

Grace vs Antinomianism & Legalism 2 Samuel 11:27b-12:1a and Psalm 51

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 4-28-2013

Introduction

This morning I am only going to focus on two sentences. The last sentence of chapter 11 says, “**But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.**” And then you see that when God was displeased with David’s actions, He didn’t throw David away. Even before David prayed, “Cast me not away from Thy presence, O Lord” in Psalm 51, God was showing that He had no intention of doing so. The first sentence of chapter 12 says, “**Then the LORD sent Nathan to David.**” God’s love pursued David. Despite the fact that God was displeased, God drew David to Himself. And I love both sides of that equation. Those two verses show the way that law and grace are inextricably tied together. God loves His law and He loves His grace and He wants His people to love both as well.

And I hope by the end of the sermon you will see that these two verses form a beautiful correction to both legalism (which is performance based, not grace based) and to antinomianism (which fails to see that grace was designed to move us to Christ-likeness). And I hope that this sermon will be both a caution on the books you are reading, as well as a tremendous encouragement to you. Point I will be mainly addressing antinomianism and point II will be mainly addressing the various forms of legalism. And I don’t think you could have a better context in which to do so than with David’s adultery and murder.

And I will be using Steve Brown and some of his followers in the PCA and other Reformed denominations as a foil on the first point and as an ally on the second point. Steve Brown is a provocative teacher at Reformed Theological Seminar, has written many books, and is a popular radio preacher who has had an enormous following in the PCA and other Reformed denominations. And right up front I will say that this sermon has the potential of upsetting both Steve Brown groupies as well as Steve Brown critics. Now, I hope it doesn't upset either, but rather proves to be a Nathan moment. Though I consider Steve Brown to be very unbalanced (and even dangerous), he does have a lot of good stuff to say, and he is a brother in the Lord. And so I will be using him positively in the second point, because I do believe that he exposes some things that need to be exposed.

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Phillip G. Kayser • Dominion Covenant Church • 307.N 41st Ave. Omaha, NE 68131 • 402.934.3300

I. Grace & Relationship Standards: Grace still insists that His children follow the standards of His law (11:27b)

A. What various forms of antinomianism teach. (Note that antinomianism “refers to any concept of justification which tends to marginalize or downplay the believer's duty to zealously strive after holiness (and against all sin).”

But let me start by addressing antinomianism. And I will start with a definition. Your outline has a great definition that I read this past week. Antinomianism “refers to any concept of justification which tends to marginalize or downplay the believer's duty to zealously strive after holiness (and against all sin).” This definition perfectly describes the Antinomianism that was being opposed by Luther and the other Reformers. Those Antinomians believed the doctrine of justification, but they had a faulty view of sanctification. And the modern antinomians that I have in mind have a very similar imbalance, even though they say many good things. They correctly teach that a person is justified by faith alone through grace alone and on the merits of Christ alone. However, where they go wrong is in having a passive view of sanctification that makes nonsense out of Paul’s calls to war against the flesh, to crucify the flesh, and Titus 2’s call to be zealous for good works, and Paul’s call to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. They do make reference to God’s working sanctification in us, but not to our working out what He has worked in. It is a very passive view of sanctification, and for some of them, sanctification simply amounts to reminding ourselves of our justification.

And for many of these folks, they are trying to bring comfort to the afflicted rather than afflicting the comfortable. There is a place for both. And I want to give them some credit, because even though David did not at all feel safe in his sin in Psalm 51, and even though verse 13 of our chapter shows that David had been in danger of death, there is an element of truth to this ancient error. The element of truth is that justification does indeed make the believer secure in God’s salvation no matter what sins he may fall into. Steve Brown keeps saying, "I'm giving you a pass for three sins today." And his point is not that sin is good, but that because of justification those three sins will not send you to hell. So let me first of all share where I am in total agreement with these men so that there is no misunderstanding. A truly justified sinner can never lose his salvation. David did not lose his salvation when he committed adultery. He did not lose his salvation when he covered his sin. And he did not lose his salvation when he murdered Uriah. And

legalists are extremely offended with that notion. But Scripture is clear that once justified, a person is justified forever. Because all of our sins (past, present, and future) have been imputed to Jesus, we will never have to answer for any of those sins before the Judge of the Universe in the Courtroom of heaven. Now, before a loving *Father*, an *Abba Father*, yes, we do have to answer for our sins, but we will no longer have to face the justice of God's courtroom because Jesus substituted His life for ours. And as the hymn writer said, "Christ paid the price that law could never demand twice." I love that hymn - no double jeopardy. We have no sins *to* answer for in the courtroom of heaven. They are paid for. Justice has been done. We have been rescued by Jesus from that courtroom. And we glory in that truth. Along with the antinomians – we glory in it.

In fact, let me glory in it a little bit more. Romans 8:29-30 gives a golden chain of redemption that cannot be broken. That chain starts in eternity past with God's love for all the elect who were given to His Son, then God's predestination to glory of all those whom He has so loved, His justification of His elect in the Son, and the decree to glorify those elect. And the reason that chain cannot be broken is because Paul says that *all* whom He foreknew He predestined, and *all* whom He predestined He called, and *all* whom He called He justified, and *all* whom He justified, will be glorified. There won't be a single one lost. That's what gives us our security. We are secure in the Son. When the Judge of the universe looks at people like David, He still treats them legally as being perfectly righteous because they are united to Jesus. So far so good. That's in the courtroom of heaven.

But where they go wrong is to claim that since we are legally perfect in Jesus that God by definition can only see Christ's righteousness, and therefore by definition He can't get angry with us, or be displeased with us, or be disappointed with us. As Steve Brown says, no matter what you do, "God's not mad at you... He isn't going to punish you."¹ Or as Adam Stadtmiller says,

God is not mad at you. If you are a believer, it is actually impossible for God to be mad at you. For God to hold anger towards you would mean that you are still under wrath. Simply put, if God could be mad or hold any form of condemnation towards believers, covered by the blood of Jesus, then Jesus failed on the cross.²

In one lecture Steve Brown told his students that they should go ahead and cuss sometime that day just to prove that they are not legalists. In

¹ Taken from a lecture.

² <http://www.conversantlife.com/life-with-god/god-is-not-mad-at-you>

another place, Brown said that believers should feel comfortable living in sin and even feel comfortable cussing before God because justification makes us 100% safe in doing so. Never mind that verse 13 says that David was in danger of death. But they say, no – justification means that we will never be in danger from God. God’s always just as fond of us. The idea is that we will always be dirty rotten sinners and will never find any security if we look at our actions (and he is overlooking 1 John which says we will only have comfort as we are confessing our sins and walking in the light). But in any case, he seeks to bring comfort by having Christians only focus on our justification and adoption. But is it true that God never gets angry with a Christian? No. Exodus 4:14 says, “**the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses.**” And I picked Moses because no one can claim he was an unbeliever. Was Moses secure in his justification? Absolutely. He could never lose his salvation. So why would God get angry with him? And I believe our passage explains the balance that we need to have on this subject.

B. Though we are secure before God as Judge and seen as perfect in our justification (“God sees Christ” – cf. Ps. 51:1,12,16), our relationship to God as Father (though never lost) can become distant (“sent...to David”; Ps 51:1c,4,11) – He still sees the rebellion of a child (“in the eyes of the LORD” margin; Ps. 51:4,9,12,17,19)

Chapter 11:27 says, “**But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.**” And it is a very strong statement in the Hebrew. It is an idiom that means He is highly displeased, but it is literally, “was evil in the eyes of the LORD.” And let’s look first of all at the phrase, “eyes of the Lord.” It’s common for these modern Reformed Antinomians to say, “When God looks at you, all He sees is Jesus.” As far as the courtroom of heaven is concerned, that is true. When the law comes after you to throw you into hell, it is going to see legal transcripts that say you have already paid the penalty for your sin and that you are dead and no longer exist as Mr. Sinner. You are legally a saint in Jesus. All the law sees is Jesus. But here is the point - God’s relationship to you is not simply as a Judge in a courtroom. God now relates to you as a Father, and as a Father, His eyes are attuned to anything that is dangerous in your life. In this verse, obviously God’s eyes were seeing something different than Jesus in David. That’s why David said, “**O God, You know my foolishness; and my sins are not hidden from You.**” (Psalms 69:5 New King James Version) Pretty clear, isn’t it?

Let's go back to Romans 8, which modern antinomians so frequently appeal to. I believe they are missing two things from that passage. First, Romans 8 does not conflate Judge and Father. They are two different offices and it distinguishes the two relationships. God *is* our Father, and He sends His Holy Spirit to enable us to cry Abba Father. But when we grieve the Spirit (and yes, Paul says that it is possible to grieve the Holy Spirit), God doesn't just overlook our sins because we are justified. That's to confuse justification with sanctification. And there are two opposite extremes that mess up in exactly the same way. Auburn Avenue Advocates confuse those two by speaking of progressive justification and so they are in constant danger of legalism and missing out on their security. The modern Grace Movement confuses justification and sanctification on the other end of the spectrum by talking about sanctification often as if it is part and parcel of justification, and it leads them to antinomianism. And both antinomianism and legalism are the worship of self. Auburn Avenue is trying to get the Grace Movement to stop worshipping self through pop psychology and a feel good religion. And the Grace Movement is trying to get people like those in the Auburn Avenue movement to stop worshipping self through self-effort. But the only way to avoid both extremes is through the traditional Protestant distinctions. And both movements have messed up on those distinctions.

The distinction between God as Judge *before* justification and God as Father *after* justification is a helpful one. The Father doesn't overlook the sins of His child simply because he is no longer a child of Satan. No. No. He is seeking to get rid of the remnant hurts and sinful issues that Satan produced prior to the adoption. The Father now has fatherly interests in our growth, still has requirements that we live by His new house rules, and he disciplines those whom he loves. So though we won't be cast into hell by the Judge of the Universe, God sustains a relationship of Father to us that does not put up with the kind of guff that modern antinomians claim that He does. And they are forced to claim that He does because they are overly focused on justification.

Second, they fail to emphasize a clause in verse 29 that includes our sanctification as an essential part of that golden chain. Sanctification means "We're not there yet, and God is going to do something about it." Romans 8:29 says,

Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Since it is a Golden Chain that is pulling us out of hell and into heaven, you cannot have any link in that chain broken and still be saved. If any link is broken, you will drop. That is standard Reformed theology, and to focus only on Justification and Sonship does a disservice to people who have deceived themselves into thinking that they are justified when they are not. And if I have time, we will look at some so-called homosexual Christians who use the Grace Movement theology to justify their behavior. What Romans 8:29 means is that if you aren't being progressively conformed to the image of Jesus, you obviously haven't been justified in the first place, which means you weren't called, which means you weren't predestined to glory. In other words, without sanctification, you can't claim to be saved.

Here's a word picture: our heavenly Father doesn't leave us in our messy diapers as the modern Antinomians imply. No, he pursues us, cleans us up, and matures us in Christ Jesus so that a three-year-old Christian really shouldn't be pooping his diapers too often. He might have other issues in the stages of growth of three, four, five, and up through eighteen. He's never going to be perfect, but there should be obvious growth in a new believer. 1 John 2:6 words it this way in the NIV: "**Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.**" Antinomians don't like that word "must" in the Christian life because it smacks too much of duty. And they say that freedom is incompatible with duty. And I will deal with that later, but back to 1 John 2:6, in context John makes it clear that this means that anyone who claims to abide in Jesus must keep all God's commandments. It's an obligation we still have, though we are now keeping that obligation out of love and out of a security that flows from justification. The amplified Bible brings out the various nuances of the Greek words and opens up the meaning of the passage this way. It says, "**Whoever says he abides in Him ought [as a personal debt] to walk *and* conduct himself in the same way in which He [that is, Jesus] walked *and* conducted Himself.**" And how did Jesus conduct Himself? He perfectly kept the law. So we must keep the law.

Antinomianism denies that. They deny the word "ought" in relation to a Christian. They say, "That's not freedom, and Christ has died to make us free." Never mind that James calls the law the Perfect Law of Liberty. But they say that if you must, ought, or have a duty, you are not free. Steve Brown speaks of a scandalous freedom that looks almost like antinomianism. And I say, no, not almost; it is antinomianism. His definition of freedom was the same definition used by the Antinomians. Brown says that the freedom Christ purchased must include both a freedom not to sin

and a freedom to sin. Brown groupie, Airgood, says, “We are free to sin”³ McLaine says, “If I didn’t have freedom to sin, then I would work for my salvation.” But that is a false dichotomy that fails to distinguish between justification (where his statement would be true) and sanctification (where his statement is not true). Another Brown fan by the name of Eric Guzman says,

We’re free to live [and I would point out that living is referring not to justification, but sanctification] according to God’s standards, and we’re free not to. ... That’s because our acceptability is based on faith in Jesus’ finished work, not on our goodness or lack thereof. If you dispute this, you drive a stake in the heart of the Gospel...

The scripture says, “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1). There are many who say that the freedom mentioned in that verse is freedom *from* sin. It certainly means that, but if it doesn’t include the freedom *to* sin, then it’s not real freedom.”⁴

And I could multiply many similar quotes showing that they believe we are not free unless we are free to sin. But that’s the definition of freedom used by both Antinomians and Arminians. In fact, if you pushed that definition, God could not be free because He cannot sin. Jesus called what they are talking about slavery, not freedom. He said,

“Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. (John 8:34)

Jesus says that isn’t freedom; that slavery. He goes on to say,

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:34–36 The Holy Bible, English Standard Version)

They like to quote that verse. Why do they not quote the verse before? Numerous Scriptures deny that the freedom Christ purchased is a freedom *to* sin. In fact, they say the opposite – that it is a freedom *from* sin. For example, in Romans 6, Paul says,

For he who has died has been freed from sin. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

So slavery is unavoidable – it is simply a question of whether you have a good master or a bad master. Are you a slave to sin or a slave to God? Paul goes on to say,

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have

³ <http://barneyisfat.blogspot.com/2008/04/i-have-been-re-reading-scandalous.html>

⁴ <http://themerrymonk.com/stupid-things/>

your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.” (Romans 6:7, 18, 20, 22 New King James Version)

Paul not only contradicts their views of slavery and freedom, he says in that verse that without holiness they will not be saved. It’s the same thing as the Golden Chain of Salvation.

Back to our word picture, when Jesus first sets us free, we are brand new babies, and He has not only set us free from Satan's family and into His own family, but He is also progressively setting us free from our dirty diapers so that we don’t get diaper rash and even though baby Christians sometimes don’t like being changed and squirm against God’s providence, He changes them anyway because He loves them. Will they spiritually poop again? Of course, but God doesn’t *like* the poop, and His grace keeps cleaning them up and keeps maturing them in Christ Jesus until they don’t like the poop either. As they grow up, they are still not free to put on a backpack and run away from God’s house. Contrary to what Steve Brown says, we are not free to sass God. We are His. The problem that I have with mild antinomians like Steve Brown is that they almost encourage people to stay in their dirty diapers, and as a result many people are getting spiritual diaper rash. I’ll mention some excellent things that Steve Brown has to say in a bit, but I believe he messes up on these first points. And though he is not as strongly antinomian as some historic Antinomians have been, he needs to pay attention to the warning in Jude 4, which describes people “**who have turned the grace of our God into a license for evil**” (NET). I think that is exactly what his books and his radio programs do.

So back to our text, God has eyes that are looking at David, and contrary to so much shallow rhetoric, God sees more than Jesus. His eyes are seeing a child that is headed toward deep trouble if He doesn’t intervene and rescue David. And of course, He *does* intervene and rescue David, as chapter 12 demonstrates.

And David expanded on everything we have said under point B in Psalm 51, which was written after Nathan’s confrontation. Psalm 51 shows that even though David never doubted his salvation, he felt distant from a grieving Daddy. He speaks of transgressions that needed to be blotted out to restore the relationship. That’s not referring to a blotting out of sins in justification (as many in the Grace Movement use that Scripture). No. He is already a justified saint. That is speaking about a blotting out of sins that had made God and David so alienated that God had to send Nathan – implying a distance. Verse 4 of Psalm 51 says, “**Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight.**” Notice that phrase – “in Your

sight.” What did God see in David? He saw more than Jesus. The Psalm speaks of God judging David’s sin, not as the Judge of the Universe who justifies or condemns to hell, but God judges David as a loving Father who wants the best for David – that kind of judgment or discernment. Every disagreement with a child’s misbehavior is a form of judgment – not condemnation, but judgment. Verse 8 speaks of God’s heavy discipline. In verse 9 David says, “**Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.**” It is clear that God’s “face” was seeing more than Jesus in David. And He didn’t like it. Verse 11 speaks of an alienated relationship – the Father/son relationship was not what it should be. Verse 12 shows that he lacked joy in this Father/son relationship. Verse 14 speaks of guilt. Yes, guilt. Contrary to Tchividjian and so many other Grace Movement people, guilt can be a good thing – it’s a warning signal on our dashboard that things are not good. But they say, no, guilt is contrary to grace. And I am pointing these things out because I know some of you read these antinomian books from the modern Grace Movement, and you need to have a heads up about amazing errors hidden in amazingly wonderful rhetoric. But they conflate justification and sanctification too much; they conflate the concepts of what a Judge sees legally and what a Father sees practically too much. They deny that a Christian ever needs to feel guilt. Well, the guilt of Psalm 51 is not the guilt of an unbeliever, but the guilt of a child who dearly loves his Father and feels badly that he has displeased his Father. And it was good that he felt that guilt. Yes, pastors should comfort the afflicted when it is appropriate, but God says the only appropriate thing for Nathan to do with David was to afflict the comfortable.

C. Contrary to antinomian theology, God can still be “displeased” with rebellious children and “judge” them as having “guilt (11:27b with Ps. 51:4,11,14,17,19)

And that ties in with point C - it’s not just God’s eyes that see something different than Jesus in a sterile academic sense. God’s heart is upset about what David did. And I won’t read all of the Psalm 51 verses that illustrate the word “displeased” that are in your outline. But verse 11 of Psalm 51 says that God was alienated from David by David’s actions. Fathers and children can be temporarily alienated, and David had withdrawn his heart from his Abba Father. Verse 13 shows that God wants Christian sinners turned back. Verse 14 shows that God wants David to delight once again in God’s righteousness.

This past week I read quite a few articles by authors in the grace movement. Some of authors who identify with that movement were actually right on the mark, but many of them were so focused on justification that they repeatedly describe sanctification as if it was simply reminding ourselves of our justification. For example, in Tchividjian's book, *Jesus + Nothing = Everything*, he says, "The Christian life is not about my transformation; it's about Christ's substitution" (p. 96). But as one critic rightly pointed out, "To the contrary, *justification* is about Christ's substitution, but *sanctification* is about my transformation."⁵ In so many ways they are confusing justification and sanctification every bit as much as Auburn Avenue advocates are. It's common for these people to say that God likes you just as much when you are in rebellion as when you are not in rebellion. Well, they will have to deal with Psalm 51:17 which speaks of God despising David's unrepentant heart. It is only a broken and a contrite heart that God does not despise. Now I will hasten to say that God did not *love* David any less when he was in rebellion as when he was following the Lord. But can God get displeased? Yes. He got displeased with David. Can God get angry with a believer? Yes. He got angry with Moses. Can God despise a rebellious heart while still loving that person? Yes. Psalm 51 affirms that He can.

D. Evil is still "evil" even when it is done by a justified saint (margin; also Psalm 51:1-4,9)

But point D highlights the fact that the literal Hebrew of God's displeasure is that what David did was *evil* in God's sight. Evil is still evil even when it is engaged in by a justified believer. One dictionary speaks of this Hebrew word for evil as a moral *offense* that is *unacceptable* to God – get that definition – what David was doing was an offense to God and it was unacceptable. Where some modern Antinomians think of everything we do as being acceptable to God in the Son, it is important to distinguish but not separate between justification and sanctification. Justification deals with a legal imputed righteousness credited to our account that makes us acceptable in the courtroom of heaven. It's purely legal. Sanctification deals with a practical infused righteousness of Christ that transforms His children and changes what is unacceptable behavior into what is acceptable. It's not legal; it's practical. Both doctrines are essential. And the Protestant faith has always held that justification is always followed by sanctification. But

⁵ <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=282>

because of the persistent writings of modern antinomians, numerous Christians have concluded that sanctification is an option.

Now these writers will hasten to say that this is not their intention. Steve Brown says that the only reason he is jumping on only one side of the boat is that legalists are jumping on the other side of the boat and he claims that legalism is the main problem in the church and that the boat is tipping over in the direction of legalism. So he says that he's got to be imbalanced on this side of the boat. He says that he's trying to bring correction. I hardly think that legalism is the main problem in our age, but let's assume for the sake of the argument that it is. You don't bring balance by being unbalanced; you bring balance by bringing balance. I would tell Steve to sit in the middle of the boat and tell everybody else to sit in the middle of the boat. Let them follow a balanced life by example.

What happens when you have everyone leaning over one side of the boat? The boat will either capsize or you will cause a number of people to fall out of boat. Does it happen? Yes it does. I was not shocked to see Steve Brown's books so highly recommended as "must" reading at "thegaychristian.com" website and other so-called Christian homosexual or lgbtq websites. These guys love him and they quote him. Why? Because he makes them feel comfortable in their sin. They now believe that God is fond of them just the way they are – as transvestites, homosexuals, bi-sexuals, etc. And Steve Brown can protest all he wants that he believes in sanctification and he believes in God's law and that he is not an antinomian, and my response is that I can only judge his theology by what he writes, not by what he claims he believes. And his theology is not a balanced Reformation teaching. It is antinomianism. But hey, it gives us an opportunity to look at both sides.

So let me summarize point I with three questions. First, does God only see Jesus when he looks at you? And the answer is, yes and no. As a Judge determining whether you are going to hell or not, yes, that's all He "sees" and credits to your account. You are justified, rescued from hell, given a new identity, are adopted as sons and daughters, are called "saints" and now you have God as a loving father. That's justification. The paperwork has been filled out for your adoption and it is finished. And if you doubt your adoption, yes, look at your paperwork and feel secure.

But that's not all there is to salvation. *Now* you have a relationship to work on. We don't work at anything for justification, but sanctification and relationship takes work. Works should not be a dirty word as at least some in

the Grace Movement have made it out to be. (And by the way, not all of the people in the Grace Movement hold to these issues.) Romans 2:15 pronounces this blessing: “**glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good.**” Do you want a blessing? Then don’t be passive; work diligently on your sanctification. Be systematic at it. Galatians 5:6 says that what really counts in the Christian life is “**faith working through love.**” You see, as a Father, God looks at you with a new set of eyes (so to speak). He sees what kind of sonship you are displaying and what kind of sonship that He wants you do display, and just as God saw something in David that wasn’t Jesus, He sees things in your life that aren’t Jesus, and so He patiently keeps working on you to conform you to the image of His Son. And He wants you to cooperate. That’s the historic Protestant faith. And is it still all of grace? Yes. Galatians says it is. Regeneration and justification is 100% God and 0% us. Philippians 2:12-13 says that sanctification is 100% God and 100% us. We are working out 100% what God has already been working in. But salvation from beginning to end is still 100% produced by grace.

Second question: Is God’s opinion of you any different when you rebel or when you are following His law? And the answer is yes and no. As a judge who determines whether you will go to hell or not, He will always see you as a saint, even when you have blown it as thoroughly as David did. But as a Father, God wants the best for His children, and it is possible to grieve the Holy Spirit, contrary to what antinomians imply. It is possible for God to get angry with you, just like He got angry with Moses. And the reason is that evil is still just as evil after justification as before justification. God’s law does not somehow change when we are converted. As a Father, God guarantees that you *will* outgrow the poopy diaper stage, and you will outgrow the crying and whiny stage, and you will mature more and more over your life time until you become like Job or like elders should be – blameless, but not totally sinless. And the moral “ought” of walking just as Jesus walked will become more and more of a goal just as pleasing God will become more and more of a goal. But it all flows from the safe position of being a forever-child of God.

Third question: Can you ever be alienated from God? Yes and no. No, you can never lose your salvation and be cast into hell. But yes, you can quit acting like a son and grieve the heart of your Father. You can even become a prodigal son and leave home. But 1 John denies that you can ever leave permanently if you are truly elect, and the reason is point II, that God will

pursue you if you are His elect. His grace of preservation will enable you to persevere.

II. **Grace & Salvation Security: Grace cares about us enough that God pursues us (12:1a)**

A. What various forms of legalism teach

So let's look at the legalists under point II. And there are many varieties of legalism. It's easy to point the finger at those who teach you can lose your salvation through sin. That is a particularly serious form of legalism. I have known some Wesleyans who cannot mature in Christ because they are constantly losing their salvation and getting saved again. Or they will lower the standards of God's law way down low so that they can claim that they are now sinlessly perfect. That is a gross form of legalism. 1 John says that you are a liar if you claim that you don't have any sin. Even the people that Scripture calls blameless (like Job and like the apostles) still have heart sins and those sins sometimes get expressed outwardly.

Of course, the Wesleyans will appeal to Psalm 51 where David says, **"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me,"** and they will say, "See? David sinned so seriously that he lost his salvation and he needed to be regenerated again and given a new heart all over again." And they appeal to the next verse, **"Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me,"** and they say, "See, it is possible for you to lose your salvation and to lose the indwelling Holy Spirit." But if you think about it, those verses actually disprove their theology. When David made that statement, **"Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me"** he was implying that he still had the Holy Spirit. He made that statement almost nine months after he had committed adultery and eight months after he had killed Uriah. On Wesleyan theology the Holy Spirit should have abandoned David at the point of the adultery and murder. So what is David referring to? Not justification. He was worried that he would lose the Spirit's empowering for office just as Saul had. Secondly, the next verse in Psalm 51 shows that David still had salvation. It was the joy of salvation that he was missing. It was the comfort of having a close relationship with God that he was missing. And contrary to what Steve Brown says, David should not have felt comfortable in his sins. But contrary to legalism We will see that David did not doubt his salvation. And so that is the first and most serious form of legalism.

But I want to give several quotes from two of Steve Brown's books that I think highlight our tendencies toward legalism and performance based Christianity that leaves Christians joyless. I wouldn't word myself the way he does, but I want to give credit for where credit is due. There is something nasty that he is opposing. And I can appreciate his opposition to performance based Christianity.

The first form of legalism that he speaks about is what I call bootstrap sanctification, where instead of depending upon the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit (as Galatians 3 says we should), we just brace ourselves and try harder in our own fleshly strength. And one symptom of this is that Christians totally lose their joy. In his book, *Approaching God: Accepting the Invitation to Stand in the Presence of God*, Steve Brown says, "If there is no laughter, Jesus has gone somewhere else. If there is no joy and freedom, it is not a church: it is simply a crowd of melancholy people basking in a religious neurosis. If there is no celebration, there is no real worship." (p. 198) I don't think his remedy is good enough, because it lacks power. He has said that he has quit even trying to quit certain sins because he can't do it. For example, he has an addiction that he can't lick, and so he has quit trying, and he is comfortable with his addiction. I would say that disqualifies him from office. And I feel sad for him because he is so psychologically oriented and so opposed to Biblical case law that he doesn't understand the Biblical blueprints for conquering addictions. But in any case, he has put his thumb on a problem, and that is joyless Christianity that rises from self-effort.

Second, he addresses the problem of seeing prayer as purely duty rather than heart relationship. He says, "Not being changed by prayer is sort of like standing in the middle of a spring rain without getting wet. It's hard to stand in the center of God's acceptance and love without getting it all over you." (*Approaching God*, p. 159) He is addressing the problem of Christians trying to calm their guilt by praying, or trying to earn God's favor by praying, and entering into prayer simply as a drudgery us duty. Prayer should be the joyful tapping into the power of God's Spirit, the love of God's Spirit, and giving joyfully to God and receiving joyfully from God.

The third thing that Steve labels as legalism in his book, *A Scandalous Freedom*, is the problem of hypocrisy or lack of transparency. He says, "The church should be a place where we can say anything and know we won't be kicked out, where we can confess our sins knowing others will help us, where we can disagree and still be friends. *It ought to be the one place in the world where we don't have to wear masks.*" (*Scandalous Freedom*, p. 113) I

think he is correct that there is a problem with this issue. I'm not convinced his solution is right or his insistence that people can stay in their poopy diapers all their lives is right. The solution is not more meditation on the doctrine of justification and sonship. The solution is given in Galatians 3, and it involves faith and the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit and our spiritual warfare. But he still has recognized a problem in the church.

In this next quote he deals with two issues. The first is being judgmental of Christians who are in any stage of sin, whether it is the poopy diaper stage, or later stages, or even serious sin like David's. There is a difference between judging sin and judgmentalism. And Steve also addresses the legalism of faking it that results from the former behavior. He says, "When the requirement for acceptance in any particular group is to think certain thoughts, to act in certain ways, and to fit certain molds ~ and we don't think or act that way, or fit the mold ~ we tend to fake it. We put on a mask that says, 'I'm just like you. Now, will you please love me and accept me?' I can think of hardly anything that will kill your joy and freedom more than wearing a mask geared to get others to accept you because you're acting like them." (Scandalous Freedom, p. 108) And I say, "Right on."

The next issue is where churches require unthinking obedience, or what the Westminster Confession calls implicit faith. There are some pretty controlling churches out there, and Steve speaks to this controlling approach to church life in these words: "Never again would I be so irresponsible as to, without thinking and without questioning, give control of my life to another human being. I would always remember that *others don't deserve that kind of worship and unthinking obedience.*" (Scandalous Freedom, p. 127) "You can accept truth & trust authority ONLY if the truth allows questions, and the authority allows challenge." (p. 129) Now, he says it in context with more attitude than he probably should, but I think he is on to something there. Even the apostle Paul allowed the Bereans to question his teaching and to check things out for themselves in the Scripture. That's why we have that booklet that outlines the circles of belief and liberty.

The next issue is thinking that we must win the victory rather than standing in the victory that was won in Christ. Now, I have a slightly different take on it than he does, but it is still a problem. He rightly points out, this is "...something a Christian should never forget: The battle is already over. GOD WON. It's final. There is no contest. Our side has already triumphed!" (Scandalous Freedom, p. 163) I agree. Unfortunately, his own testimonies show that he doesn't know how to claim that victory in historical

space-time experiences. It's a theory that revolves around justification. He needs to study Owen on sanctification a bit more.

The next issue is making our love conditional. Steve says, "Whenever religion becomes leverage, it ceases to be the religion of Jesus. The gospel of God's grace takes away the leverage. Why? Because, if I'm forgiven without condition, you can't make me feel guilty. If God loves me, you can't manipulate me by threatening to take away your love. [And that's the key point that I'm in agreement with him on – using the withdrawal of love as leverage. He goes on.] If God knows my secrets and doesn't condemn me, then you can't use my secrets as blackmail." (Scandalous Freedom, p. 165) He probably applies that too far, but there is some truth to that.

And I will just summarize one more point. Doubting your salvation every time you sin is to insert legalism into justification. Security in our sonship comes from understanding what our adoption papers look like, not seeing how clean our diapers are or how perfect our behavior is. And I think the first sentence in chapter 12 addresses all of these issues at least in seed form, and David's Psalm 51 addresses them more fully.

B. God's covenant with us never ends ("Yahweh") despite the fact that we have many sins (Ps. 51:1-5,7,16,18-19)

Verse 1 says, "**Then Yahweh sent Nathan to David.**" The name Yahweh is the name God uses when He is speaking of His covenant relationship with His people. It was God's covenant with David that made it impossible for God to throw David away. It is of God's very character that makes Him persevere with His people. He names Himself the covenant keeping God. And 2 Timothy 2:13 says that even if we are faithless, "**He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.**"

And you see this confidence in Psalm 51. Though David weeps over His sins and grieves over the broken relationship, he never doubts God's covenant. Instead verse 1 bases the whole prayer upon "**Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies.**" God's lovingkindness never changes, and it is because He is our Yahweh. And the multitude of God's tender mercies answers the multitude of our sins. As Paul worded it in Romans 5:20, "**where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.**"

In verse 2 David has faith that God can cleanse him from even as heinous a sin as adultery and murder. Only legalism would say, "I am too bad for God to forgive." That's legalism. Only unbelief would say, "I have

committed the unpardonable sin, so I can't ask God to forgive me." That manifestation of legalism calls God a liar when 1 John promises that "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And I have known people who have said, "my sin is an exception. Mt sin is too great." And I say, "We'll, you are calling God a liar. God said 'all sin.' If you confess that sin, it automatically means that you haven't committed the unpardonable sin because God promises to forgive every such sin confessed. All through Psalm 51 you see evidence that David believes the everlasting covenant that he is in with God. It preserves him from the legalism of thinking he is too bad to be forgiven. And we must repent of such legalism.

C. God pursues those whom He loves ("sent...to David") to turn them from the pain of sin to the joy of holiness (Ps. 51:1,12)

The second thing we see from this phrase is that God pursues those whom He loves. God sent Nathan to David. That implies distance, yes. We've already looked at that. But it also implies a pursuing God. David has wandered, and God is seeking him.

And this too hints at the overflow of God's heart that is so evident in Psalm 51. References to God's lovingkindness, tenderness, mercy, and generous Spirit show that David never doubted the love that motivated God to pursue Him. Again, only legalism would say that God's covenant faithfulness is in some way dependent upon our faithfulness to God. And I think this is where Auburn Avenue has gone wrong. As I quoted from 2 Timothy 2:13 earlier, Paul said, "**If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.**" Of course, if you are a faithless, rebellious, rebel like David, you can count on life being miserable as God heats up the loving discipline. Why? Because He remains faithful. You are still His child. Psalms 32 and 51 speak of the incredible pain that David was experiencing, and God's goal was to restore David to repentance and faith so that He could restore David to joy and restore him to love for God's law.

D. Grace seeks to conform us to God's powerful Word ("sent Nathan"; Ps. 51:6,10)

The last thing that we see in 2 Samuel 12:1 is that God's grace seeks to conform us to God's powerful Word. What did God send to David? He sent Nathan the prophet – but He sent him with inspired words; He sent Nathan with the word of God. And this addresses not only legalism, but also antinomianism. But let's just deal with the legalism. It addresses legalism in that it shows, not a dead letter, but the power of God's grace wielding the

Scripture as a sword and then later as a healing oil. And God's Word was more powerful than any two-edged sword in David's life. He had erected a covering of his sin that seemed impervious, but in one fell swoop, God's Word cut away everything and exposed David and humbled David and made him ready to come home to Father. And so contrary to legalism, we must not separate word and *Spirit* or word and *grace* or word and *power*. The Word of God is the powerful vehicle for grace's transformation. If you just take word without Spirit, all you have is law with self-effort. Legalism seeks to have self-reformation. Grace causes backslidden Christians to realize that God's grace precedes, undergirds, and finishes the good work that God has begun, but His grace uses the Word. We must approach God's law with full dependence upon grace. Nathan would draw David's attention to God and not simply to himself.

Conclusion

So next time you are tempted by antinomianism to ignore sin and be comfortable in sin, remember 2 Samuel 11:27b. And if Satan turns around and tempts you to be judgmental of other people's sins or to feel hopeless about your own sin, remember 2 Samuel 12:1a.

I would urge you to glory in the grace of your heavenly Father. Glory that grace doesn't throw the baby out with the bathwater simply because the baby is poopy. But then, neither is it surprised by poopy diapers in immature believers. Diarrhea might occasionally happen to a mature believer, but we should expect continual growth in all God's elect. And as we will see next week, God uses humans – He uses the body to be part of this loving process of maturing us in Christ. As Hebrews twice worded it:

Hebrews 3:13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called “*Today*,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 10:25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Let's avoid the self-worship of both antinomianism (that ignores sin in ourselves and others) and legalism (that trusts ourselves and judges others). Let's stand firmly in justification, and secure in Christ and depending on his supernatural grace, let us also obey the admonition of Hebrews 12:14, **“Pursue peace with all *people*, and [pursue] holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.”** Amen.

Motivations to Holiness

Kevin DeYoung posted in the Gospel Coalition website an excellent summary of motivations to holiness from 2 Peter. He says,

I see in 2 Peter alone twenty motivations for holiness.

1. We pursue holiness so that we might become partakers of the divine nature (1:4).
2. We make every effort to grow in godliness because God has already set us free from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire (1:4).
3. We grow in grace so we will not be ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (1:8).
4. We pursue Christlike character so we will not be blind, having forgotten that we were cleansed from our former sins (1:9).
5. We work hard at holiness in order to make our calling and election sure, so that we will not fall (1:10).
6. We practice these godly qualities so there will be richly provided for us an entrance into the eternal kingdom (1:11).
7. We pursue godliness because Jesus is coming back again in great power, and we know this to be true because of the glory revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration and because of the prophecy of Scripture (1:16-21).
8. We walk in obedience to Christ because those who wander into sensuality are condemned and will be destroyed (2:3).
9. We are serious about holiness because we believe God knows how to judge the wicked and save the righteous (2:4-10).
10. We turn from ungodliness because those who revel in sin are ugly blots and blemishes, irrational animals, unsteady souls, and accursed children (2:10-16).
11. We pursue holiness because sin never delivers on its promises (2:17).
12. We pursue holiness because those who live in their sin again are like those returning to slavery, returning to the mire, and returning to vomit (2:19-21).
13. We must remember to be holy so we will not be drawn away by those scoffers who will come in the last days following their own sinful desires (3:3).
14. We make every effort to be godly because the world will not always continue as it does now; the heavens and the earth are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly (3:4-7).
15. We must take Christlikeness seriously right now because we do not know when the Lord will return (3:10).
16. We pursue holiness because all our works will be exposed on the last day (3:10).
17. We pursue holiness because whatever we live for in this life will be burned up and dissolved (3:11).
18. We strive to walk in obedience and repentance because in so doing we may hasten the coming of the day of God (3:12).
19. We live in righteousness now because we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness will dwell forever (3:13).
20. We pursue godliness so that Christ might be glorified both now and to the day of eternity (3:18).

If you want to see clearly our need for effort in sanctification and if you want see why this diligent pursuit of holiness is so needed, 2 Peter is the book for you. Read, mark, learn, inwardly digest.

(See Sermon Outline On Other Side)

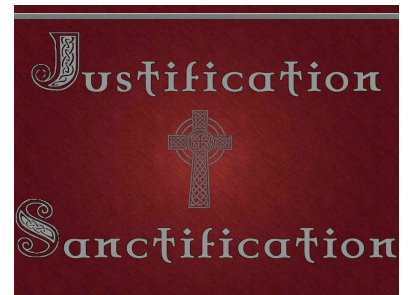
Grace vs Antinomianism & Legalism

2 Samuel 11:27b - 12:1a with Psalm 51

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 4-28-2013

Introduction

- I. Grace & Relationship Standards: Grace still insists that His children follow the standards of His law (11:27b)
 - A. What various forms of antinomianism teach. (Note that antinomianism “refers to any concept of justification which tends to marginalize or downplay the believer’s duty to zealously strive after holiness (and against all sin).”
 - B. Though we are secure before God as Judge and seen as perfect in our justification (“God sees Christ” – cf Ps. 51:1,12,16), our relationship to God as Father (though never lost) can become distant (“sent...to David”; Ps 51:1c,4,11) – He still sees the rebellion of a child (“in the eyes of the LORD” margin; Ps. 51:4,9,12,17,19)
 - C. Contrary to antinomian theology, God can still be “displeased” with rebellious children and “judge” them as having “guilt (11:27b with Ps. 51:4,11,14,17,19)
 - D. Evil is still “evil” even when it is done by a justified saint (margin; also Psalm 51:1-4,9)
- II. Grace & Salvation Security: Grace cares about us enough that God pursues us (12:1a)
 - A. What various forms of legalism teach
 - B. God’s covenant with us never ends (“Yahweh”) despite the fact that we have many sins (Ps. 51:1-5,7,16,18-19)
 - C. God pursues those whom He loves (“sent...to David”) to turn them from the pain of sin to the joy of holiness (Ps. 51:1,12)
 - D. Grace seeks to conform us to God’s powerful Word (“sent Nathan”; Ps. 51:6,10)



Conclusion