

understand the difference between these two covenants. He contrasts faith and works in terms of wages: It's not considered a gift when you are paid for your wage. But if you receive grace by faith, it's not wage you're given but a free gift! This is the essence of the difference between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

Discussion Questions

- Are there any elements of grace in the covenant works, or any elements of works in the covenant of grace?
- In your own words, explain the difference between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

Day 5 – Review Q&A and recite memory verse

Those who are born again still can break God's commands, but now have a new heart with the ability and desire to obey His commands. We noted before that we do not believe that sinlessness is attainable this side of heaven, but as it says in 2 Corinthians, we make it our aim to please Him. The newness of the new covenant is that the covenant members have the ability to keep God's law. Just like Adam and Eve before the fall, those who are in the new covenant now have both the desire and ability, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to obey God. This makes it a superior covenant, as it says in Hebrews 8:6, "Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant." The wonderful promise of the new covenant is that it would be not "like the covenant I made with their fathers...the covenant that they broke." God promises this: "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Jeremiah 31: 31, 33. In Ezekiel 36 we read God will give a new heart and a new spirit to those in the new covenant. Those who trust in Christ and have been made righteous by faith now have a new heart. This new heart has the desire to live in God's ways and obey His commands.

Discussion Questions

- Is there evidence of a "new heart and a new spirit" in your life?
- What are some of the benefits of the new covenant that make it distinct from the old covenant?

Baptist Catechism

Family Worship Guide



West Oaks Baptist Church

(in preparation for Sunday, December 17th, 2023)

Baptist Catechism Question #15

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

A: *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 pain of death.*

Suggested Memory Verse

Genesis 2:17 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Day 1 – Review Q&A and recite memory verse

If you've ever read the book of Judges, there is a familiar refrain throughout the book. If you haven't, this is a phrase that pops up several times, and it's never good when it does: "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." The time between the death of Joshua and reign of King David was a tumultuous time. The book of Judges describes this period as a time of warfare, oppression, and a pattern of sinful rejection of God's law by His people. God gave His people laws to keep them safe and bring them happiness. He provided laws that taught them to keep away from idolatry and worship God according to His ways. Israel rejected God's law, and things went bad for them! But did you know that God made man with the ability and desire to obey his commands? Ecclesiastes 7:29 says that "God made man upright." So, when God spoke to Adam and Eve in the Garden and commanded them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he wasn't giving them an impossible task. In fact, God gave Adam and Eve every tree in the Garden of Eden to enjoy, save one! God's command was for their good and for their protection. God's command was a blessing that would allow Adam and Eve to flourish, exercising dominion over the created world, while in submission to God's rule. And for a time, it pleased man to obey God's command.

Discussion Question

- Does God's law sometimes feel like a burden to you? Do you ever envy people who don't care for God's laws?
- Do you see God's commands as a blessing, protection, and benefit for your life?

Day 2 – Review Q&A and recite memory verse

A funny story is recounted in Charles Spurgeon's autobiography. At a conference there was a preacher who was teaching a doctrine known as "sinless perfectionism." The teaching states that it's possible to reach perfection in this life where a Christian no longer sins. Rather than engage the man in a doctrinal debate, the following day Spurgeon poured a pitcher of milk over the preacher's head, sending him into a fit of rage. It was clear that the man was anything but sinless! We sin because it's a part of our nature. However, Adam and Eve were created upright, as we discussed in the previous day's catechism devotional guide. God created man with the ability to obey, as well as disobey. God offered Adam a choice, a covenant that would result in life if obeyed. God told Adam, regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, "In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die," Genesis 2:17. The death that resulted in man's disobedience was his spiritual death. That death was also passed on to his offspring. It's only through being born again that we can overcome the spiritual death inherited from our father Adam. Even those who are born again will wrestle to overcome our sinful nature until God delivers us from our sinful state and brings us into eternal glory. Romans 6:6 says, "We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin."

Discussion Questions

- Is God's law difficult to obey? Why or why not?
- Describe the process of growing in holiness and learning to say "no" to sin. What makes this possible? Does your life reflect a growth in holiness and overcoming sin?

Day 3 – Review Q&A and recite memory verse

God's special act of providence was to enter into a covenant with Adam. In the book of Genesis we don't read the word "covenant" in the text of the first few chapters, but it's clear that God bound Adam to a covenant. Some theologians have argued that Adam's state at creation was perfect, and that no covenant was held out to Adam whereby he could improve his position. The book of Romans however makes the covenant that God made with Adam even more clear for us by speaking of Adam as a covenant head. In all covenants in the Bible, there is one person who embodies the agreement that God makes with a people. Paul states that Adam was the representative head of all born after him. And because Adam sinned, sin was introduced to the whole human race. Therefore, every human naturally born to a man and a woman is born guilty of the sin of Adam. The covenant that God made with man was an act of grace. Hence, according to the catechism question it's called a "special act of providence." As a creature, Adam owed allegiance and worship to God. Isaiah 44:21 says "Remember, O Israel, for thou art my servant, I have formed thee." Just like the people Israel, by rights, Adam belonged to God. God, in an act of sheer grace, offered a reward to Adam for obedience: Eternal life.

Discussion Questions

- Do you see the elements of covenant in Genesis chapters 2 and 3?
- In your own words describe the covenant God made with Adam. What makes the covenant an act of grace on God's part?

Day 4 – Review Q&A and recite memory verse

While we did note that God is gracious in establishing any covenant at all, there is a major difference between the new covenant that Christ establishes, and the covenant offered to Adam. Galatians speaks of the distinction this way: "And the Law is not of faith: but the man that shall do those things, shall live in them." Galatians 3:12. God offered to Adam in the covenant of works the opportunity for eternal life on the condition of his perfect obedience to God's command. Should Adam have obeyed, it is supposed that he would have attained eternal life, being free from the risk of falling into sin for himself and his posterity. This is contrasted with the covenant of grace. In the covenant of grace, eternal life is conferred based on faith, not of works. It's Christ, who is our covenant head, or covenant representative, whose righteous works are imputed to us when we believe. Adam, who was under law, was offered covenant rewards for his work. But those who believe in Christ, are offered covenant rewards based on *faith*. In the book of Romans, Paul uses an analogy to help us