

The following excerpt is taken from "The Ten Commandments" by Thomas Watson.

If a man has no power to keep the whole moral law, why does God require it of him? Is this justice? Though man has lost his power of obeying, God has not lost his right of commanding. If a master entrusts a servant with money, and the servant spends it dissolutely, may not the master justly demand it? God gave us power to keep the moral law, which by tampering with sin, we lost; but may not God still call for perfect obedience, or, in case of default, justly punish us?

What is the difference between the moral law—and the gospel? (1) The law requires that we worship God as our Creator; the gospel, that we worship him in and through Christ. God in Christ is propitious; out of him we may see God's power, justice, and holiness: in him we see his mercy displayed. (2) The moral law requires obedience—but gives no strength (as Pharaoh required bricks—but gave no straw)—but the gospel gives strength; it bestows faith on the elect; it sweetens the law; it makes us serve God with delight.

Of what use is the moral law to us? It is a looking-glass to show us our sins, that, seeing our pollution and misery, we may be forced to flee to Christ—to satisfy for former guilt, and to save from future wrath. "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." Gal 3:24.

What comfort may be given to a regenerate person under the failures and imperfections of his obedience? That a believer is not under the covenant of works—but under the covenant of grace. The covenant of works requires perfect, personal, perpetual obedience; but in the covenant of grace, God will make some abatements; he will accept less than he required in the covenant of works. (1) In the covenant of works God required perfection of degrees; in the covenant of grace, he accepts perfection of parts. There he required perfect working, here he accepts sincere believing. In the covenant of works, God required us to live without sin; in the covenant of grace, he accepts of our combat with sin. (2) Though a Christian cannot, in his own person, perform all God's commandments; yet Christ, as his Surety, and in his stead, has fulfilled the law for him: and God accepts of Christ's obedience, which is perfect, to satisfy for that obedience which is imperfect. Christ being made a curse for believers; all the curses of the law have their sting pulled out. (3) Though a Christian cannot keep the commands of God to his satisfaction—yet he may to God's approbation.

How is that? (1) He gives his full assent and consent to the law of God. "The law is holy and just:" there was assent in the judgment. Rom 7:12. "I consent unto the law;" there was consent in the will. Rom 7:16. (2) A Christian mourns that he cannot keep the commandments fully. When he fails, he weeps; he is not angry with the law because it is so strict, but he is angry with himself because he is so deficient. (3) He takes a sweet delight in the law. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." Rom 7:22. Greek: "I take pleasure in it." "O! how love I your law." Psalm 119:97. Though a Christian cannot keep God's law—yet he loves his law; though he cannot serve God perfectly—yet he serves him willingly. (4) It is his sincere desire to walk in all God's commands. "O that my ways were directed to keep your statutes." Psalm 119:5. Though his strength fails—yet his pulse beats. (5) He really endeavors to obey God's law perfectly; and

wherein he comes short he runs to Christ's blood to supply his defects. This sincere desire, and real endeavor, God esteems as perfect obedience. "If there are a willing mind, it is accepted." 2 Cor 8:12. "Let me hear your voice, for sweet is your voice." Canticles 2:14. Though the prayers of the righteous are mixed with sin—yet God sees they desire to pray better. He picks out the weeds from the flowers; he sees the faith and bears with the failing. The saints' obedience, though short of legal perfection—yet having sincerity in it, and Christ's merits mixed with it, finds gracious acceptance. When the Lord sees endeavors after perfect obedience, he takes it well at our hands; as a father who receives a letter from his child, though there are blots in it, and false spellings, takes all in good part. Oh! what blotting are there in our holy things; but God is pleased to take all in good part. He says, "It is my child, and he would do better if he could; I will accept it."