

“*[T]he Antinomians... make all sanctification to be justification... the Papists make all justification to be sanctification; therefore we would learn to distinguish these two, yet not so as to separate them.*” – **James Durham**¹

Legalism: Any emphasis upon the scriptural doctrine of sanctification which tends to minimize or redefine the scriptural doctrine of justification.

- “Sanctification involves our personal obedience to God’s law; therefore so does justification.”
- “Sanctification is by faith actively ‘working by love’; therefore so is justification.”
- “Sanctification imparts Christ’s righteousness into my very nature; therefore so does justification.”
- “Sanctification is primarily concerned with the filth and corruption of sin; therefore so is justification.”

Antinomianism: Any emphasis upon the scriptural doctrine of justification which tends to minimize or redefine the scriptural doctrine of sanctification.

- “Justification involves Christ’s vicarious obedience to God’s law; therefore so does sanctification.”
- “Justification is received passively by faith ‘apart from works of the law’; therefore so is sanctification.”
- “Justification imputes Christ’s vicarious righteousness as a legal status; therefore so does sanctification.”
- “Justification is primarily concerned with the guilt of sin; therefore so is sanctification.”

EIGHT DANGEROUS CHARACTERISTICS OF ANTINOMIANISM

1. ANTINOMIANISM DIVORCES THE LAW OF GOD FROM THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

- “When it comes to salvation, the law and the gospel represent two antithetical principles: The law only ever says ‘Do!’ (imperative) and the gospel only ever says ‘Done!’ (indicative)”²
- “The gospel has freed me from the bondage and burden of striving to keep God’s law perfectly.”³
- “The exclusive (or primary) role of the Ten Commandments is to highlight Christ’s perfect righteousness *for us*, not to define and promote the increase of Christ’s righteousness *in us*.”⁴
- “The gospel (but not the law) is a means of sanctification, since the law is a dead letter apart from the saving work of the Holy Spirit.”⁵

2. ANTINOMIANISM DIVORCES SUBSTITUTION FROM TRANSFORMATION.

- “Justification is the substance of salvation, whereas sanctification is merely a result of salvation.”⁶
- “When God’s word contrasts the righteous with the wicked (e.g. Ps. 1), it always has the imputed righteousness of Christ (not the believer’s sanctified character and conduct) primarily in view.”⁷
- “The life of a justified believer will not necessarily be more righteous than the life of an unbeliever.”⁸
- “The only righteousness I desire is the righteousness of Jesus, my perfectly obedience substitute.”⁹
- “Good works show my gratitude for salvation, but are not a necessary feature of the path to heaven.”¹⁰

¹ Recommended reading, in no particular order: (1) Samuel Bolton’s *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*; (2) John Colquhoun’s *A Treatise on the Law and the Gospel*; (3) Ernest Kevan’s *The Grace of Law: A Study of Puritan Theology*; (4) Samuel Rutherford’s *The Trial and Triumph of Faith and Christ Dying to Draw Sinners to Himself* and *A Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist*; (5) Mark Jones’ *Antinomianism: Reformed Theology’s Unwelcome Guest?* (6) The Westminster Standards.

² Gal. 3:11-12; Acts 26:18; Phil. 1:27; Rom. 10:16; 2 Thes. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17.

³ Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Ps. 119:45; Jam. 1:25; 1Jn. 5:2-3; Gal. 5:13-14.

⁴ Deut. 6; Jer. 31; Ps. 19:7-11; 119:9-12; 29; 105; Matt. 5:17-20.

⁵ Rom. 8:3-7; 13:8-11; 2 Cor. 3:6, 13-18; 4:3-4; Eph. 6:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

⁶ Rom. 6:5-7; Eph. 1:4; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Thes. 2:13; Tit. 2:14-15; 1 Pet. 2:24.

⁷ Deut. 6:24-25; 24:13; Rom. 6:18; Eph. 4:20-24; 2 Cor. 9:10; Heb. 12:11-14; Jam. 1:19-20.

⁸ Matt. 7:18-20; Rom. 6:14; 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 5:18; Col. 3:1-7; 1 Jn. (entire epistle).

⁹ Matt. 5:6 with Matt. 5:17-20; Rev. 19:8-9 with Matt. 22:11-13.

¹⁰ Matt. 7:13-14; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Eph. 2:8-10; Heb. 12:1-2, 12-14, 22-23.

3. ANTINOMIANISM DIVORCES PERSONAL ASSURANCE FROM PERSONAL HOLINESS.

- “It is legalistic to regard my sanctification as evidence of my justification.”¹¹
- “I have assurance of my salvation, not because I crucify my sinful lusts, but because I do not crucify them, but believe in Christ, who crucified them for me.”¹²

4. ANTINOMIANISM DIVORCES PERSONAL HOLINESS FROM PERSONAL EFFORT.

- “It is legalistic to actively strive against sin, exercising my own personal strength to crucify it.”¹³
- “To work out my salvation is to meditate on my justification and rest in Christ’s finished work for me.”¹⁴
- “Instead of actively cultivating spiritual graces and pursuing spiritual duties, I choose to rest in Christ.”¹⁵

5. ANTINOMIANISM DIVORCES PERSONAL HAPPINESS FROM PERSONAL HOLINESS.

- “If I truly grasped my justification, I would not mourn over my sins, but rejoice in Christ’s righteousness.”¹⁶
- “Since Christ died for my sins, I should neither feel guilty for personal sins, nor be accused of guilt.”¹⁷
- “Being spiritually united to Christ and clothed in His perfect righteousness, I am as holy as I will ever be and ought therefore to be as happy as ever.”¹⁸

6. ANTINOMIANISM DIVORCES GOD’S GOOD PLEASURE FROM PERSONAL CONDUCT.

- “My own holiness (or lack thereof) has no impact upon the love or favor of God toward me.”¹⁹
- “God considers all my sanctified good works as wretched, filthy rags and is in no way pleased by them.”²⁰
- “When God looks at me, He does not see my sin, but only His Son.”²¹

7. ANTINOMIANISM DIVORCES PERSONAL CONSEQUENCES FROM PERSONAL CONDUCT.

- “It is legalistic for believers to obey God with an eye to rewards and punishments.”²²
- “Since Jesus paid the penalty for all my sins (past, present, future), God can no longer punish me for them.”²³
- “All the OT blessings and curses are fulfilled in Christ, who merited our rewards and bore our punishments.”²⁴

8. ANTINOMIANISM DIVORCES MORAL LAW-KEEPING FROM PERSONAL CONDUCT.

- “When God’s word calls us to keep His law or speaks of blamelessness²⁵ and purity of heart²⁶ (e.g. Ps. 15, 24), this can only refer to unattainable perfection, thus pointing us to Christ’s vicarious obedience alone.”
- “Imperfect law-keeping by a regenerate, justified believer is not law-keeping at all.”²⁷

¹¹ Matt. 7:17-23; 2 Cor. 13:5; Jam. 2:17-18; 2 Pet. 1:5-11; 1 Jn. 5:13 (with entire epistle).

¹² Gal. 5:19-24.

¹³ Ps. 119:32; Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Heb. 12:1-4; Matt. 5:29-30; Lk. 9:23; Rom. 8:13; 2 Cor. 7:1; Col. 3:5; 1 Thes. 4:1-3, 9-10.

¹⁴ Phil. 2:12-17

¹⁵ Matt. 11:28-30; 18:20; Heb. 4:11-16; Rev. 3:19-20. “Shall we [ignore spiritual duties] that grace may abound?” (Rom. 6:1)

¹⁶ Jer. 50:4-5; Zech. 12:10–13:2; Matt. 5:4; Lk. 7:37-38, 47; Rom. 7:22-25; 2 Cor. 7:9-11; Jam. 4:8-10. This assumes (1) the only lamentable aspect of sin is its legal penalty; (2) Christ’s death for us will not heighten our personal anguish in offending Him.

¹⁷ Ps. 51; 1 Cor. 11:27, 32; Gal. 2:11-13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jam. 5:16; 1 Jn. 1:8-9. Guilt of commission vs. guilt of condemnation.

¹⁸ Rom. 7:22-25; Matt. 9:15; 26:38-39.

¹⁹ Jn. 14:21, 23; 15:10; 1 Jn. 3:22; Rev. 2:4, 14. We must distinguish God’s love of *benevolence* from His love of *complacency*.

²⁰ Isa. 64:6 [in context]; Ps. 19:14; Rom. 8:7-9; Phil. 2:12-15; 4:18; Col. 1:9-12; 3:20; 1 Thes. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:4; Heb. 13:16, 21.

²¹ Ex. 4:14, 24-25; 2 Sam. 11:27; Ps. 19:12; Heb. 4:13; 12:5-11; Rev. 2-3. This is true of God *as Judge*, but not *as Father*. A god who cannot see His children’s sin is as impotent as a doctor who cannot see his ailing patient’s disease!

²² Ps. 119:120; Isa. 66:1-2; Mt. 6:6, 18, 20; 1 Cor. 11:28-32; Rev. 2-3. This tenet forces Antinomians to regard the blessings and chastisements of the Mosaic Covenant as a Covenant of Works which Christ fulfilled and thereby annulled for believers.

²³ 2 Sam. 12:10-15; 1 Chron. 21; 1 Cor. 11:27-32; Heb. 12:5-11; Rev. 3:19.

²⁴ Eph. 6:1-3; Rev. 2:5; 3:19. Judicial vs. Fatherly: Lev. 26:40-46; Deut. 8:5-6; Ps. 103:13; Ezra 9:13; Rom. 9:4; Heb. 12:5-11.

²⁵ 2 Sam. 22:21-28; Job 1:18; 2:3; Ps. 19:13; Lk. 1:6; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:22; 1 Thes. 2:10; 1 Tim. 3:2; 6:13-14; Tit. 1:6; 2 Pet. 3:14. Perfect in parts, not in degrees – like an ice cube tray with water in each compartment, but none are full (2Cor. 5:17; Heb. 12:23).

²⁶ Ps. 32:2; 73:1; Mt. 5:8; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2:8; 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3; 2:22; Tit. 1:15; Jam. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2 Pet. 3:1; 1 Jn. 3:3.

²⁷ Deut. 5:10; 7:9-10; 13:18; 30:1-2; 1 Kings 11:38; Dan. 9:4; Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 2:3-6; 5:2-3; Rev. 12:17; 14:12. Shepherd Analogy.