**The Marrow of Modern Divinity**

Lesson 10 – The Law of Christ, Pt. 3

**The Distinction of the Law of Works & the Law of Christ Applied to 6 Antinomian Errors**

1. The first error of the Antinomian is to use Romans 6 & 7 to say that believers are not under any law whatsoever, but are altogether delivered from it.
   1. Romans 6:14 – “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”
   2. Romans 7:6 – “But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.
   3. The sense of these 2 passages for believers is that we are not under the law as a covenant of works. Christ has freed us from the law in this sense. However, we are under the law of Christ as members of the covenant of grace with Christ as our mediator. 1 Corinthians 9:21 says, “to those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ)…” And again in Romans 3:31, Paul writes, “Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.” So here we see Paul can use the word “law” in different senses: 1) In one verse Paul can talk about the law as a law of works, and 2) in another verse Paul can talk about the law as the law of Christ.
2. A second teaching of antinomians is that a believer does not commit any sin based on misunderstanding 1 John 3.
   1. 1 John 3:6 – “No one who abides in Him [God] keeps on sinning;…”
   2. 1 John 3:9 – “No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in himl and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.”
   3. It is true that regarding the law as a covenant of works, we do not sin because we are no longer held captive by the law in that sense and are no longer bound to it. So even though believers still sin, Evangelista says “they do not transgress the law of works.” So, when we sin, we do not sin against the law of works, but we sin against the law of Christ. So, John writes in 1 John 1:8, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” and James writes in James 3:2, “For we all stumble in many ways…”
3. A third error of antinomianism is that the Lord cannot see any sin in a believer.
   1. Numbers 23:21 – “He [God] has not beheld misfortune in Jacob, nor has he seen trouble in Israel…”
   2. Song of Solomon 4:7 – “You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.”
   3. We cannot sin against the law as a covenant of works and since we cannot sin against the law in that sense, God cannot see sin in a believer as a transgression of the law of works. However, as sinning against the law of Christ, God most certainly sees our sin. Hebrews 4:13 states, “And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”
4. A fourth error of the antinomians is that the Lord is not angry with a believer for his or her sins.
   1. Isaiah 54:9 – “This is like the days of Noah to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you, and will not rebuke you.”
   2. If we cannot sin against the law as a covenant of works and God cannot see sin in a believer as a transgression of the law of works, then of course He is not angry and does not chastise a believer for sins considered as a transgression of the law of works. Isaiah is talking about God’s punishing wrath upon sin which punishment has been taken up by Christ for us so that such wrath cannot abide upon believers. However, God as our Father can be temporarily angry toward us. Psalm 106:40 says, “Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against His people and He abhorred His heritage;” David angered the Lord by his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah. Moses says in Deuteronomy 1:37 that the Lord was even angry with him because of the sin at Meribah and the consequence was that Moses did not get to enter the Promised Land. But neither Moses or David experienced or will experience eternal death. Their souls are not in hell awaiting judgment but are in heaven awaiting the resurrection of the body.
5. A fifth error of the antinomians is that they teach the Lord does not chastise [discipline] a believer for his sins.
   1. The Lord does not chastise us according to the law of works because that chastisement is eternal death and Christ has freed us from that through His death. The Lord disciplines us not as the Judge of the earth, but as our Heavenly Father for our sins against the law of Christ. It is not eternal death, but temporary consequences/punishment/testing in order to bring us back to repentance and reconciliation with God and one another. David endured consequences for his sin with Bathsheba – the death of the child, strife within his household, etc. Because of David’s census in 2 Samuel 24, plague came upon Israel for 3 days. Paul writes of the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11 that because they profaned the Lord’s Supper “many of you are weak and ill, and some have died” (v.30) .
6. Finally, the antinomians also teach that a believer has no reason to confess his or her sins, or beg pardon at the hands of God for them.
   1. Evangelista writes, “If the Lord is not angry with a believer and does not chastise him for his sins as transgressions of the law of works, then a believer has no need to confess his sins to God, crave pardon for them, mourn over them, or humble himself for them as transgressions committed against the covenant of works.”
   2. But because our sins transgress the law of Christ as the covenant of grace, which indeed angers the Lord and causes Him to discipline us for our sins against the covenant of grace, then as believers we have reason to confess our sins to the Lord, beg pardon for them, fast, mourn, and humble ourselves for transgressing the law of Christ.
7. The crux of the antinomian in all of these cases and whatever else errors it may hold is that it fails to distinguish between the law of works (10 commandments toward unbelievers) and the law of Christ (10 commandments toward believers saved in Christ). The Antinomian fails to distinguish between the various ways that Paul and other Scripture writers talk about the law. They see the word “law” and make it absolute, rather than try to distinguish among its various senses, whether it is being used in the sense of “law of works” (covenant of works) or in the sense of “law of Christ” (covenant of grace). All 6 of these claims of the antinomians are true if we consider the law as a covenant of works. However, all 6 claims are false if we consider the law as a covenant of grace and the law of Christ.
8. So how can we apply this distinction practically in our daily lives?
   1. Believe that you are no longer under the law as it is the law of works. Therefore, do not hope for what the law of works promises, and do not fear what the law of works threatens. The law of works promises justification and eternal life to all who obey it perfectly. The law of works threatens condemnation and eternal death for any point of departure from it. Believe you are dead to this law and therefore cannot yield any obedience to it. Jesus Christ has purchased your justification and eternal life by HIS perfect obedience to the law of works and freely gives both to you. Live in peace because in Christ you do not have to fear the penalty of the law of works for you are no longer under it. Evangelista writes, “Because the law of works is dead to you, you have no more reason to fear its threats than a living wife has to fear the threats of a dead husband.”
      1. Acts 13:39 – “And by Him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.”
      2. John 6:47 – “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.”
      3. Romans 8:1 – “There is therefore now no condemnation [from the law of works] for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
      4. John 11:26 – “Everyone who lives and believes in me [Jesus] shall never die.”
   2. Believe that you are under the law as it is the law of Christ. Therefore, hope for what the law of Christ promises in the case of your obedience, and fear what the law of Christ threatens in case of your disobedience. The law of Christ promises the comfort and enjoyment of communion with God and Christ in this life as well as freedom from any spiritual or physical affliction that would come as a consequence of disobedience of the law of Christ. The law of Christ threatens in case of disobedience a lost sense of close and sweet communion with God in Christ and an exposure to the temporal afflictions that come as the fruits and effects of transgressing that law of Christ.
      1. 2 Chronicles 15:2 – “The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you…”
      2. James 4:8 – “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.”
      3. Psalm 81:13, 16 – “Oh, that my people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways….He would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”
      4. WCF 11.5 – “God does continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified; and, although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may, by their sins, fall under God’s fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of His countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.”
      5. Peter wept after denying Jesus 3 times. David’s family became disorderly because of his sin. We can lose our internal sense of God’s love, peace, and joy. Our conscience may keep us awake at night. God may remove His hand to let us suffer from the temptations and attacks of the devil (Lk 22:31-32). And sometimes God punishes us for one sin by being allowed to fall into another sin.
      6. Thomas Boston notes, “God nowhere threatens to cast believers in Christ into hell, yet He both threatens and often executes the casting of a hell into them, for their provocations.”
      7. God threatens us in the law of Christ with temporal or spiritual afflictions, or both at the same time. But He does this out of a fatherly love towards us in Christ so that we see our sins and are grieved by them and come back to Him like the prodigal son or as Lamentations 3:40 says, “Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord!”
      8. WCF 17:3 – “Saints may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and, for a time, continue therein: whereby they incur God’s displeasure, and grieve His Holy Spirit, come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.”
9. At this point in the book, we find some of the most comforting words put in the mouth of Evangelista:   
   “the Lord cannot, by virtue of the covenant of works, require any obedience of you, give you an angry look, or threaten and afflict you for any disobedience to that covenant.  Therefore, whenever your conscience tells you that you have broken any of the 10 Commandments, do not think that the Lord looks upon you as an angry Judge, armed with justice against you.  Do not think that He will execute His justice upon you according to the penalty of the covenant of works, to un-justify you, deprive you of your heavenly inheritance, or give you over to hell-fire.  Instead, assure yourself that your God in Christ will never disinherit you nor divorce you. In fact, as far as your justification and eternal salvation are concerned, He will never love you the slightest bit less because of the sins that you still commit, no matter what they are.  For this is a certain truth:  just as no good either in you, or done by you, moved God to justify you and give you eternal life, so also no evil in you, or done by you, can move him to take it away from you once it has been given. And although the Lord does express his anger towards you in chastising and afflicting you, you should not imagine that your afflictions are penal, as if proceeding from hatred and vindictive justice as payment for your sins and the beginning of hell’s eternal torments.”
10. So, we respond to God’s chastening hand as children, not as criminals. It grieves us that we cannot keep God’s commandments perfectly as we desire to do (Romans 7). It is our delight to do the will of God (Psalm 40:8; John 14:15; 1 John 5:3), and when tempted we say just as Joseph said, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9) And when we do sin, we know that God’s fatherly chastisement is meant to purge us more from our sinful corruption and draw us even closer to Him as Jesus Christ the righteous One advocates for us with the Father (1 John 2:1).