

The School of Biblical Law Covenant and Law

Lesson Seven: “The Covenant Model: Ethics – Part II”

The ethics section of the covenant model outlines the stipulations or rules required by the transcendent covenant-giver of the hierarchy covenant steward. Faithfully keeping the covenant rules yields promised covenant results. Breaking covenant stipulations by unfaithfulness yields loss of promises, if not punishment (Deut. 28). Even our national judicial system is based upon ethics and reward or punishment. God has established the link between cause and effect. God has established an ethical relationship between cause and effect.

1. Keeping the covenant by obeying the ethics is not, nor has it ever been, only about external obedience. To reduce covenant-keeping faithfulness to deeds while ignoring the heart’s motivation distorts man’s relationship with God.

“Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands; and of good use both to themselves and others: yet, because they proceed not from an heart of faith; nor are done in the right manner, according to the Word nor to the right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful and cannot please God.” (Westminster Confession of Faith XVI. 7)

Moses told the Israelites, “And you shall love the Lord your God with all you heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you this day, shall be on your heart” (Deut. 6:5-6).

Jesus condemned the external religion of the Pharisees calling them white washed tombs and declared that the righteousness of his followers must exceed that of the Pharisees (Mt. 5:20; 23:27).

The Apostle Paul declared, “Whatever is not of faith is sin” (Rom.14:23) while James stated, “Show me your faith without works, and I will show you my faith by my works”. Faith is holistic; it is both the strong persuasion and the deeds that reflect the heart-felt convictions.

2. Covenantal ethics teach that faith is not standardless; but rather, faith has a standard of righteousness that reveals how believers may remain faithful. (10 Commandments)

God’s standard reflects His character; and because His character doesn’t change, His ethics do not change. (“He that says, I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” I Jn.2:4.)

The difference between the Old and New Covenant is how the commandments are kept: O.T. man looked forward by faith to the substitute’s act of atonement; N.T. man is in Christ, who incarnated the Law and became the fulfillment of righteousness in His atonement.

3. The right motivation and the right standard must also be properly applied to the situation.

Biblical truth is faithfulness to the covenant, to God, and his people. (Examples: Mid-wives in Moses’ day, Rahab in Joshua’s day)

“Situational ethics says that the situation totally determines the truth, so truth changes from situation to situation. Biblical ethics says the truth always remains the same: the Word of God. Only the application of truth changes.” (*That You May Prosper*, Sutton, pg. 66)

The promise given to the obedient and the faithful is associated with conquest and blessings. “When the Lord your God shall bring you into the land where you go to possess it, and has cast out many before you . . . and shall deliver them before you . . . Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keeps covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; and repays them that hate him to their face . . .” (Deut. 7:1-15). The effects caused by keeping covenant ethics are rewarded over time and in history.