

## **I. ANTINOMIANISM**

### **A. Antinomianism denies sanctification by making holiness unnecessary for Christians (Heb. 12:14).**

- 1. Antinomianism is the denial of the place of the law in the Christian life (it means “anti-Law”).**
  - a. Antinomianism says that we are dead to the law, not under law, etc.
  - b. But Antinomianism fails to appreciate that *we are not free from the law in every sense*.
  - c. Antinomianism says that we are either free to break the law, or that we are free to live unto God without the law guiding us.
- 2. Antinomianism comes in different forms.**
  - a. Some Antinomians teach that the Christian is still totally depraved; the Christian cannot do any good works; and that we must not expect good works from the Christian or preach good works. Such Antinomians do not like to hear the preaching of the law or moral exhortations.
  - b. Other Antinomians teach that there are different kinds of Christians: spiritual Christians who live according to the Spirit and are holy; and carnal Christians who live according to the flesh and who are unholy in life, but they are both Christians. *This is easy believism or carnal Christianity*.
  - c. These kinds of Antinomians are a plague on Christianity: they teach that a person can have Jesus as Saviour without having Jesus as Lord; that a person who makes a commitment to Jesus will go to heaven no matter how he lives thereafter (I John 2:4).

### **B. Antinomianism is a heresy which the Reformed Faith has always opposed.**

- 1. The Bible teaches that the Law summarized by the 10 Commandments is the guide for our life.**
  - a. It is true that the Law is no longer a condemning judge, nor is the law a cruel taskmaster to enslave us. In that sense “we are not under the law but under grace” (Rom. 6:14).
  - b. But we *are* under the Law as a guide to regulate our thankfulness. We need the law to determine *how* we are to show our gratitude to God (John 14:15).
  - c. We should remember the threefold role of the law: it reveals our sin and misery to humble us (Rom. 3:20); it leads us to Christ to be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24); it guides us in our gratitude (Rom. 13:8-10; Eph. 4:25-28, 6:1-3, etc).
- 2. The Bible sharply condemns the view that Christians may sin b/c they are saved by grace.**
  - a. Such a view is a denial of God’s grace which never promotes sin but delivers us from sin and promotes godliness (Rom. 3:8, 6:1; Gal. 5:13; Tit. 2:12; Jude 4; Heid. Cat. Q&A 87).
  - b. The Bible insists that God’s work of grace will always produce fruit, and that those without fruit who lead wicked and ungrateful lives are not saved at all. There are not two kinds of Christians: there are carnal (Rom. 8:7-8, 13; I Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21, 6:7-8, etc) and there are the saints.
  - c. The believers Paul calls “carnal” in I Cor. 3:1-4 are not living in gross wickedness; they are immature, and too influenced by the sinful nature. But they are “saints,” “brethren,” “babes in Christ.” Paul calls them to live in godliness, and he commands them to expel a sinner in chap. 5.

## **II. PERFECTIONISM**

### **A. Perfectionism is the teaching that entire sanctification can be and is reached in this life.**

#### **1. The most famous advocate of “Christian perfection” was John Wesley.**

- a. John Wesley’s teachings live on in Methodism, the Church of the Nazarene and some Pentecostal groups (such as the “Holiness” Pentecostals).
- b. Perfectionism teaching appeals to many because it offers a way of salvation which quickly and easily ends the struggles of the believer with sin; it promises a victorious Christian life; and it appeals to the sinner’s pride (he can elevate himself above others).
- c. Perfectionism leads to two-tier Christianity: some in the church are “ordinary Christians” and others are “entirely sanctified.” The practical effect is either despair, hypocrisy or pride.

#### **2. Perfectionism is difficult to define or describe**

- a. Perfectionism is *not* the teaching that the believer is perfectly without sin in the sense that he has the innocence of Adam, the holiness of angels or of glorified saints. Writes Wesley, “ “By perfection ... I do not contend for the term sinless though I do not object to it.”
- b. Wesley defined sin as a “voluntary transgression of a known law.” Wesley denied that sin is the corruption of the nature. Christians can live for days, weeks, years in a such a “sinless” state.
- c. This “entire sanctification is “that act of God subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement [devotion] to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect” (Nazarene Art. of Faith, 10).

**B. Perfectionism is a heresy.**

**1. The texts to which the perfectionist appeals do not teach this error.**

- a. The Bible speaks of “perfect” believers (Gen. 6:9; Job 1:1; Ps. 37:37; I Cor. 2:6; Phil. 3:15; James 3:2) but the word perfect means mature or one who is godly in every part of his life (complete). See also Phil. 3:2; James 3:2.
- b. The Bible calls us to be perfect, but this does not mean that we can be perfect. (Matt. 5:28; Heb. 6:1; II Cor. 7:1; I Thess. 5:23). I Thess. 5:23 teaches that we *will be* perfect at Christ’s Coming.
- c. I John 3:9. This verse would prove too much for the Perfectionist. It teaches that all Christians are sinless, not just some. The “sinlessness” here means that no regenerated person continues in the daily walk of practicing sin. It does not exclude frequent falls into sin (Canons V: 1-3).

**2. Perfectionism is a proud heresy**

- a. How does one become perfect? God gives entire sanctification in a second blessing. But God gives it only to those who fulfill the conditions for it: “waiting on the Lord,” “yielding to the Spirit,” spiritual preparation are required. Thus the “entirely sanctified” has reason to boast.
- b. The heresy of perfectionism leads to spiritual elitism in the “perfect” and despair in others. Some have no more struggle with sin, they say; the rest struggle on; but spiritual struggle is the normal Christian life (the experience of sorrow over sin and joy in forgiveness) (Romans 7).
- c. I John 1:8-10 is the definitive answer to all forms of Perfectionism.

**III. PRESERVATION (PERSEVERANCE)**

**A. An important aspect of salvation is that the sanctified believer perseveres in sanctification.**

**1. This is the “P” of TULIP, the last of the “Five Points of Calvinism.”**

- a. The “P” stands for perseverance of the saints: the teaching that all believers who have been made saints (holy ones) shall persevere and continue in holiness unto final salvation.
- b. The “P” also stands for preservation of the saints: the teaching that God will preserve His people in the salvation that He has given them so that no true saint can fall away into perdition.
- c. Another term is “eternal security” or “once saved, always saved” (OSAS). These terms are less helpful b/c they fail to emphasize the truth that God preserves saints who persevere in holiness.

**2. The reason for the perseverance of the saints is God’s faithfulness.**

- a. Left to ourselves we are liable to fall into any and all sins, and we would certainly perish because our enemies (the devil, world and flesh) are stronger than we.
- b. But God does not permit saints to perish. John 6:39, 10:28; Phil. 1:6; I Peter 1:5; Canons V: 8 gives at least five reasons why a falling away of saints is from God’s perspective *impossible*.
- c. This doctrine never makes us careless because God preserves us *through means*: through warnings, admonitions, threatenings, chastisements, etc (Canons V:14).

**B. The perseverance of the saints is denied by Roman Catholicism, Arminianism & Federal Vision.**

**1. Such heretics appeal to the passages which seem to teach a falling away of true believers.**

- a. Such passages teach a falling away *from a false profession*: Heb. 6:4-6 (vv. 7-9 & I John 2:19).
- b. There are many examples of apostasy in the Bible (Saul, Judas, etc) but these were never saved.

**2. The final stage of sanctification is glorification**

- a. Glorification of the soul takes place at the point of death (Heb. 12:23).
- b. Final glorification of the body takes place at the Second Coming (I John 3:2; Jude 24-25).
- c. Our glory will be perfect holiness, freedom from all sin, and the enjoyment of God forever.