

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SALVATION

In Catholic teaching, the fruits of Christ's work on the cross are made available to all mankind. The Catechism reads:

*CCC#616 It is love "to the end" that confers on Christ's sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction. He knew and loved us all when he offered his life. Now "the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died." No man, not even the holiest, was ever able to take on himself the sins of all men and offer himself as a sacrifice for all. The existence in Christ of the divine person of the Son, who at once surpasses and embraces all human persons, and constitutes himself as the Head of all mankind, **makes possible his redemptive sacrifice for all.***

In other words, Christ died for all persons. Though this doctrine is found throughout Scripture, this essay will concentrate on Paul's contribution. Scripture quoted herein is from the Revised Standard Version-Catholic Edition (RSV-CE) unless appearing in another's quotation.

The Type of Adam

Many followers of the Reformed Christian tradition and others who share their sentiment on atonement do not believe Christ died for all, but only for a specific group of people. Early Protestant John Calvin, whose Scriptural analysis will be examined later, insisted certain persons are "preordained...to eternal damnation." These persons, he says, God "passes over" by depriving them of the grace won by Christ's sacrifice.

In one sense, Christ's atonement is "limited" in that it is not finally appropriated to all souls since some go to hell. The difference between the Catholic and "limited atonement" (LA) position is this: a Catholic insists Christ's work on the cross is made available to all. He rightly can be said to have "died for all men." No one is deprived of the graces poured out by Christ's work, and thus it is possible for anyone to go to

heaven. The LA tradition says the graces poured out by Christ's sacrifice are limited in that they are not made available to all people, but only the elect.

The LA proposition is debunked in the writings of Paul.

*Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned – sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of **Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come**. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the effect of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Then **as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men**. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:12-19)*

There are a few key points in this text:

- Adam is a type of Christ.
- Adam's trespass brought death to all men.
- Jesus' obedience brought life to all men.

The text is shaped by symmetry. Christ is a reversal of Adam. Adam's work is juxtaposed with Christ's work. The LA interpretation reads the "all/many" pertaining to Adam's half of the equation as literally "all mankind." The LA interpretation of Jesus' half of the equation is read as "only all the elect."¹

First, the LA reading of the text violates the symmetry. For the LA interpreter, Adam affects "all men" yet Jesus only affects "some men."

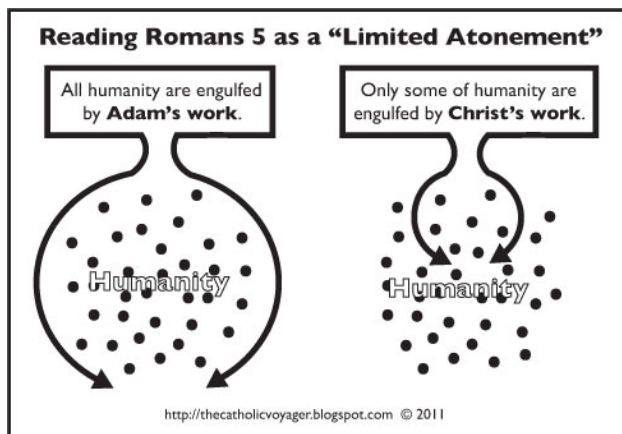
¹ See Editor's note #169 in John Calvin's *Commentary on Romans* for an example reflecting this interpretation. (<http://www.biblestudyguide.org/ebooks/comment/calcom38.pdf>)

A second flaw in the LA interpretation is the violation of a basic Pauline and Biblical principle: New Covenant antitypes are better than their Old Testament types.

Broadly, Paul teaches that the new is much more splendid than the Old (2 Cor. 3:11). The prophet Haggai also foretold of this teaching (Hag. 2:9). Paul gives a number of specific examples of this. One is the above passage (Rom. 5:12-19) comparing the inferiority of Adam to the superiority of Christ. Another is Paul's exegesis of the story of Hagar and Sarah who represent the inferior covenant of slavery and superior covenant of freedom, respectively (Gal. 4:21-28). A third example is Paul's identification of baptism with the circumcision of Christ as compared to the inferior circumcision in the old done by "human hands" (Col. 2:11-14).

New Testament antitypes are superior to their Old Testament types. This is the key principle at work here.

But what happens when one attempts to say Christ's sacrifice was only for some? Consider the following illustration:



So does the LA interpretation remain faithful to the superiority of New Testament antitypes? The answer is no. The LA interpretation considers the scope of Christ's work to be weaker than Adam's. Adam's work is actually seen to be the more powerful of the two. Thus, the idea of a limited atonement not only departs from the balance and symmetry of the text in Romans 5, but also does not give proper justice to the Biblical concept of typology. Christ, as the superior New Testament antitype, cannot be made the less powerful agent. The Catholic interpretation recognizes that the scope of Christ's work is the overturning of Adam's. Christ turns Adam's path of death for all mankind into a path of life for all mankind.

Supporting this interpretation, one may also reference the two other mentions of the phrase "all men" in the letter to the Romans. In Rom. 3:9, Paul uses "all men" to refer to those who are under the power of sin as he did in chapter 5 with reference to the effect of Adam. The other mention is Rom. 11:32, which is again an Adamic reference: "For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all." This single verse also echoes the symmetry in Rom. 5, comparing the two conditions of man in the old and new covenants. In each of these supporting verses, Paul is using the term "all" universally of mankind and not just "all" of a specific class. Adam and Christ are "representatives of two sorts of humanity, especially in relation to obedience to God."²

Other similar passages in Paul are also signposts for the universality of Christ's work on the cross. All of these passages read or have some paraphrase of "all men" in

² Ziesler, John, Pauline Christianity, Oxford University Press, New York, 1983, p 53.

regards to those to whom salvation is directed (1 Tim. 2:1-6, 1 Tim. 4:10, Rom. 11:32, Tit. 2:11, 1 Cor. 15:22, Eph. 3:8-9).

Paul to Timothy on “all men”

Perhaps the most striking of these is 1 Timothy 2:1-6, especially verse 4.

*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of **God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who **gave himself as a ransom for all**, the testimony to which was borne at the proper time.(1 Tim. 2:1-6)*

In these passages, we again see the “all men” verbiage with regards to salvation.

An objection to the universality of this passage is seen in the writings of St. Augustine:

And what is written, that He wills all men to be saved, [1 Timothy 2:4] while yet all men are not saved, may be understood in many ways, some of which I have mentioned in other writings of mine; but here I will say one thing: He wills all men to be saved, is so said that all the predestinated may be understood by it, because every kind of men is among them.³

[W]hen we hear and read in Scripture that He will have all men to be saved, [1 Timothy 2:4] although we know well that all men are not saved, we are not on that account to restrict the omnipotence of God, but are rather to understand the Scripture, Who will have all men to be saved, as meaning that no man is saved unless God wills his salvation: not that there is no man whose salvation He does not will, but that no man is saved apart from His will; and that, therefore, we should pray Him to will our salvation, because if He will it, it must necessarily be accomplished. ...

[W]e are to understand by all men, the human race in all its varieties of rank and circumstances—kings, subjects; noble, plebeian, high, low [etc]...⁴

³ Augustine, *On Rebuke and Grace*, 44, ca 420 A.D. Translated by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis, and revised by Benjamin B. Warfield. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 5*. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1513.htm>>.

⁴ Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 103, ca 400 A.D. Translated by J.F. Shaw. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3*. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1302.htm>>.

For the above interpretation, Augustine is not without critics. The late theologian Father William Most wrote most critically:

[According to Augustine] God wanted to display mercy and justice... He thought God picked those to rescue blindly, without any consideration of how they lived. He picked them not that He had any love for them, but merely to make a point. Augustine did not see it, but that was a denial of God's love. For to love is to will good to another for the other's sake. If I will good to another not for that other's sake, but for some outside purpose of mine, I am not loving that person, but using him.

So in that theory, God does not really love anyone, He merely uses the few for His own purposes, not for their sake. Hence, as we shall soon see, he explicitly denied several times that "God wills all to be saved: (1 Tim 2:4)... It is tragically obvious that Augustine completely denied the clear sense of Scripture here."⁵

Even Augustine's contemporary St. John Chrysostom contradicts Augustine's interpretation. He writes:

*Imitate God! If He wills that all men should be saved, there is reason why one should pray for all, if He has willed that all should be saved, be thou willing also; and if you wish it, pray for it, for wishes lead to prayers... And if you pray for the Heathens, you ought of course to pray for Heretics also, for we are to pray for all men, and not to persecute... Was Christ then a ransom for the Heathen? **Undoubtedly Christ died even for Heathen**; and you cannot bear to pray for them.⁶*

So where shall we consider Augustine to have erred? The *Sacra Pagina* commentary writes of 1 Tim. 2:4 on how God wills the salvation of all:

This, together with the title "savior" (sōtēr) for God, underlines a key theological position of the [pastoral epistle]... probably in reaction to an understanding of salvation among the false teachers that is not as extensive and is linked to their esoteric knowledge... The letters, therefore, reiterate

⁵ Most, Father William, *St. Augustine on Grace and Predestination*.

<<http://www.ewtn.com/library/THEOLOGY/AUGUSTIN.HTM>> Accessed February 12, 2011.

⁶ John Chrysostom, Homily 7 on 1st Timothy, ca 390 A.D. Translated by Philip Schaff. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 13. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1889.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/230607.htm>> Accessed February 12, 2011.

“our” salvation... as paradigmatic for that of all people who accept the truth of faith as God and Christ desire that all do.⁷

So we see that Paul’s emphasis on salvation for “all” is distinct from false teachers who assert salvation for “some.” Both Gnosticism and Judaism taught a limited view of salvation, and Paul argues throughout his letters against salvation via either of these religions (e.g. 1 Tim. 6:20 against Gnosticism or Rom. 3:20-21 against salvation through Judaic law). The commentary ties this with Rom. 5, which is discussed above:

Moses is the type of Jesus as mediator ... for Jesus’ mediation brings into effect God’s salvific will (1 Tim 2:4). The universality of this salvific aim (as opposed to the false teachers’ view) and of Christianity (as distinct from Jewish particularism) is expressed with the words “humans,” v. 5, and “all,” v. 6. Jesus’ humanity is stressed here... and his self-sacrificing and redemptive death is proclaimed (and compare... Rom 5:18...)⁸

Recall that Romans 5:18 compares Adam and Jesus in their respective effects toward humanity. The emphasis of Jesus’ humanity here could therefore be an Adamic reference, which strongly speaks to Christ’s salvific work affecting all mankind, not just “every kind of men” as Augustine asserted.

There is also similarity between the condition of man in the old and new covenants as well. Although Abraham lived under the law of a futile covenant...he by faith was justified by the “future heavenly...righteousness”⁹ of Christ.

The disobedient condition of all mankind did not result in final condemnation for all, as Abraham demonstrates. In this new covenant, “God would not breath just on a

⁷ Fiore, Benjamin and Harrington, Daniel J. The Pastoral Epistles: First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus, Liturgical Press, 2003, p 59.

⁸ Fiore, p 60.

⁹ Ambrosiaster (Bray, Gerald Lewis, editor), *Commentaries on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians*, IVP Academic, 2009 (original work ca 366-384 A.D.) p 31.

few special servants, but on all his people.”¹⁰ Just as Abraham escaped the condemned condition of humanity in his age, one can reject the condition of grace given to all men (cf. Tit. 2:11, Rom. 11:21-22) in the new covenant. In 2 Cor. 6:1, Paul exhorts his audience “not to accept the grace of God in vain.”

The unsaved included among those “redeemed”

Three of Paul’s passages refer with some explicitness to Christ having died even for those who are ultimately not saved.

*1 Timothy 4:10 For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is **the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.***

Many times throughout the writings of Paul, belief is the mechanism of appropriation to enter into a state of justification. From his writing on Abraham in Rom. 4 to grace through faith in Eph. 2:8, faith is given as a condition to those who are to be saved. This faith is inseparably united with “obedience” and “love” (Rom. 1:5, 16:26, Gal. 5:6). So in 1 Tim. 4:10, Paul includes persons distinct from those who believe as beneficiaries of Christ’s salvific work.

Two other of Paul’s passages refer to ruined persons. Paul still considers Christ to have died for those souls.

*Rom. 14:15 If your brother is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat **cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died.***

*1 Cor. 8:11 And so by your knowledge this **weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died.***

¹⁰ Ziesler, p 10.

In I Cor. we have an idea of what Paul means by the word destroyed by comparing it to the only other use of that word in the letter. The word for “destroyed” in 8:11 (*apollutai*) is derived from the same root as the word “perishing” in 1:18 (*apollumenoiv*). In 1:18, the word is contrasted with being saved: “For the word of the cross is folly to **those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved** it is the power of God.”

Thus, Christ can be said to have died for someone who is not “being saved” in 8:11.

God’s Will

The mentality behind Augustine’s interpretation of I Tim. 2:4 is the notion that if God is said to “will” something, it therefore must transpire. “[I]f He will it, it must necessarily be accomplished,” he writes. So he deduced that if God wills the salvation of all men, and if all men are not saved, then all men must not mean all universally. Therefore, he imposed the words “all *kinds of men*” onto the text.

But does Paul teach that God’s will is always necessarily accomplished? How does Paul understand God’s will?

Scripturally (including in the Pauline letters), God’s will is either something He ordains or something He permits man to refuse. The Gospels distinguish between those who do God’s will and those who don’t (e.g. Mat. 7:21). Remember, we have established that Paul taught Christ’s redemptive work on the cross has an Adamic scope, offered to all mankind. And Paul teaches that this work is the will of God: “Jesus Christ...gave himself for our sins...according to the will of our God and Father” (Gal.

1:4). He exhorts the Ephesians to do that which is God's will (Eph. 6:6). More than once, Paul described God's will as something that we must work to identify (Rom. 12:2, Eph. 5:17).

A passage giving stronger indication that a man can thwart God's will is in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians:

*For **this is the will of God**, your sanctification: **that you abstain from immorality**; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like heathens who do not know God; that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in this matter... For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore **whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God**, who gives his Holy Spirit to you (1 Thes. 4:3-8).¹¹*

Augustine's understanding of God's will includes only that which is necessarily accomplished and ordained. But if Augustine's principle applied to any dimension of God's will, then 1 Thes. 4 would mean no child of God would sin. In our lives we can see that is a false idea without even Scriptural confirmation. As well, according to Paul's theology, even those who will be saved have committed works that will burn up in the fires of purgatory (1 Cor. 3:11-15). Paul himself admits he sins even though he doesn't want to (Rom. 7:19).

Figure of Slavery

Paul frequently uses the analogy of slave and master to describe man's corporate condition before and after the sacrifice of Christ. Just as Abraham lived in an era of slavery to sin and escaped his condition, so too can the members of the new covenant

¹¹ See also 1 Cor. 7:17 Only, let every one lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.

live in an era of slavery to Christ and yet reject that condition. Theology professor Dr.

John Ziesler provides a summary for the premise:

Pauline literature uses three words for [redemption]: exagorazō in Gal. 3:13 and 4:5; lutroō in Tit. 2:14; and apolutrōsis in Rom. 3:24; 8:23; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:14; Eph. 1:7, 14; 4:30. All three basically denote transfer from one ownership to another, and in the case of the second and third, transfer from slavery to freedom. In the Septuagint lutr- is the root used for Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt, so it can scarcely be doubted that "redemption" in Paul means deliverance from slavery of some sort.¹²

A closer look at two of these passages reveal how Christ can be said to have redeemed all mankind while yet some of those persons go to hell. They are from Colossians and Ephesians which, because of their similarities, MacDonald and Harrington say it "makes sense to study them together."¹³

*Col. 1:14 He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, **in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.***

*Eph. 1:7 **In him we have redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.*

Understanding the term redemption in these verses as a figure of freedom from slavery demonstrates how man prior to Christ was bound to sin. After Christ humanity was granted freedom from this bind. Through the forgiveness obtained by Christ, man in the new covenant is free from futile slavery to sin.

Yet, a slave given freedom does not always avail himself of the opportunity. In Eph. 1:6, Paul tells us that the grace given us through Christ's redemption was given to us "freely." It is a free gift. And in order to reap the benefits of this gift, Paul places forth the proviso of faith: "[Christ] has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death...

¹² Ziesler, p 83.

¹³ MacDonald, Margaret Y. and Harrington, Daniel J., *Sacra Pagina: Colossians and Ephesians*, Liturgical Press, 2000, p 4.

provided that you continue in the faith.” (Col. 1:22-23) The RSV-CE translates the Greek words *ei ge epimenete* as “provided that you continue.” These words broken down translate to “if indeed you continue the action” of faith.¹⁴

So we have Paul establishing freely given redemptive grace, freeing us from a futile condition of slavery to sin, that requires our faith to appropriate and sustain it.

Paul also confirms that a slave can reject the “opportunity” of freedom:

*Were you a slave when called? Never mind. But **if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.** For he who was called in the Lord as a slave is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a slave of Christ. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. (1 Cor 7:21-23) (cf. Gal. 5:13)*

*So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir... but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, **how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more?** (Gal. 4:7,9)*

Father George Maloney states a good summary that God’s will includes the universality of redemption.

[W]e discover in Ephesians a doctrine of universal redemption much more developed and nuanced than in Colossians. ... Paul would say that God’s good will, to gather all human beings into one body, was “a plan for the fullness of time, to bring all things together in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.” (1:10)¹⁵

Calvin’s case

It could be argued that 16th century Protestant John Calvin is most responsible for promoting the idea that Christ’s sacrifice did not pour grace on to all humanity, but only those known as the “elect.” In his famous work *The Institutes*, he selects Augustine

¹⁴ Net Bible: Colossians 1:23.

<<http://classic.net.bible.org/verse.php?search=col%201:23&book=col&chapter=1&verse=23>> Accessed February, 13, 2011.

¹⁵ Maloney, p 13.

as authoritative (even though he concedes that not all of Augustine's writings agree with his idea that man has no part in response to grace¹⁶). Calvin's doctrine is also known as the doctrine of "double predestination" which says humans are assigned to heaven or hell regardless of any response on their part to grace. Those assigned to hell are deprived of grace altogether. This is in stark contrast to the idea of Christ's grace offered to all humanity. Beginning with the paragraph cited earlier in this essay, Calvin writes:

By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation.¹⁷

Because God of his mere good pleasure electing some passes by others, [critics] raise a plea against him. ... God has always been at liberty to bestow his grace on whom he would.¹⁸

There are two noteworthy Pauline passages Calvin immediately uses in defense of his doctrine of double predestination. There are others, but in the interest of brevity, these two will suffice as exemplary. The first passage is:

Eph. 1:4-5 [H]e chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.

¹⁶ See Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 22.8, ca 1559. Quoted at: <<http://www.reformed.org/books/institutes/books/book3/bk3ch22.html>> Accessed February 14, 2011.. Augustine writes in Sermon 169: "What does this mean, "for our justification"? So that He might justify us; so that He might make us just. You will be a work of God, not only because you are a man, but also because you are just. For it is better that you be just than that you be a man. If God made you a man, and you made yourself just, something you were doing would be better than what God did. But God made you without any cooperation on your part. For you did not lend your consent so that God could make you. How could you have consented, when you did not exist? But he who made you without your consent **does not justify you without your consent**. He made you without your knowledge, but **He does not justify you without you willing it.**" (quoted in Jurgens, William A, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* volume 3, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1979, p. 29)

¹⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, 21.5. Quoted at: <<http://www.reformed.org/books/institutes/books/book3/bk3ch21.html>> Accessed February 14, 2011.

¹⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, 22.1.

This passage immediately precedes 1:7, which is addressed earlier in this essay. 1:7 expresses the opportunity to escape sin by faith. In 3:11-12, Paul again emphasizes faith as a proviso when he says: “Christ...in whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him.” Access to Christ is through faith. Paul, in praising the grace bestowed on believers in 1:4-5 is not expressing any deprivation of grace from those who do not believe.

Regarding the phrase “that we might be holy,” Calvin argues: “Here [Paul] opposes the good pleasure of God to our merits of every description.” A Catholic would agree that prior to justification, no human can merit the grace of God. Yet Calvin excludes the possibility that man’s merit flows from the free gift of grace. St. John Chrysostom debunked this notion centuries prior.

*But wherefore has He chosen us? That we should be holy and without a blemish before Him. That you may not then, when you hear that He has chosen us, imagine that faith alone is sufficient, he proceeds to add life and conduct. To this end, says he, has He chosen us, and on this condition, that we should be holy and without blemish. And so formerly he chose the Jews. On what terms? This nation, says he, has He chosen from the rest of the nations. Deuteronomy 14:2 Now if men in their choices choose what is best, much more does God. And indeed **the fact of their being chosen is at once a token of the loving kindness of God, and of their moral goodness.** For by all means would he have chosen those who were approved. He has Himself rendered us holy, but then we must continue holy.¹⁹*

Chrysostom’s position is fortified later in the letter when Paul exhorts the same audience to “put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” (4:24) He continues in chapter 5, calling the audience to holiness and virtue. He gives a warning: “Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure

¹⁹ John Chrysostom, *On Ephesians*, I, ca. 390 A.D. Translated by Gross Alexander. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 13. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1889.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/230101.htm>> Accessed February 13, 2011.

man...has any inheritance in the kingdom.” (5:5) This verse suggests the reason for the sinner’s non-inheritance is his disobedience rather than abandonment by God. Virtue is tied into one’s destiny contrary to Calvin’s argument that excludes all man’s merit even after initial justification. Understanding Paul this way reconciles him with Peter, with whom Paul stayed for a time (Gal. 1:18), and who also taught about divine election.

For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue...For whoever lacks these things is blind and shortsighted and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never fall. (2 Pet. 5, 9-10)

Once more, man must recognize that he must respond with faith to God’s unmerited grace given to all. The response does not “cause” God to make His sovereign choice, as Calvin elsewhere criticized.²⁰ God has rather established that response as the term of the covenant. And the free response itself must be considered a gift. “For what have you that you have not received?” says Paul (1 Cor. 4:7). In accepting that neither man’s free response, nor God’s sovereignty are violated in election, we may imperfectly glimpse the mystery that Christ died for all, yet not all are saved.

The second noteworthy passage Calvin cites for double predestination is:

[T]hough [Jacob and Esau] were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his call, she was told, "The elder will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." (Rom. 9:11-13)

Calvin states:

[T]he distinction between the brothers is not founded on any ground of works, but on the mere calling of God, inasmuch as it was fixed before the children

²⁰ Calvin, John, *On Predestination*, quoted in Oliver J. Thatcher, ed., *The Library of Original Sources* (Milwaukee: University Research Extension Co., 1907), Vol. V: 9th to 16th Centuries, pp. 141-150. Excerpt taken from <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/calvin-predest.html>> Accessed February 14, 2011.

were born. ... We learn from the Apostle's words, that the salvation of believers is founded entirely on the decree of divine election, that the privilege is procured not by works but free calling. We have also a specimen of the thing itself set before us. Esau and Jacob are brothers, begotten of the same parents, within the same womb, not yet born. In them all things are equal, and yet the judgment of God with regard to them is different.²¹

Calvin's first error here is to remove even man's free response, itself a gift, moved by grace.

Second, remember, God's call can be understood as a free opportunity (I Cor. 7:21, Gal. 5:13) to do His will.

Third, Paul does not go beyond the idea that our *human* works are powerless as factors in election (especially works of the law which Paul frequently teaches throughout Romans are not a mechanism for salvation). It is these works Paul calls to our attention, that we might understand the mercy of God: "It depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy." (9:16) Man can will with all effort, but election is entirely dependent on God's mercy. The terms of the covenant, which demand our free response to His grace, are entirely His terms. Neither Jacob, nor Esau, could exert a human work to effect God to cause their particular inheritance.

As the Navarre Study Bible notes, the story of Jacob and Esau is an illustration of Jews and Gentiles, not factual data regarding the eternal fate of each man:

These examples [like Jacob and Esau] taken from sacred history help the Apostle explain to the Jews why they should not be surprised to see the Gentiles being called to the faith.²²

Paul advances this idea in the letter:

²¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 22.5.

²² The Navarre Bible: Romans and Galatians, Scepter Publishers, New York, 2005, p 108.

*What if God, desiring to show his wrath...has endured with much patience the vessels of wrath made for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?
(9:22-24)*

The Jews are corporately equated to the group God “endured with patience” (9:22) that are the “elder.” (9:13) The reason they are described as “vessels of wrath” is because “Israel pursued righteousness...based on law...not...through faith.” (9:31-32) Again, Paul returns to the appropriating factor of faith. The mercy shown to the Gentiles simply demonstrates God’s terms that salvation is by faith, not by works of law that Gentiles didn’t practice! Faith has the supernatural element of grace behind it, unlike the works of the law. As Paul states, the example of Jacob and Esau shows that God’s “purpose of election” is not based on a human work or genealogical inheritance according to OT law.

Finally, to Paul, being a “vessel of wrath” is not tantamount to being created by God for hell without grace. Otherwise, it is irrelevant for Paul to draw attention to the Israelites seeking righteousness by works of law *instead* of faith. In those words, Paul identifies the determining factor. And the determining factor is faith, not an arbitrary divine decree as Calvin espoused. The Ignatius Study Bible notes: “Paul is not saying that God has predestined the unbelievers of Israel for damnation; otherwise he would not be praying (10:1) and working (11:14) for their salvation.”²³ Thus, neither does Paul consider the figure of Esau doomed to hell, but rather representative of the vessel, the vehicle---a person who maintains righteousness through works of “human hands” (Col. 2:11)---that does not lead to glory.

²³Mitch, Curtis (Compiler) and Hahn, Scott (editor), *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible New Testament, 2nd Catholic Edition RSV*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2010, p 270.

The account of Abraham fortifies this interpretation. Paul admits and even draws attention to Abraham having participated in the very works that characterize a vessel of wrath. Abraham was circumcised.

[Abraham was] the father of all who believe without being circumcised...and likewise the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but also follow the example of the faith which our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. (Rom. 4:11-12)

In this passage, Paul is not dooming to hell those who are circumcised, for they too can be justified through the appropriating factor, which is, once again, faith. Those who remain committed to justification by the law and not faith are those Paul classifies as vessels of wrath. Yet Paul does not insist that all persons in this condition are bound to hell because even if one practiced law like circumcision, one who was a vessel of wrath can still “follow the example of faith [of] Abraham.”

Paul’s statement to the Galatians is perhaps more succinct:

You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace....For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love.” (Gal. 5:4,6, cf. Gal. 6:15, 1 Cor. 7:19)

The Greek for “avail” is *iscuei* in reference to “power.” This is alien to Calvin’s notion that regarding the salvation of souls “all things are equal, and yet the judgment of God with regard to them is different.” Thus all humanity can, by grace, avail themselves toward an increase in grace and eternal by this “faith working through love.”²⁴

²⁴See Council of Trent, 6.C22, Ed. and trans. J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848) Hanover Historical Texts Project. Scanned by Hanover College students in 1995. Quoted at <<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/ct06.html>> Accessed February 14, 2011: “**If any one saith**, that the good works of one that is justified are in such manner the gifts of God, as that they are not also the good merits of him that is justified; or, that the said justified, **by the good works which he performs through the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ, whose living member he is, does not truly merit increase of grace, eternal life**, and the attainment of that eternal life,-if so be, however, that he depart in grace,-and also an increase of glory; **let him be anathema.**”

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