

Robert Lancaster

Antinomianism

For was he, or are we indeed Antinomians, enemies to the Law? God forbid. Nay, we never were, we never could be truly friends with it, until it pleased the Lord to discover unto us the Words of this Life. The Law looked upon us as an enemy, shaking over us continually the rod of God's indignation, scourging and piercing our souls and consciences with scorpions, with menaces, with curses, with terrible and austere exactions, and that we had no strength. How then could we look upon it, but as upon a most bitter and implacable adversary? But after the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, who not according to the works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy hath saved us. After the Lord Jesus had taken the hand-writing that was against us, and nailed it to his cross, and exhibited a full satisfaction to all that the Law could demand of us, or lay to our charge; this only was able to settle us in an everlasting peace, and reconciliation with the Law. Right reckoning, men say, makes long friends; but when the creditor and debtor not only agree in their accounts, but also the debtor is able to produce a full acquittance for the uttermost farthing that was due, there can be no breach, no jarring between them. The case is ours, {everlasting praise and thanks be rendered unto the Lord our righteousness,} our acquittance is recorded everywhere in the Word of his Grace; Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. {Rom.10:4} Wherefore we are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, and delivered from the law. {Rom.7:4, 6} So that the Lord will remember our sins and iniquities no more. {Heb.10:17} For we are not under the law, but under grace; {Rom.6:14,15} which is the most constant doctrine of that apostle; it is also sealed unto us by the blood of our Redeemer, inasmuch as the New Testament of grace is in force by the death of the Testator. {Heb.9:16,17} But let them take heed of the just charge of Antinomianism, who when the law requireth a perfect fulfilling, and continuing in all things, {Gal.3:10,} will make it content with lame, imperfect performances; nay, it must accept the will for the deed, rather than they will be beholden for a full and free acceptance of wills and deeds, and all, unto the Beloved of the Lord, in whom the soul of the Lord is well pleased, and the faithful are freely accepted. Is not this to frustrate and make void the very end of a bond, to make it content with some few farthings, when so many thousands were due? Let them also take heed they be not guilty of Antinomianism, who take and leave what of the law they see good; who cut off the curse, the rigor, and all the punishment of it at one blow. Surely it is not easy to separate what God hath joined without good warrant from him. The apostle affirmeth, that whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them that are under it. He saith not something, but all whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them that are under it. So that there is never a curse in the law, which it doth not pronounce upon the head of him that is under it. And our Saviour himself saith, that heaven and earth shall pass away, but "one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law" till all be fulfilled. {Mt.5:18} Surely the curses are as much as one jot or tittle. He that should deny unto the laws of England the power to punish such offenders as are under them, might justly be thought and called an enemy to, and a destroyer of the laws of the land. But as for us, we make not void the law through faith, but establish it; we affirm that it remaineth in its full force and power, not only of commanding, but also of exacting, of terrifying, of cursing, and punishing every son of Adam that is under it, without the abatement of the least jot or tittle. And whether this be Antinomianism or no, let the church of Christ consider, and judge by the Word of Christ. He that saith this doctrine teacheth licentiousness, we are sure he is a stranger to it, and never felt the power of it in his own heart; for can anything else effectually teach to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, but

this grace of God appearing? {Tit.2:11,12} Can any man truly find and prize this pearl of the kingdom, and not sell all that was of high esteem with him before? {Matt.13:46} Is there any other reason why we love God but because he hath so freely and abundantly loved us first? {I Jn.4:19} Doth not love manifested, as truly and infallibly kindle love again, as fire kindleth fire. {Song 8:6} Nay, rather the want of the more full and pure and powerful preaching of the Free Grace of Christ is the very root and ground of the continuance, in all sensuality and profaneness, in those that are notoriously wicked. For what can men do but catch at shadows and appearances of good, such as honors, and pleasures, and profits, and transgress for a morsel of bread, whilst they know not the glory of their own durable riches and righteousness, whilst the true substance is absent or covered, whilst Christ and his benefits are seldom, and coldly, and darkly proposed? It is the true cause also of all unbelief, self-love, and slavish fear in legal professors, and of all the evil fruits that spring from these roots of bitterness. For how can they believe, when they do not hear this Free Grace preached, but rather reviled and slandered? How can they cease from self-love, and seeking their own things, whilst they see not how infinitely, how all-sufficiently they are beloved of God their Father in Christ? And how can they be otherwise, but continually invested with slavish fear, when they are kept under by the spirit of bondage, when they may not dare for fear of presumption to be assured of God's free love, and joyfully to apply Christ and his benefits unto themselves, from whom the Spirit of Adoption cometh, whereby we cry Abba Father? Or; if this assurance be allowed, it is upon such hard and high terms, that men must bring so much goodness to Christ, before they must dare to partake of him; that if a man will deal faithfully with himself, and not make lies his refuge, by making himself better than he is; he must needs be enforced to renounce all claim unto Christ, and to live in horror and despair all his days. Yea, the chief, or only cause of the weak and inordinate walking of the professors of the gospel, is not because they have received the doctrine of free grace; {for the devil labors to make men believe;} but because they have not received it so fully, so freely, and so abundantly, as it is plentifully held forth unto them in the word of the gospel. In a word, we entreat all those that are possessed with this groundless fear, that the preaching of free grace opens a way unto licentiousness, seriously to consider how contrary the divine reason of the apostle, {Rom.6:14,} is unto all their carnal reason, when he affirmeth that the cause why sin shall not have dominion over us; that is, why we shall not run out into all licentiousness, is "because we are not under the law but under grace." The prudence and wisdom of man thinks quite contrary, that if men be not under the law, if they be not bridled, restrained, and kept in by the law, they must needs run into all uncleanness with greediness; but let God be true, and every man a liar; let the foolishness of God be wiser than men. He needs no instructor or counselor to teach him how effectually to work upon men; for he knows what is in man. {Jn.2:25} Robert Lancaster {Preface to the Works of Tobias Crisp, Christ Alone Exalted, 1643}