

From Your Pastor

A Study of the Shorter Catechism

Question: What special act of providence did God exercise toward man in the estate wherein he was created?

Answer: When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death. (Gen. 2:17)

Scripture memory: *"But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them." (Gal. 3:12)*

An explanation: Our God and Creator voluntarily condescended to His creatures to enter into a covenant with us. Simply stated, a covenant is a mutual agreement and engagement (more permanent and binding than what we call a contract), between two or more parties, to give or do something. There are two primary covenants God has made with man: **"The Covenant of Works"**, and **"The Covenant of Grace"**.

The Covenant of Works was made between God and Adam as representative and covenant head of the whole human race in his estate of innocency. In this covenant, life and happiness with God was promised to Adam and all those he represented as covenant head, if he was to perfectly and personally obey God's commandments. Death was threatened as a consequence of his disobedience: *"...In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die"* (Gen. 2:17; cf. Rom. 6:23). Because Adam sinned, it plunged the whole human race into sin and rebellion against God: *"...Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned..."* (Rom. 5:12). Now, a sinner can never gain life and righteousness through obedience to this covenant: *"Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them."* (Gal. 3:10; cf. 3:12, 4:21).

But God was gracious and offered to man the Covenant of Grace, whereby His own Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, would take upon Himself man's nature (Heb. 2:11-16; Phil. 2:6-8), to do the commandments and live by them (Gal. 3:12), and die under the curse that sinful man brought upon himself: *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us"* (Gal. 3:13). Where Adam failed the covenant as representative head, Christ, the Second Adam, perfectly kept the covenant by obeying God's perfect law, on behalf of sinners. As Romans 5:18-19 teaches: *"...As one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so **one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.** For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, **so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.**"* Let us thank God that we are heirs of a better covenant! *"Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises"* (Heb. 8:6). ***"The righteous shall live by faith."*** (Gal. 3:11).

A Prayer: Thank you, Lord and Father, that you sent Jesus Christ to keep your commandments perfectly for us, as our Covenant Head and Kind King, and He is the *"one who does them and shall live by them"* (and has, **for us!**); He is the one who said: *"I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart"* (Psa. 40:8). Jesus' perfect righteousness has been imputed to us by faith—you are holy and just in upholding your perfect law and punishing sin, but also you are the magnificent and glorious justifier of all who believe in Christ Jesus! (Rom. 3:21-26). Thank you, dear Lord, that we are under a "better covenant" that is established on better promises because we have a better Mediator! (Heb. 8:6).

In Christ's love,
Pastor Biggs

"But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation say continually, "Great is the LORD!" As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!"

- Psalm 40:16-17