

3. The condition of the covenant

The condition in this conditional covenant was that of implicit and perfect obedience to the revealed will of God, both before and especially during the temptation by Satan.

The command specifying the nature of the required obedience forbade Adam to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This is called a "positive command" or a command of "positive enactment" because it is not grounded directly in the perfections of the divine nature, nor immediately grounded in the permanent nature and relations of human beings, nor immediately grounded in the changing relations of individuals and communities, but grounded in those sovereign expressions of the will of God which are neither universal nor perpetual, but bind only those to whom God has addressed them, and only so long as He wills.

As a "positive command," it may be viewed by some as arbitrary and without apparent reason. However, the same command may be viewed as an asset, in the sense that Adam's test was therefore one of pure obedience to God's command, without other nuances or overtones.

Louis Berkhof writes: "The great question that had to be settled was, whether man would obey God implicitly or follow the guidance of his own Judgment."

The issue, then, in the condition of the covenant of works, was one of implicit obedience to God's authority versus human autonomy.

4. The penalty of the covenant

The penalty threatened was death: "In the day you eat from it you shall surely die." (Gen. 1:17)

In the most inclusive sense of death, Adam faced the penalty of spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death.

C. The Present Force of the Covenant

1. There are some theologians who hold that the covenant of works was forever abrogated at Adam's Fall. They argue that:

a. when Adam fell, the promise of the covenant was revoked, and the agreement annulled

b. when Adam fell, he became by nature incapable of rendering the required obedience

c. when Adam fell, he became corrupt, and incapable even by God's grace of rendering the required obedience

d. it would be absurd for God to require of a depraved creature that he live a life of holy and undivided obedience.