

# The Law and the Gospel

John Colquhoun (1815)

## Chapter 1b (Lesson 2)

### (review) Section 2-The law as given to Adam under the form of the Covenant of Works

The law of creation was given to Adam in the garden of Eden in the form of a covenant of works. The law of creation is not \_\_\_\_\_ to the covenant of works but it was given to Adam as part of this covenant.

*“The law of creation, or the 10 commandments, was, in the form of a covenant of works, given to the first Adam after he had been put into the garden of Eden. And it was given him as the first parent and the federal representative of all his posterity by ordinary generation. An express threatening of death and a gracious promise of life annexed to the law of creation made it to Adam a covenant of works proposed; and his consent, which he as a sinless creature could not refuse, made it a covenant of works accepted.”*

*“The law of creation requires man to perform perfect obedience and says, ‘Do.’ But the law as a covenant of works requires him to ‘do and live’; to do, as the condition of life; to do, in order to acquire by his obedience a title to life eternal. The command to perform perfect obedience merely is not the covenant of works, for man was and is immutably and eternally bound to yield perfect obedience to the law of creation though a covenant of works had never been made with him.”*

There are three main elements of this covenant: a precept, a promise, and a punishment.

#### **1. This covenant contains a precept (a \_\_\_\_\_) that Adam (and all his posterity) was to obey**

*“The law in this form comprised not only all the commandments peculiar to it as the law of nature but also a positive precept that depended entirely on the will of God...This positive precept was, in effect, a summary of all the commands of the natural or moral law; obedience to it included obedience to them all, and disobedience to it was a transgression of them all at once.”*

All true obedience is built on \_\_\_\_\_. In order for Adam to obey these commands (both natural and positive) Adam must believe that God is good. Faith was (and always is) the necessary first element from man.

*“The natural law, given in the form of a covenant of works to Adam and all his natural descendants, required them to believe whatever the Lord should reveal or promise...Unbelief, which is departing from the living God, is forbidden in the first commandment of the law.”*

*“So long, then, as a sinner, unwilling to be convinced of his sin and his want of righteousness, cleaves to the law as a covenant and refuses to accept and present in the hand of faith the spotless righteousness of the adorable Surety, that sinner continues to be ‘a debtor to do the whole law’. He keeps himself under an obligation to do, in his own person, all that the law in that form requires and also to suffer all that it threatens.”*

All humanity is under the covenant of works and one cannot get out of this covenant unless God \_\_\_\_\_ them from it.

*“For though the law in its covenant form is broken, yet it is far from being repealed or set aside. The obligation of this covenant continues in all its force, in time and through eternity, on every sinner who is not released from it by God, the other party.”*

*“The law, then, as a covenant of works, does, in the most authoritative manner, demand from every descendant of Adam who is under it perfect holiness of nature, perfect righteousness of life, and complete satisfaction for sin. And none of the race of fallen Adam can ever enter heaven unless he either answers these three demands perfectly in his own person or accepts by faith the consummate righteousness of the second Adam, who ‘is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth’ (Romans 10:4).”*

## 2. The covenant of works also contains a \_\_\_\_\_

There is a promise of \_\_\_\_\_ for obedience. Even under the covenant of works “life” is something that God chose to graciously give.

*“This promise, which flowed solely from infinite benignity and condescension in God, was made and was to have been fulfilled to Adam and all his natural posterity on condition that he, as their representative, perfectly obeyed the precept... When the Lord said to him, ‘In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die’ (Gen. 2:17), it implied, ‘If thou eat not of it, thou shalt surely live.’ ... The promise of eternal life upon man’s perfect obedience, then, flowed entirely from the good pleasure and free grace of God.”*

*“It is manifest, then, that there could have been no real merit in the perfect obedience of man nor so much as the smallest proportion between it and the promised reward. Although Adam had performed the condition of that covenant, he could not have expected eternal life on any ground except this: that God had graciously promised it on that condition.”*

*“Eternal life is made so to depend on personal and perfect obedience that without this obedience, that life cannot be obtained; it cannot be claimed on any other ground... Thus the law has become weak not by any change in itself but because men have not yielded perfect obedience to it. The reason why it cannot now justify a man in the sight of God or satisfy him with eternal life is because he cannot satisfy it with personal and perfect obedience.”*

Here some people forget that the law demands \_\_\_\_\_. Rarely is a person so proud and so self-deceived that they think they have perfectly upheld the law. But anytime we look at something we have done as a means of bringing about our justification we are relying on the covenant of works.

*“A man is to be counted a legalist or self-righteous if while he does not pretend that his obedience is perfect, he yet relies on it for a title to life.”*

*“It is one thing to be justified by faith merely as an instrument by which a man receives the righteousness of Christ, and another to be justified for faith as an act or work of the law. If a sinner, then, relies on his actings of faith or works of obedience to any of the commands of the law for a title to eternal life, he seeks to be justified by the works of the law as really as if his works were perfect. If he depends, either in whole or in part, on his faith and repentance for a right to any promised blessing, he thereby so annexes that promise to the commands to believe and repent as to form them for himself into a covenant of works. Building his confidence before God on his faith, repentance, and other acts of obedience to the law, he places them in Christ’s stead as his grounds of right to the promise, and so he demonstrates himself to be on the works of the law and to be under the curse.”*

## 3. The covenant of works also has a \_\_\_\_\_ if the precept is not perfectly performed

The punishment for violating the covenant of works is \_\_\_\_\_: spiritual, physical, and eternal.

*“In its (the law of creation) covenant form it says to every man who is under it not only ‘Do and live’ but ‘Do or die.’ This law of works has a twofold power: a power to justify persons if they yield perfect obedience, and a power to condemn them if in the smallest instance they disobey.”*

*“One single transgression has forever cut him off from all possibility of attaining life by the law. And since all have sinned, consequently, ‘by works of the law shall no flesh be justified’ (Gal. 2:16). The law of works has pronounced all the race of Adam guilty, has condemned them to eternal punishment, and has not made the smallest provision for their deliverance.”*

*“The Lord, therefore, in order to guard His grace and condescension from being despised and trampled on, annexed such a penalty to His righteous law as, if duly considered, should serve to terrify man from violating His gracious covenant... Nothing could appear better calculated to deter him from transgressing the covenant than the awful consideration that as he was already bound by the precept to perform perfect obedience, so he should, if he disobeyed, be as firmly bound by the curse to suffer endless punishment.”*