

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE WHETHER OR NOT I BELIEVE

(REALIZE) THAT I AM EXPERIENTIALLY DEAD TO SIN

1. First of all, it is essential to sanctification that it be a fact that I have died to sin, in the sense that I am no longer enslaved to it. God through Paul has revealed to us that, having been united to Christ by the Holy Spirit, we are dead to our old bondage to the operation of the evil attributes in us. The evil characteristics of our nature still operate in us to produce sinful acts, but the operation of those characteristics no longer has mastery over our conduct.

NOTE: It is the operation of the evil characteristics ("the flesh") in me that is properly called the SIN PRINCIPLE.

It is vital to our progress in holiness to appropriate this first fact by faith, to believe it to be so because God says that it is so. Our believing it to be so does not make it so; it is so because God has revealed it to be so! And since God has told us that it is so (whether or not we know it, are convinced of it, or commit ourselves to it), we may just as well believe it! However, if it is so, regardless of whether or not we believe it, then why is it vital to our progress in holiness to lay hold of this fact by faith? Simply because if we do not believe that we are dead to the mastery of the sin principle, all efforts toward holiness of life will appear hopeless, doomed to failure from the very beginning, and motivation will be greatly weakened. After all, if I believe that I am still enslaved to the evil characteristics in my nature, so that the sin-principle still controls my life, then what is the point of attempting to please God? In my mind, failure is guaranteed! But if I believe that I am dead to the mastery of the sin-principle, then there is at least a possibility of hope for success!

2. Secondly, it is essential to sanctification that I have died to sin, in order that it be a fact that I have been made alive to God and to righteousness. God through Paul has revealed to us that, having been united to Christ by the Holy Spirit, we are now alive to a new bondservice, to the operation of the good attributes in us. The good characteristics of our nature (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, etc.) now operate in us to produce the practice of righteousness, and the operation of those characteristics now has mastery over our conduct.

NOTE: It is the operation of the good characteristics ("the spirit") in me that is properly called the RIGHTEOUSNESS PRINCIPLE.

It is vital to our progress in holiness to appropriate this second fact by faith, to believe it to be so because God says that it is so. Why is it vital to our progress in holiness to