

# A COVENANT OF WORKS?

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"Mr. Reisinger, if God did not make a covenant of works with Adam in the Garden of Eden, then exactly what was the arrangement?"

I view the situation in the Garden of Eden as follows: Suppose I put you on a large farm and tell you that everything on it was for your personal use and enjoyment. I promise to pay all of the bills for everything, the fertilizer, the animal's feed, the electric bill, etc. You need only work the farm and you may sell or use all the produce, animals, etc. for yourself. There is only one condition. There is a small building out back of the barn that belongs to me and you may not go into it. The day you go in that building, you are going to be thrown off the farm. That is exactly like the arrangement that God made with Adam. Those are the same promises, conditions and terms laid on Adam in Eden. Everything in the Garden was Adam's to do with as he chose. The only restriction was to not eat of one tree.

Question: Is there anything in my 'farm deal' with you that states, or in anyway remotely implies, that if you do not enter that little house for X number of weeks, months, years or some period of time, I will reward you by moving you to a bigger, better or different farm? There is not a thing to that effect! Total silence! Is there any inference of any kind that if you do not go into the little house for a specific period of time that I will tear down the little house. No! Not even a hint of such a thing.

Is that not the exact 'deal' God made with Adam? I ask again, where in Genesis 1-3 is there a promise of a better life (or bigger farm) as a reward for Adam's obedience to a so-called covenant of works? There is not a single word or inference to that effect. There is indeed a threat of death for disobeying the one commandment, but there is no promise to Adam that he could gain, by works, something he did not already possess. Remember we are not talking about a minor point of doctrine. A covenant of works with Adam whereby he could literally "earn life" by obedience is an *essential building block* in the system of covenant theology. No covenant of works with Adam, no covenant theology.

By the way, what was missing in Eden that Adam needed and God promised him he could earn by personal obedience? I always thought Eden was a pretty good deal that did not need any improvements. I think Adam had everything that any heart could desire.

I repeat, the whole system of covenant theology is build on the absolute necessity of Adam being under a covenant of works wherein he was promised 'life' as a reward for obeying that covenant. But He already had life! He already had fellowship with God. The great tragedy of Eden was not that "an opportunity to earn life was lost." The tragedy was the life Adam *already had* was lost when he disobeyed. Where in Gen 2:17 is there the slightest inference that if Adam obeys a covenant for X number of months, or years, he will get a bigger and better

garden or God would remove the tree. Genesis is a simple and straightforward narrative and covenant theologians superimpose a whole unproven system of theology on it.

That there are many arguments for different terms or labels used by different covenant theologians for the "covenant of whatever" is proof of my original statement. We do not have to argue about labeling a doctrine when it is established from texts of Scripture. However, when you are discussing inferences and deductions, you have many conclusions that have no clear biblical (meaning textual) proof. One man's idea is as good as another when we are discussing ideas. That is not true when we discussing the words inspired by the Holy Ghost.

A.H. Strong was asked when and where the covenant of works was made. He replied, "In Amsterdam in 1468." He was far closer to the truth than the WCF.

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