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PREPARATION

In this section Calvin addresses a very subtle but nonetheless absolutely wonderful question. Did the man Christ Jesus have true merit of his own, as a man?

EXPLORATORY

1. In view of Augustine's statement in line 27 and Calvin's summary of his own position in 529, 24ff, do you think this section has been properly titled by the editor?

- a. No, he seems to have got the order wrong. In Calvin's (&Augustine's) view, God's grace precedes Christ's merit, not *vice versa*.

Why is it that, *certain perversely subtle men...cannot bear to hear the word "merit"*? (528 18ff & 524, 24ff)

- a. *...they think that it obscures God's grace.*
- b. They feel that the concept of merit must be excluded lest it somehow makes room for our own righteousness to play a part in our own salvation. (Cf last sentence, section 1)

What issue arises, according to Calvin, if we push the exclusion of merit from salvation so far as to exclude any role for Christ's merit? (528, 19ff)

- a. *...they would have Christ as a mere instrument or minister, not as the Author or leader and prince of life.*

Although we would not describe Christ as a saved man, he was an elect man, as the quotations from Augustine make clear.

The greatness of the privilege to which he - the man Jesus - was elected - *...to be the only-begotten Son of God, and to be assumed into unity of person by the Word co-eternal with the Father* - was beyond anything he could possibly have earned or deserved.

In book 1 Calvin made the point that even in his created innocence the distance between man and God was so great that salvation still needed to be given to him as an act of God's grace. (cf ch15.8 etc)

In 528, 21ff Calvin applies this thought to the man Jesus (*Christ by himself...no worthiness will be found in man*). This is the only concession to his opponents that Calvin is prepared to make.

Nonetheless, as the God-man Christ has merit - in himself because he is God and in his life because he perfectly obeyed God's law.

The very existence of this merit, however, depended on God's grace, which the foreordination of the the man Jesus to the immense privileges already noted shows that he received in abundance. Hence Augustine's statement: *The clearest light of predestination and grace is the man Christ Jesus...*

Whence does the merit of Christ originate? (529, 11f)

a. *...not...in him, but we go back to God's ordinance, the first cause.*

How does this remove any hint of inconsistency or conflict between God's grace and Christ's merit? (529, 15f)

b. *...a thing subordinate to another is not in conflict with it.*

2. What distinction (529, 28) does Calvin have in mind? (529, 19f)

a. The distinction between...*God's free favour and Christ's obedience.*

John 3:16 - What is the first thing that Calvin notes in this verse? (529, 31)

b. *...God's love holds first place, as the highest cause or origin.*

What follows...*as the second or proximate cause?* (529, 32)

c. *...faith in Christ*

How does the view that Christ is only a formal cause diminish his power in a way that Jn3:16 does not support?

d. Because if it were true God the father would be the object of faith, not Christ. *...if we obtain righteousness by a faith that reposes in (Christ) we ought to seek the matter of our salvation in him.*

i. What does Calvin mean by...*the matter of our salvation* (529, 36)?

e. The substantial cause of it.

What, in this context, is the key concept in 1 John 4:10 for Calvin? (530, 4)

f. Appeasement

Who needed to be appeased? (530, 5f)

g. *...God...was angry with us*

What does Calvin also say about God's attitude towards us? (530, 5)

h. *...God loved us.*

How does Calvin reconcile these two conflicting attitudes on God's part? (530, 5)

i. *In some ineffable way...*(in other words, he doesn't)

What did God do on the basis of Christ's blood that he would not have done in its absence? (530, 20)

j. *...he revealed his love...*

In the absence of this reconciliation, how should sinners think of God? (530, 24)

k. *...as an enemy and a judge.*

In what way is righteousness...*the beginning of love* ? (530, 25)

l. Calvin is thinking of the righteousness that is God's gift to us. The righteousness that we are given, if we are in Christ, is Christ's righteousness. 2Cor 5:21.

Why does the gift of righteousness have to be the first thing that we receive if we are to become the conscious recipients and objects of God's love? (530, 22f)

a. *...God is the fountainhead of all righteousness.*

What does this make God to sinners?

b. *...an enemy and a judge.*

c. Why is it important that we realise that the grace that we receive from Christ is his bestowal on us of what he has already received? (530, 33ff)

- a. *...it would not be fitting for this credit to be given to him as distinct from the Father, namely, that grace is his and proceeds from him.*
3. What two things are mentioned by Calvin in this section as being the grounds of our justification? (530, 36 & 531, 4)
 - a. Christ's obedience;
 - b. Christ's death.

What does Calvin deduce from the, *commonplace*, that Christ died as a righteous man in the place of the unrighteous? (531, 2)

 - c. He deserved (*ie*, merited) what he obtained.

What conclusion does Calvin draw from Paul's association of our reconciliation with Christ's death? (531, 4f)

 - d. *...reconciliation has no place except where an offence precedes it.*
 4. In this section Calvin repeatedly makes the same point, borne out by twelve scripture references. His point is - what? (531, 18ff)
 - a. *...his death was an expiation for our sins.*
 - b. *...Christ's grace is too much weakened unless we grant to his sacrifice the power of expiating, appeasing and making satisfaction.*
 - c. *...the burden of condemnation, from which we were freed, was laid upon Christ.*
 5. Again, Calvin is making a single point in this section - which is? (532, 24)
 - a. *...he (Christ) paid the price to redeem us.*
 6. What passage, wrongly interpreted in Calvin's view, is used as a proof text by those who assert that Christ himself benefited in some way from his own merits ? (534, 25)
 - a. Phillipians 2:9.

What two sentences encapsulate Calvin's teaching in this section? (534, 19ff)

 - b. *...he who gave away the fruit of his holiness to others testifies that he acquired nothing for himself. And this is indeed worth noting: to devote himself completely to saving us, Christ in a way forgot himself.*

FOR REFLECTION

1. What elements make up the concept of reconciliation? In the scripture passages quoted by Calvin on p530 who is reconciled to whom? Is Calvin correct, in lines 21f to speak of God being reconciled to us? Should we think of God's being reconciled to us in the same way as we are reconciled to him?