death so he may live. Jesus taught, "*He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it*" (Matthew 10:39).

Paul explained that there can be no newness of life without a uniting in the likeness of Christ's death. We cannot live with Him without first having died with Him. "*Our body of sin*" must be done away; "*our old self*" must be crucified with Jesus, who "*died to sin once for all*" (Romans 6:6, 10). A disciples' decision to die is intricately connected to his willingness to be baptized for the forgiveness of his sins. All who are baptized into Christ Jesus are "*buried with Him through baptism into death*" (Romans 6:3, 4).

Like Christ who is no longer mastered by death because of His resurrection, sin is to no longer master those "*who have died.*" Christians are not only supposed to stop sinning, they are to consider the members of their earthly bodies as dead to sin (Colossians 3:5). If I have died with Christ, if I have come to a definitive end and a conclusive separation, then I am dead to all those sinful lusts which once tempted and enslaved me. And with a new resolve I abstain from all things that are ungodly and unrighteous because God is holy.