

**“Of the Law of God”  
(WCF 19.1-2)**

**WCF 19.1** God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which He bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience; promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it; and endued him with power and ability to keep it.

**I. The Moral Law was a part of the original Covenant of Works.**

**A. When did God first introduce the Moral Law?** God introduced the Moral Law in the Garden of Eden as the requirement of the Covenant of Works.

1. Its whole content was implied in the commandment given to Adam.
  - a. “The Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die’” (Gen. 2:16-17).
  - b. To break this commandment was to break all of them. Consider what Edward Fisher wrote in *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*:

Nom. But, sir, methinks it is a strange thing that so small an offence, as eating of the forbidden fruit seems to be, should plunge the whole of mankind into such a gulf of misery.

Evan. Though at first glance it seems to be a small offence, yet, if we look more [earnestly] upon the matter it will appear to be an exceeding great offence; for thereby intolerable injury was done unto God; as, *first*, His dominion and authority in his holy command was violated. *Secondly*, His justice, truth, and power, in his most righteous threatenings, were despised. *Thirdly*, His most pure and perfect image, wherein man was created in righteousness and true holiness, was utterly defaced. *Fourthly*, His glory, which, by an active service, the creature should have brought to him, was lost and despoiled. Nay, how could there be a greater sin committed than that, when Adam, at that one clap, broke all the ten commandments?

Nom. Did he break all the ten commandments, say you? Sir, I beseech you show me wherein.

- Evan.
1. He chose himself another God when he followed the devil.
  2. He idolized and deified his own belly; as the apostle's phrase is, "He made his belly his God."
  3. He took the name of God in vain, when he believed him not.
  4. He kept not the rest and estate wherein God had set him.
  5. He dishonoured his Father who was in heaven; and therefore his days were not prolonged in that land which the Lord his God had given him.
  6. He massacred himself and all his posterity.

7. From Eve he was a virgin, but in eyes and mind he committed spiritual fornication.
8. He stole, like Achan, that which God had set aside not to be meddled with; and this his stealth is that which troubles all Israel,—the whole world.
9. He bare witness against God, when he believed the witness of the devil before him.
10. He coveted an evil covetousness, like Amnon, which cost him his life, (2 Sam 13), and all his progeny. Now, whosoever considers what a nest of evils here were committed at one blow, must needs, with Musculus, see our case to be such, that we are compelled every way to commend the justice of God, and to condemn the sin of our first parents, saying, concerning all mankind, as the prophet Hosea does concerning Israel, “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself,” (Hosea 3:9).

c. This is why James writes, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all” (2:10).

2. The fact it remains as a part of fallen man’s innate knowledge of God’s will shows it was originally written on Adam’s heart.
  - a. “And although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them” (Rom. 1:32).
  - b. In the context, all fallen mankind have this knowledge, presumably through their conscience.

**B. What does the Moral Law require?** Perfect and perpetual obedience.

1. God, being perfect and not willing to tolerate sin in His presence, requires perfection as the condition of fellowship with Himself.
  - a. “*Your* eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You can not look on wickedness *with favor*” (Hab. 1:13).
  - b. “For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; no evil dwells with You. The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity” (Psalm 5:4-5).
  - c. “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48).
2. This perfect obedience must also be perpetual:
  - a. Under the Covenant of Works, sins ends in loss of fellowship with God.
  - b. Adam failed once and was cast out of the sanctuary of God (Gen. 3:24).

**C. What did God promise Adam if he kept it?** He promised eternal life.

1. It was not so much spoken as implied: The Tree of Life symbolized the life Adam would receive if he passed his probation: “Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9).
2. His failure to pass is one of the reasons he was put out of the Garden: “Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and

evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” (Gen. 3:22).

3. “For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness” (Rom. 10:5).

**D. What did God threaten if he disobeyed it?** He threatened eternal death.

1. “The Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die’” (Gen. 2:16-17). This included:
  - a. Spiritual death: loss of fellowship with God; loss of desire for it.
  - b. Judicial death: under God’s just sentence of eternal destruction: hell.
  - c. Physical death: Adam would begin to age and eventually die.
2. Any who do not keep the Law are under its curse: “For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them’” (Gal. 3:10).

**E. How could Adam ever hope to keep this Law?** God gave him the power and ability to keep it.

1. The Lord made Adam in His image – natural and moral. The indwelling of the His Spirit gave Adam the desire for what was good – the ability to keep His Law.
2. “Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices” (Eccl. 7:29).

**WCF 19.2 This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables; the first four commandments containing our duty towards God; and the other six, our duty to man.**

**II. The relationship of the Moral Law to the 10 Commandments and its requirements.**

**A. What is the relationship of the Moral Law to the 10 Commandments?** The Ten Commandments summarize the Moral Law.

1. God still required perfection after the Fall, especially of those He brought near to Himself in covenant.
  - a. This is what He required of Noah: “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God” (Gen. 6:9).
  - b. This is what He required of Abraham: “Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless’” (Gen. 17:1).
2. It shouldn’t surprise us that when God entered into covenant with Israel, He required the same of them, spelling out the requirements of the Moral Law in the Ten Commandments.
  - a. “You shall be blameless before the LORD your God” (Deu. 18:13).
  - b. “You shall therefore obey the LORD your God, and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you today” (Deu. 27:10).

- c. “So you shall observe to do just as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left” (Deut. 5:32).
- d. “Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth” (Deu. 28:1).

**B. What does the Moral Law require?** That we perform our whole duty to God and to our neighbor.

1. The first four commandments explain our duty towards God:
  - a. “You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy” (Ex. 20:3-11).
  - b. These first four commandments may be summarized: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deu. 6:5).
2. The last six explain our duty towards our neighbor:
  - a. “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor” (Ex. 20:12-17).
  - b. These may be summarized: “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD” (Lev. 19:18).
3. How could Noah, Abraham, or any of the Israelites, keep this Law perfectly?
  - a. They couldn't: unlike Adam, they didn't have the power to keep it perfectly.
  - b. But Jesus could and did; and even in those days the merits of His perfection were applied to them through faith.
  - c. Through Christ and His Spirit, they were given the ability to love that Law and grow in their conformity to it.
  - d. “O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:97).