



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: LESSON 193

In addition to legalism, the second heresy which has negatively impacted the church and the Christian's pursuit of holiness is the heresy of Antinomianism, which also comes in different forms.

**Antinomianism** – Like legalism, in Christian theology antinomianism is also a misunderstanding, distortion, or abuse of the law of God. The word antinomianism comes from the Greek “anti” meaning against and “nomos” meaning law, thus literally meaning “anti-law-ism” or “lawlessness.”

Antinomianism is theologically at the opposite extreme of legalism. For the Christian, where legalism elevates manmade laws to the level of the law of God, antinomianism ignores or denies the law of God.

**Free from the law of God** – In its most basic form antinomianism teaches that believers being in Christ, who fulfilled the law in their place, are now set free from the law of God and are no longer bound to obey it (Romans 6:14; 7:4, 6; Galatians 5:18). Thus they affirm that they can live as they want, and that the keeping of the law is not necessary, as long as they continue to believe and trust in Jesus.

It is true that we as Christians are no longer under the law or are free from the law, but this means that we are free from the law as a way of salvation. Sinful man cannot be saved by the keeping of the law; rather, the law convicts and condemns sinners (Deuteronomy 27:26; Romans 3:20; 4:15; Galatians 3:10-12, 21). So when Paul says that we who are in Christ have died to the law he means we have died to the curse, condemnation, and penalty of the law because Christ satisfied the demands of the law perfectly and bore its penalty fully in our place and for us. Thus we who believe in Christ are saved by faith alone and not by any works or keeping of the law (Galatians 3:1-7, 13-14, 22-24). Therefore, it is in this sense that the Bible teaches that we are free from the law (Romans 8:1-2; Galatians 4:4-5; 5:18).

But this does not mean that we are now free to do what we please even if it is contrary to the law of God. Rather, as redeemed people we now have a new relationship to the law, where we now love the law, delight in it, and desire to obey it. This has been the testimony of believers both in the Old and New Testaments (Psalm 1:1-4; 19:7-11; 111:7; 119:97-104; Romans 7:12, 22; 1 Timothy 1:8; 1 John 5:3). As a matter of fact, only those who have been regenerated and redeemed can begin to correctly understand the law of God and its purpose, to love it and to pursue it in their lives. The law of God is good and spiritual, revealing the holy character of God, and telling us what pleases Him.

Thus, we are not under the law as a condition of life, but we are under the law as a way of life (Romans 6:22). Freedom from sin is not freedom to do whatever we want; rather, it is freedom to serve God. So to say that as Christians we no longer need to obey the law is a great perversion of the teachings of the Bible. However, we need to be careful to note that we are talking about the moral laws of God, which are eternal principles stemming from and reflecting His character, and not the civil, ceremonial, and dietary laws, which were given for a specific period and purpose, which are not binding on Christians.

Even some accused Paul of teaching such antinomianism, which he rejected and condemned (Romans 3:5, 7-8; 6:1-2, 15). All who live such lives have misunderstood the grace of God (Romans 3:31; 7:4; Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16). Before His ascension in Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus commissioned His disciples to make disciples of all nations, “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” Obedience to the law of God, not its denial, demonstrates that a person truly loves Christ and is His disciple. One who is a child of God does not embrace lawlessness as a way of life (John 14:15; 1 John 3:3-10; 5:18). Thus it is clear that contrary to antinomianism, the Bible calls believers to be in practice what they are in position, to keep the law of God, to bear fruit, to daily purify themselves being conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 6:11-13; 8:29; 12:1-2, 9; 13:14; Ephesians 2:8-10; 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Timothy 6:11; Hebrews 12:14; James 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24).