

## An Exposé on Reformed Theology (RT) and Calvinism (CV), Part 4

### Ezekiel 18 and the End of Calvinism

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**A**s the inspired, inerrant word of God, the Bible never contradicts itself. However, RT/CV would have us believe many things which absolutely contradict the Scriptures. Scripture states that one must become childlike in order to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:1-3; 19:13-15). RT/CV tells us that small children are “vipers in diapers.” Scripture tells us that man can choose God (Jos. 24:15; Jn. 5:39-40). RT/CV would have us believe that man cannot come to God until and unless he has been chosen and predestined to salvation by God. Scripture tells us that man is saved “by grace, through faith” (Eph. 2:8-9). RT/CV teaches that man is saved by grace alone, through faith alone. The list of contradictions could fill this entire edition!

There is one passage that forever defeats the hopeless and arbitrary doctrines of RT/CV. Ezekiel served as a prophet for God’s people approximately 600 years before the birth of Christ (Eze. 1:2). He was a “watchman” sent to warn the people of God (Eze. 3:17). He was to warn the people of his day of sin and encourage them in being righteous. If he were to neglect his role as a watchman, he would have been accountable for his lack of action (Eze. 3:18). God said that he was responsible to do his work of warning. He also said that both the wicked and the righteous were going to be held accountable for their response to the message that Ezekiel would bring.

We are told in RT/CV that man was radically corrupted to his core when Adam sinned and, because of that, man is wholly incapable of turning to God. If this doctrine is true, the student of Scripture runs into a major problem with Ezekiel! The current generation of Jewish captives had been blaming the previous generation for their sorrows (Eze. 18:1-2). In response to this, God proclaimed that He would bring their blame-shifting to an end (Eze. 18:3). Jeremiah dealt with the same complaint from his contemporaries (Jer. 31:27-30). Ezekiel used a scenario of three generations of men and how they each behaved. Consider what God, through the prophet, revealed to Israel.

**Generation 1** - Ezekiel 18:5 reads, “*But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right...*” Notice that there is no previous generation to either blame or thank for the condition of the “just man.” There is no

hint of an inherited, sinful nature. There is just a man and he is just. Verses 6-9 lay out the case for him as a “just man.” The Hebrew term used is defined in the Baker and Carpenter Word Studies as a term that has “moral and ethical significance. Someone is considered to be just or righteous because of conformity to a given standard.” Fortunately, the Biblical text reveals what the standard is. “*Hath walked in My statutes, and hath kept My judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God*” (Eze. 18:9). This is not difficult! It certainly does not match up with RT/CV.

**Generation 2** - Ezekiel 18:10-13 speaks of the just man’s son and he is the exact opposite of his father! Just by doing a casual reading of the text, something is missing that RT/CV teaches should be there. He should be able to agree with the Israelites and say “*The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.*” However, the Bible simply says, “*...he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him*” (Eze. 18:13). There is no

justification of his sinful behavior by claiming a sinful nature. There is no “corrupt to the core” excuse given because that is not a Biblical doctrine. He sinned. He shall die.

**Generation 3** - The wicked man has a son and notice what the text says of him: “*...seeth all his father’s sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like*” (Eze. 18:14). Note carefully - he sees, considers, and does not act like his father. If RT/CV were true, this verse makes no sense! According to Reformation Theology, Ezekiel 18:14 should read, “*The wicked man’s son sees, considers, and does exactly like his wicked father because he too has a sinful nature that was corrupted by the sin of Adam.*” RT/CV is a truly arbitrary, hopeless, man-made, system of theology! The wicked can turn - of his own volition - from his wickedness and live (Eze. 18:21-22). The righteous can turn - of his own volition - from his righteousness and die (Eze. 18:24). God’s way is equitable (Eze. 18:25-29). God’s desire is for a sinner to turn from his sin and live (Eze. 18:30-32). RT/CV has man stuck in sin until and unless God forces him into faith by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. I guess Ezekiel forgot to include that detail!

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**T**he idea of election is to choose, to select. In the Old Testament times, Israel was God's chosen, elect nation. They were chosen to receive special blessings and to be a special vehicle for Divine purposes (Gen. 12:1-3; Gal. 3:8, 19). God stated the reasons Israel was His chosen people. One, they were to be a possession unto God (Deut. 7:6-8). Two, a light to the Gentiles (Isa. 42:6; 49:6; 51:4) and three, the nation through whom Messiah came (Isa. 42, 49, 50, 53; Gal. 3:19; Lk. 1:31-33, 54-55; Rom. 11:28). God's choice of the nation of Israel was not an arbitrary selection for individual, personal salvation of Jews. Rather, it was about the nation through whom God provided the blessings (Jn. 4:22; Gen. 25:23). The promise that God made with Abraham and continued through Isaac and Jacob, was all about the families of the earth having access to God's redemption through their descendant, Jesus Messiah (Gen. 12:3; 17:6-8, 17-21; 22:15-18; 28:1-4). Obviously, salvation for individuals would accompany these promises and blessings that were given to Abraham and his descendants. That was the plan. That's the way God chose to do it. God has made choices as to the people involved and the plan that is to be obeyed.

Abraham had a choice to make, if he would believe and obey God or not (Gen. 22:18). The same is true today of those who desire to be right with God. Today we are amenable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not the Mosaic law (Mt. 5:17; Lk. 24:44; Gal. 3:19-25). Now that Christ has accomplished the will of the Father (Jn. 19:30), all can be children of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26). Paul wrote that the Christians in Galatia were children of God because they had been baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27). How does the concept of election work under the New Covenant?

**All who are IN CHRIST are included in God's election.** God chose Abraham (and all in him); God chose Jacob (and his descendants); God chose David (and his descendants) for the purposes mentioned above. God chose Christ (and all in Him). Just as all who were "in" Abraham, Israel, and David were included in their election, so it is with Christ. The election of Christ involves the election of those IN CHRIST. The plan of God for salvation today is spoken of in the words of being: foreknown (1 Pet. 1:20; Rom. 8:29), predestined (Acts 4:28; Eph. 1:5; Rom. 8:29-30), and loved before the foundation of the world (Jn. 17:24; Eph. 1:4). God chooses a category, a group - obedient believers IN CHRIST. Christians are in Christ in a similar way that the Jews were in Abraham and humanity is in Adam (Eph. 1:10). Not the exact way, nor for the same exact purposes, but the concept of a certain group of people is the same.

**In Christ, Christians share the election of Abraham.** As Christ is the unique "seed" of Abraham (Gal. 3:16), so those who are IN CHRIST are the offspring or children of Abraham (Gal. 3:29; Gen. 12:3). As spiritual children of Abraham through Christ, Christians share his election and blessings. They become children of Israel, so that the same group terms are applied to them (1 Pet. 2:4-5, 9). All of this is because they share Christ's election. As He is "The Elect One" or "The Chosen One," Christians are called "the elect ones" (1 Pet. 1:1-2). They share Abraham's and Israel's election by sharing Christ's election. Just as Abraham's and Israel's election was corporate and included their descendants, so God in choosing Christ chose all those who are IN CHRIST. One was in Abraham by natural birth; one is in Christ by a spiritual birth (Gal. 3:27; John 3:3-5; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Titus 3:5).

**It is NOT said in Scripture that God has chosen Christians INDIVIDUALLY. He has chosen those IN CHRIST; He has NOT chosen WHO will be in Christ.** God elects a community, and the community He chooses NOW are those IN CHRIST. Personal acceptance of the Gospel, or rejection of it, determines who

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the elect are individually. A person "judges" himself worthy, or unworthy, of eternal life by reception or rejection of the Gospel (Acts 13:46). Some try to use Ephesians 1:4 to prove "Reformed Theology." This passage simply says God had elected the Christians at Ephesus "in Him" [Christ]. Paul was describing what has been previously explained above in this article. Since Christ is God's elect, those IN Christ are God's elect. This harmonizes with other important doctrinal truths revealed in the Bible - man's free will, God's will, Gospel preaching, reception or rejection of the Gospel, God's love for all the inhabitants of the world, God wanting ALL to come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved, and God not wishing that ANY should perish but that ALL should come to repentance (Josh. 24:15; 2 Pet. 3:9; Mk. 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:21; Jn. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4).

**Jesus is calling you through the Gospel to be added to the number of His elect people** (2 Thes. 2:13-14; Eph. 6:17; Mk. 16:15)! If you will but come to Him in obedient faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26; Gal. 3:27; Mk. 16:16), He will put you IN CHRIST where all spiritual blessings are found - where you will be numbered among God's elect and share in the blessings of Christ's election (Eph. 1:3, 7)! God has not "fixed" the number of those who are saved and lost. The blessings of salvation are available to "whoever desires" (Rev. 22:17). RT says the Jews who rejected Jesus didn't "desire" it, but Jesus says they weren't "willing" (Jn. 5:39-40)! Are you willing?

**T**he teachings that flow from RT/CV are among the most destructive and blasphemous heresies of all false doctrines in the religious world. To be very clear, RT/CV's god is not the God of the Bible! The god of RT/CV is a monster who has purposely and deliberately ordered condemnation to men who have no free will or choice in the matter. They are simply predestined to hell. If RT/CV's view of God is accurate, then nothing really matters. Why? Because, if you are predestined to hell, there is nothing you can do about it. Even if you wanted to be saved, you could not. What is most tragic about RT/CV is that it has crept into the hearts and minds of the church that belongs to Jesus! Evidently, some of our own brethren have failed to "test the spirits" (1 Jn. 4:1) to determine if RT/CV is of God.

The third basic tenet of RT/CV is that Christ died only for the ones God has unconditionally chosen to save, also known as "Limited Atonement." The implications of this tenet are a natural outgrowth of the doctrine of "Unconditional Election" which is the second basic tenet of RT/CV. Essentially, the false doctrine of "Limited Atonement" teaches that Christ died only for the elect. In other words, Jesus came to save the saved! David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas in their book called "The Five Points of Calvinism, Defined, Defended, Documented," said, "*Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Holy Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation*" (p. 17). There are a multitude of passages that RT/CV misuses and abuses to support their false notions. Space doesn't permit me to address every one. Thus, I plan to address a few in the remainder of this article.

**John 10:15.** The argument made from this verse is that Jesus died only for His sheep, which RT/CV take to mean "His elect." RT/CV would say that Jesus' atoning sacrifice was limited to His sheep or "the elect." The way to answer this argument is by appealing to the context. In verse 16 Jesus expressed that there are "*other sheep I have which are not of this fold*" who would come into His fold. RT/CV denies that an individual can change from "sheep not of His fold" to "sheep of His fold." Also, there are many other examples of individuals who changed from being "not of His fold" to being a part of "His fold." They include the Corinthians (1 Cor. 6:9-11) and the apostle Paul (1 Tim. 1:13-14).

**1 Timothy 2:3-4.** Does this passage affirm that the salvation that God offers through Christ is limited to only the elect? The answer is a resounding no! As a matter of fact, it affirms the opposite! God "*desires ALL men to be saved.*" If this is the case, then why are not all men saved? The answer is found in John 5:40, which Jesus expressed to the unbelieving Jews that they "*were*

*not willing to come to Me that you may have life.*" Friends, it is true that Jesus died for all of humanity. But, it is also true that many will not have the desire to embrace His sacrifice. It is also true that salvation is limited to those who "*obey Him*" (Heb. 5:8-9). But, it is not true that salvation is limited to those whom God unconditionally elected before the foundation of the world, regardless of the choices humanity makes!

**Titus 2:11-12.** God refutes RT/CV in this one passage! Does this passage state that God's salvation is limited to only the elect whom He chose from the foundation of the world, regardless of what man does? No, it certainly does not! Paul clearly states that salvation "*has appeared to ALL men.*" But again, not all men will embrace this salvation. In order for the salvation that God has brought to the world through His son to benefit a person, that person must respond to it favorably. For example, in Acts 13:44-46 some of the Jews were "*filled with envy*" after hearing the "*things spoken by Paul.*" Paul proceeded to tell them that they rejected the word and thus judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life. How did these particular Jews "*judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life?*" They did so by rejecting the word! These Jews decided, through their own will, to not be saved. Thus, man is either willing or he is not. God is not going to coerce one into obedience. Yes, He has brought salvation to all, but that doesn't mean all will accept. Is this not clear? Yes, it is! Why does RT/CV make it so convoluted?

**Romans 9:13.** This passage has been used by RT/CV as a proof text to support the tenet of "Limited Atonement." The argument used in relation to this passage is that the love of God in giving Jesus as a sacrifice was not a general kindness to all creation. Rather, it was a special and discriminating love, the favor which He bears to His own people, as distinct from others. Dear readers, this line of reasoning sounds quite different than the Biblical teaching that "*there is no partiality with God*" (Rom. 2:11). Romans 9:13 simply shows that God was not unrighteous in His selection of Jacob to be an ancestor of the Messiah. Admittedly, this passage shows that God preferred Jacob over Esau even before his birth. However, this preference was in regard to the election of the descendants of Jacob as the people through whom the Messiah would come, not in their salvation! Friends, the gospel is for all (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16). Jesus died for all people (Lk. 19:10; Jn. 12:32; Rom. 5:18; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; 1 Tim. 4:10; Heb. 2:9). The blood of Christ can wash away anyone's sins (1 Jn. 2:1-2). It would be extremely difficult for us to devise a teaching which would be more out of harmony with the teachings of the Bible than the doctrine known as "Limited Atonement." This false doctrine stands in direct opposition to the death of Jesus for all (Jn. 12:32) and the Father's desire for all to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4).

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**The Churches of Christ**

- Bible only (2 Pet. 1:3)
- Name of Christ (Rom. 16:16)
- Began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4)
- Established by Jesus (Matt. 16:18)
- Purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28)
- Married to Christ (Rom. 7:4)
- Established in the 1st century (Acts 2:47)
- Jesus the Head of the One Body (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23)
- Added to the church by God (Acts 2:41, 47)

**Salvation**

- Saved by grace, though faith (Eph. 2:8-9)
- Not by faith alone (Jas. 2:14-26)
- Not by grace alone (Matt. 7:21)
- Belief and baptism (Mk. 16:16)
- Repentance and baptism (Acts 2:37-38)
- Belief, confession, and baptism (Acts 8:37-38)
- Hear, belief, baptism (Acts 18:8)
- Faith and baptism (Gal. 3:26-27)
- Baptism does save us (1 Pet. 3:21)

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