**The Marrow of Modern Divinity**

Lesson 2 – Introduction & The Covenant of Works

**Introduction – A Threefold Law**

1. Fisher presents a disagreement over the law and its relationship to the believer between the legalist Nomista, the antinomian Antinomista, and the new believer Neophytus. So they have come to the pastor Evangelista to help them in their dispute over the law.
2. So to begin the discussion, Evangelista points them and us to Romans 3:27 and Galatians 6:2 to talk about a threefold law.
   1. Romans 3:27 – “Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.”
   2. Galatians 6:2 – “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”
3. The law of works = the moral law which is summarized in the 10 Commandments as a covenant of works which requires perfect obedience to the law in order to be accepted by God.   
   The law of faith = the gospel or covenant of grace whereby one is accepted by God by faith in Christ apart from the works of the law  
   The law of Christ = the 10 Commandments in the hands of Christ the Mediator given to those who have already been accepted by God through faith in Christ, thus making the 10 Commandments an easy yoke and light burden for believers.
4. Thomas Boston puts it this way, “The law of works is the law to be done, that one may be saved (Galatians 3:12); the law of faith is the law to be believed, that one may be saved (Acts 16:31); the law of Christ is the law of the Savior, binding His saved people to all the duties of obedience.”
5. This is in harmony with the Westminster Confession of Faith which says in 19.6, “Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of law informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives; so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin, together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of His obedience. It is likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin: and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve; and what afflictions, in this life, they may expect from them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law. The promises of it, in like manner, show them God’s approval of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof: although not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works.”
   1. Romans 6:14 – “Sin will have no dominion over you since you are not under law [covenant of works] but under grace [covenant of grace].”
   2. Romans 7:4 – “Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law [law of works] through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another [law of faith], to Him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God [law of Christ].”
6. This 3-fold distinction of law is absolutely crucial not only for understanding the rest of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, but for also properly understanding all that Scripture teaches regarding law and gospel (grace).
7. The error of the legalist is that the legalist says the believer is under the law of works as a rule of life. The legalist believes that doing good causes God to bless a person both in soul (salvation) and body (material). Evangelista is going to argue that believers are not under the law of works as a rule of life. And here is where confusion can set in. The 10 Commandments can either be in the sense of the law of works OR in the sense of the law of Christ.
8. The error of the antinomian is that the antinomian says that the believer is not under the law of Christ as a rule of life. The antinomian believes that works have no part whatsoever for a person who has been saved by faith. Evangelista is going to argue that believers are under the law of Christ as a rule of life.

**The Covenant of Works – The Broken Covenant of Works**

1. The covenant of works (aka “law of works”) says “Do this, and you shall live” (Lev. 18:5) as well as the converse of that statement, “If you do not do it, you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17). Life and death is determined by obedience or disobedience to the law. All it takes to deserve death is to break the law at any point one time.
2. This covenant was made with Adam in the garden of Eden. The Westminster Confession of Faith 19.1 says, “God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which He bound him and all his posterity to person, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience, promised life upon the fulfilling [of it], and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it.”
3. So even though the word for “covenant” does not appear in Genesis 1-2, all of the elements of a proper covenant are there: 2 parties, the promise of blessing for keeping covenant, the threat of punishment for breaking covenant. Adam and Eve accepted the terms of the covenant in that Eve repeats to the serpent the stipulations of the covenant (although she adds her own qualifications to it) in Genesis 3:2-3.
4. And in this one law of the covenant of works that Adam and Eve had, they had the whole of the 10 commandments in summary. Evangelista says, “Adam hear as much of the law in the garden, as Israel did at Sinai; but only in fewer words, and without thunder.”
5. But one question that arises is, “Why did God make a covenant with Adam when Adam already owed perfect obedience to God even before the covenant of works?” Why is the covenant necessary, in other words, since God is the Creator and man is the creature?
   1. Since man was created as a rational creature with the ability to make choices, it was proper for a covenant to be made so that man could serve God in a rational manner.
   2. It reminded man that even though God gave him dominion over all the earth and its creatures, he was still under the authority of the sovereign Lord.
   3. It showed man that he had nothing by rights, but everything by divine gift.
6. But of course, Adam fell and did not continue in that happy and holy estate of divine innocence in the garden. So, Adam broke the covenant of works which resulted in immediate spiritual death and later physical death. The same is true for all of his offspring. We are conceived in a state of spiritual death and later we die physically. We are all born as breakers of the covenant of works. Romans 5:12 says, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” Luther says that because of Adam’s sin, every infant born in this world is entirely in the power of sin, death, Satan, hell, and everlasting damnation. In Adam’s sin, both he and the rest of mankind lost original goodness and received a nature prone to all kinds of wickedness.
7. Though this offense may seem small to us, it was exceedingly great because:
   1. God’s dominion and authority in the commandment given was violated
   2. God’s justice, truth, and power in the threat of punishment was despised
   3. God’s pure and perfect image in man which consisted of righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:24) was utterly defaced
   4. God’s glory which should have been brought to Him by the creature was lost and spoiled
8. Because of this great offense against God, Adam became God’s enemy and there was no hope of renewing the covenant on Adam’s part. He was no longer capable to perform the conditions of the covenant that the covenant required. In his sin, Adam (and all of us descended from him by ordinary generation) now had a 2-fold debt due to God’s justice:
   1. He had to make satisfaction for the sin he had committed
   2. He had to be perfectly and perpetually obedient
9. Adam is unable to make satisfaction because since the offense was against an infinite and eternal God, Adam was required to make an infinite and eternal satisfaction which he was unable to do as a now fallen creature.
10. Adam was able to be perfectly and perpetually obedience because by his sin he was now unable to be obedience to God because his will was made evil, his affections/desires are now disordered, and he has no inclination toward obeying God. Evangelista says, “The very truth is, our father Adam falling from God, did, by his fall, so dash him and us all in pieces, that there was no whole part left, either in him or us, fit to ground such a covenant upon.”
11. So because of the Fall, none of us are now able to keep the covenant of works arrangement. Evangelista says, “The law requires that man ‘love the Lord with all his heart, soul, and strength (Deut. 6:5; Matt 22:37 // Mark 12:30 // Luke 10:27); and there is not the holiest man that lives but he is flesh [sinful] as well as spirit [righteous] in all parts and faculties of his soul, and therefore cannot love the Lord perfectly.”
12. As an older Reformed commentator puts it, “The law was Adam’s lease when God made him a tenant of Eden. When Adam did not keep that lease, he forfeited Eden for himself and for all of us. God read a lecture of the law to him before he fell, to be a hedge to keep him in paradise. But when Adam would not stay within the boundaries set by the law, that same law became the flaming sword at Eden’s gate, to keep him and his posterity out.”
13. But this covenant of works is still binding upon all of Adam’s posterity because the Lord has not released man from his obligation to render perfect and perpetual obedience to Him. Evangelista says, “Though strength to obey be lost, yet man having lost it by his own default, the obligation to obedience still remains. In short, Adam and his offspring are no more freed from their duties because they have no strength to perform them than a debtor is freed from his debt because he lacks money to pay it.”
14. So, this is what the law of works or covenant of works is. God made Adam happy and holy, placed him in paradise, and made a covenant of works with him that promised life upon obedience and death upon disobedience. Adam disobeyed as our federal/covenant head and has plunged himself and all of mankind into sin, misery, condemnation and death. Though the terms of the covenant of works are still binding upon all people throughout history, we are now unable to keep the terms.
15. Thomas Boston points out, “Many delude themselves into thinking that they can recover themselves by keeping the covenant of works. Such people are prompted by their ignorance of the law’s high demands, their own utter inability, and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ.” This is the way of the legalist.

Scripture: Unbelievers Believers Believers

Legalists: Believers --- ---

Antinomians: Unbelievers Believers ---

Neither the Legalist nor the Antinomian properly understands the continuing role of the law in the life of the believer. The Legalist does not properly understand the law of works, the law of faith, or the law of Christ. The antinomian falls short of Scripture in not understanding the law of Christ.