

Romans Lesson 8 Articles

We have been baptized into Christ. Our baptism acted out our dying to sin and rising to new life with Christ. We are far too closely identified with Jesus to carry on sinning. We have died to sin. In theory, we can no more sin than a dead body can!

Of course, we still have free will. We can sin if we want to, but it will be out of keeping with our Christian character. But look at it positively: instead of letting sin dictate our actions, we are free to do right! And which master do we prefer? The only wage sin ever paid was death. But now God *gives* us eternal life. To serve him is perfect freedom.¹

I would say that one of the greatest problems in evangelical Christianity today is the pervasive influence of what we call 'Antinomianism'. Antinomianism says, 'I am saved by faith, therefore I never have to be concerned in the slightest about obeying the law.' Antinomianism says that the commandments of God have no binding influence on my conscience. That is not just a distortion of Christianity, it is a fundamental denial of Christianity. Yet this notion is commonplace in Christian circles.

Good works that follow from your conversion will not count for your justification, but if they are not there, it proves that faith is not there either. Your works don't give you salvation; the work of Jesus gives you salvation. But if you do not have works in your Christian life, you are not a Christian; you have never been redeemed; you have never trusted in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Antinomianism is the very thing Paul says is utterly unthinkable for a true believer: **By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?**

When he says that we are dead to sin, does this mean that we don't sin at all? Of course not. He makes it clear in chapter 7 that the Christian is not free from the battle with sin. But the death sentence has been pronounced upon my old nature. I have been crucified with Jesus Christ, representatively. In God's sight my evil nature is dead. My sin was put to death on the cross of Jesus Christ and my sins were paid for. I was released from the bondage to sin.²

People obviously are the slaves of the one to whom they offer themselves to obey (v. 17). Paul set forth two masters: one is sin, and the other is obedience [to God]. There is no possibility of living without an allegiance to one or the other. "There is no absolute independence for man," writes J. Denney; "our nature requires us to serve *some* master." Unbelievers may think they are free and would have to give up that freedom should they accept Christ. Such is not the case. They are servants of sin right now. In coming to Christ they simply exchange one master for another. Servitude to sin is replaced with servitude to God. The master we obey is clear evidence of whose slaves we really are. There is no room for compromise. As Jesus taught, "No one can serve two masters" (Matt 6:24). We also are reminded of Joshua's challenge to the Israelites at Shechem, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Josh 24:15).

There is a dramatic difference in the outcomes of choosing one or the other of these masters. To choose sin as a master leads to death. To choose obedience to God as master leads to righteousness (v. 16). The contrast in v. 16 is between sin and obedience. From this we may rightly infer that the essence of sin is disobedience. Sin is not simply something that we can't help doing but something we choose to do in direct violation of the will of God. It may be forgiven but it is not something that is excusable due to extenuating circumstances. The righteousness to which obedience leads is the righteousness of personal growth in spiritual maturity³

¹ Knowles, A. (2001). *The Bible guide* (1st Augsburg books ed., p. 570). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg.

² Sproul, R. C. (1994). *The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans* (p. 110). Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications.

³ Mounce, R. H. (1995). *Romans* (Vol. 27, pp. 155–156). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.