

The Law of God & the Christian

–Lesson 7–

- I. *What is the law of faith?* It is the covenant of grace, or *the gospel*, the most joyful tidings ever made known to man (Rom 1.16-17). Foreseeing man's fall before creation, God purposed, in His eternal decree, to send His Son Jesus Christ into the world to deliver fallen man (2Tim 1.9; Eph 3.8-11). In time He promised it (Gen 3.15; Rom 1.1-2) and in the fulness of time He performed it (Gal 4.4-5).
- II. *Antinomista*: How are we to think of God's *eternal purpose* to send His Son into the world?
 - A. It has often been framed anthropomorphically as a conflict between God's attributes (Hos 11.8).
 1. God's *Justice* stood up and said, "Man has sinned and therefore man must die," and so called for the condemnation of a sinful and cursed creature. But God's *Mercy* pleaded that man be pardoned and reconciled to God. Justice replied that man could not be pardoned as He must pay and satisfy the judgment of God.
 2. Therefore *Wisdom* became an umpire and devised a way to reconcile them. It concluded that before man could be reconciled two things had to be done: 1) God's justice must be satisfied, and 2) man's nature must be repaired.
 - a) And these two things needed to be done by such a middle and public person that had both *zeal* towards God that He might be satisfied and *compassion* towards man that he might be repaired; such a person who could take man's guilt and punishment upon himself and satisfy the justice of God and yet have such a fullness of God's Spirit and holiness in him that he might sanctify and repair the nature of man; and that this person could be none other than Jesus Christ, one of the Three Persons in the blessed Trinity.
 - b) And therefore Jesus Christ, by His Father's ordination, and by His own voluntary offering, and by the Spirit's sanctification, was the only one fit for the business of redeeming lost man.
 - B. This wise and eternal purpose of redemption took the form of a covenant or mutual agreement between God the Father and God the Son (called the Covenant of Redemption), that if the Son would make Himself a sacrifice for sin, then He should "see his seed, prolong His days, and the will of the Lord would prosper in His hand" (Isa 53.10).
 1. In Ps 89.19, the mercies of this covenant between the Father and Son are set forth under the type and shadow of God's covenant with David. Compare Ps 89.19-20 with Heb 10.5-7.
 2. Thus Christ assented to the Father's will and struck hands with God from everlasting to take on man's flesh and name and to enter in his place under the Law, to do all that was required of man and to pay all that was owed by man (Gal 4.4-5; Heb 8.22). By committing to be man's *Surety*, Christ was required to meet the conditions of the covenant of works which man lay under. Having met it on man's behalf, He is now *the end* of the law for all who believe in Him for salvation (Rom 10.4).
 3. Thus *Justice* was satisfied, as well as *Mercy*, by the Lord Jesus Christ. And God laid *all* that was owed on Christ (Isa 53.6; Ps 89.19), protesting that He would not deal with us, nor so much as expect any payment from us, so rich was His grace, Isa 53.10, 12.
 - C. Thus the Son of God entered into the same *covenant of works* that Adam did, in order that He might deliver believers from it. He was content to be under all its commanding authority, and

all its revenging authority, in order that He might free them from the demand and penalty of it.

1. Therefore Adam is said to be a *type* of Christ and Christ is said to be a *Second* Adam, Rom 5.14; 1Cor 15.47. Adam had all the sons of men born into the world included in him, while Christ had all the elect of God included in Him, Isa 53.8; Jn 10.26-29; Eph 1.4.

D. In sum we see that, being willing to show His *mercy* to the fallen and to maintain the authority of His law and *justice*, the Lord, in *wisdom*, took a course that best manifested *both* His mercy (to the elect) and His justice (to the reprobate). The Son of God entered into covenant with the Father to become the elect's *Surety* and therefore fully liable for man's obligations.

1. God's *justice* could not abide man, because he stood guilty of sin.
2. And God's *holiness* could not abide man, because he stood unclean and defiled by sin.
3. But God's *mercy* went out to man, because God is compassionate and merciful.
4. Therefore God's *wisdom* devised a plan whereby His Son, as man's *Surety*, would pay both the debt of man's punishment and the debt of man's obedience as well as repair the image of God in man by His Spirit in order that *mercy* might be preeminent, Ps 130.4; Ex 34.6-7.

III. *Antinomista*: When did the Lord promise to deliver fallen man?

A. On the very day man sinned, God immediately promised His grace to fallen man, Gen 3.15.

B. It was because Christ undertook to satisfy the covenant of works on behalf of the elect that God comes into the Garden in Gen 3.15 to establish a covenant of grace, in which He announces that He will accept satisfaction from a Surety, provide the Surety Himself, and give it all to His people freely for His sake.

1. The promise of a seed to crush the serpent's head was the gospel preached to our first parents. And it remained the only comfort of Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, and the rest of the godly fathers, until the time of Abraham (WCF 8.6)
2. God covered His people's nakedness with the skin of animals to signify that their sin and shame were covered by Christ's righteousness and the animals were offered up in sacrifice for their sins.

C. What did Adam and Eve (and the church till Abraham) understand by the gospel promise?

1. That man's restoration unto the favor of God was not to be effected by man himself and his own works, but by another. —Note that our first parents are not sent by God back to the covenant of works, as if they may try again; but are directed to trust in a new covenant in which their salvation will come by another.
2. That this Saviour was to be incarnate.
3. That He would suffer.
4. That by His suffering He would make a full conquest over the devil and destroy his works and so recover the captives out of his hand. —This encounter was on the cross; there Christ treaded on the serpent and crushed its head by the bruising of His heel (i.e. humanity).
5. That he should not be held by death, though the serpent's power should be broken irrecoverably (since only his heel would be bruised, while the serpent's head would be crushed).
6. That the saving interest in him and his salvation, is by faith alone. They must believe the promise and appropriate its hope for themselves since its blessings were only revealed then by a promise and not yet by a performance.

**Next week: We'll learn how the promise of the gospel (the covenant of grace) was renewed to Abraham and Israel.