

On the other hand, if Christ lived a perfect life and expiated the guilt and penalty of the transgressed law on behalf of all human beings, then those who by Saving faith elect themselves are no longer liable to the requirements of the law, and can no longer be condemned by it. But correspondingly, if Christ atoned for all human beings, then those who do not exercise saving faith in Christ cannot continue to be liable to the requirements of the law (since Christ has already fulfilled them on their behalf), and cannot continue to be condemned by it (since Christ has already expiated their guilt and penalty). Otherwise there would be a double exaction of the penalty!

It would be possible to escape the force of this difficulty by making Christ's atonement only a potential fulfillment of the law and a potential expiation of guilt and penalty, to be made actual by the favorable response of the believing sinner. However, this seems to make the atoning work of Christ something less than finished, and seems to require the addition of human action to make it complete, which in turn appears to ground salvation in both Christ's work and ours! Thus this solution creates more problems than it solves.

It would also be possible to escape the force of this difficulty by acknowledging that Christ has indeed taken away all liability and condemnation for all human beings, and that therefore no human being will be adversely judged for lack of conformity to and transgression of the law of God, but will be judged for one sin only, namely, failure to believe in Christ. Aside from the problem of judging those who have never heard of Christ, this solution is contrary to scripture representations of judgment for various sins and evil works, including unbelief in Christ.

This brings us to the critical question:

### DOES CHRIST'S ATONEMENT MAKE SALVATION POSSIBLE OR ACTUAL?

Did the atoning work of Christ make salvation possible? Or did it actually accomplish salvation? Did Christ's redemption provide salvation for all human beings? Or did it actually save elect human beings?

Among various scriptures quoted on both sides of this issue, a particularly interesting passage is found in II Corinthians 5:18-20:

- 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:
- 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.
- 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.