

An Exposé on Reformed Theology (RT) and Calvinism (CV), Part 5

About God's Choice

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The more and more I have studied the wicked doctrines that fall under the heading of *Calvinism* or *Reformed Theology*, it becomes more apparent that there are only certain passages to which they appeal for their doctrines. Romans 9-11 is one such passage. From just a surface reading, the RT/CV doctrine of election may appear to be taught. After all, those who hold to RT/CV will reference what Paul wrote: *"As it is written, Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid"* (Rom. 9:13-14). With other verses from that chapter the claim will be made that God has, from all eternity, predetermined the saved and the lost. That is not all! It is also claimed that the numbers of the saved and lost are so certain that they cannot be altered at all! Each one's salvation has been predetermined by God and nothing can be done and, if you question it, you are accused of questioning the wisdom and sovereignty of God. Here are some questions to think about...

- Did God's choice of Jacob have anything to do with Jacob's personal salvation?
- Does God's choice of Jacob have anything to do with my individual salvation?
- Is Romans 9 a proof of the validity of the doctrines of RT/CV?

"...Romans 9 does not belong to Calvin and his systematic beliefs."

In regard to God's choice of Jacob as recorded in Genesis 25:19-26, we have to start in Genesis 12 with the promises to Abram. God promised Abram a land, a great nation, and the Messiah (Gen. 12:1-3). Those promises were reiterated to Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 26:4-5; 28:10-15). Scripture reveals that all three of those promises have been fulfilled. The fulfillment of the land promise is seen throughout the book of Joshua (Jos. 21:43-45). Jacob (Israel) became a great nation (Deut. 10:22). The promise of the seed has been realized in Christ. Paul wrote, *"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ"* (Gal. 3:16). The promises had nothing to do with the guaranteed salvation of any particular individual, but with the development of the Jewish nation and the eventual life of Christ. The point is that Romans 9 does not belong to Calvin and his systematic

beliefs.

A closer examination of God's promise to Isaac and Rebekah will help in our understanding of this issue. *"Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger"* (Gen. 25:23). The holy God was not selecting certain individuals for salvation and certain individuals for condemnation. That belief system not only contradicts a multitude of passages in Scripture, but it also contradicts the very nature of God Himself! God chose a nation - Israel - through whom the Christ would come to bless all nations with the opportunity of salvation.

Well, what of Romans 9? What of *"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy"* (Rom. 9:15)? Doesn't that verse prove the position of RT/CV? Not at all. God had selected a people - Jews - to accomplish His purpose of bringing the seed of Abraham into the world so that all nations could be blessed by Him. That

is not, as RT/CV teaches, God choosing only certain individuals for salvation and others for eternal condemnation. The problem with the Jewish nation is revealed at the end of Romans 9 when Paul wrote, *"But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and a rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed"* (Rom. 9:31-33). The Jews were more concerned with keeping the works of the Law of Moses than they were about looking for the one to whom the Law pointed - Christ. They were more concerned about their tithes than they were *"judgment and the love of God"* (Lk. 11:42). Jesus told them, *"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life...For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me"* (Jn. 5:39-40, 46). Romans 9 does not "prove" RT/CV and the foolish notion that God has selected only certain individuals to be saved. God selected the means by which all are saved - Christ.

The term “irresistible grace” often conjures up images of God dragging people against their will to the pool of grace He uses to save them. It is this ill-conceived notion that is often refuted in the church of Christ. I am convinced many of my brethren have not researched the topic adequately enough to properly articulate what Irresistible Grace (IG) is to the satisfaction of the informed Reformed Theologian/Calvinist. This article is going to be very simple. We are going to define IG and then offer a refutation from Scripture. One refutation is all it takes. If we can find just one place in Scripture where man successfully resisted God’s will to change his nature and apply grace, then we need look no further, nor do we need to deal with any other passage that seems to teach the idea of IG.

DEFINED. IG is not the notion that God will save someone whether or not they want to be saved. RT/CV teaches that man is degenerate and in this degenerate, depraved state he cannot and will not come to God for grace. It teaches that God the Father, through the medium of the Holy Spirit, **MUST** regenerate the heart to make it alive and then the gift of faith is given. If this miraculous, involuntary rebirth is not applied, then the man in question is hopeless, remaining in a state of total depravity because God chose not to save him. R.C. Sproul in a series of articles attests to this misconception of IG: *“However, the idea of irresistibility conjures up the idea that one cannot possibly offer any resistance to the grace of God. However, the history of the human race is the history of relentless resistance to the sweetness of the grace of God. Irresistible grace does not mean that God’s grace is incapable of being resisted. Indeed, we are capable of resisting God’s grace, and we do resist it”* (<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/tulip-and-reformed-theology-irresistiblegrace>). Notice the admission that God’s grace is able to be resisted. This is a very effective equivocation. Many who disagree with IG as they have been taught will read an article like the one quoted above and see the reasonableness of the explanation and be swayed. The easiest way to guard against this is to actually define IG the way RT/CV scholars define it. Let us allow Sproul to go on and define what IG actually is: *“The Holy Spirit changes the inclination and disposition of our wills, so that whereas we were previously unwilling to embrace Christ, now we are willing, and more than willing. Indeed, we aren’t dragged to Christ, we run to Christ, and we embrace Him joyfully because the Spirit has changed our hearts. They are no longer hearts of stone that are impervious to the commands of God and to the invitations of the gospel. God melts the hardness of our hearts when He makes us new creatures”* (www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/tulip-and-reformed-theology-irresistible-grace).

According to the expert, Sproul, God changes a man against the man’s own will so that he will desire God. This is horrendous! It is reminiscent of the date rape drug. This despicable doctrine would have God taking away any and all autonomy of will and power to consent from man,

thus making him nothing more than a soulless, mindless robot. There can be no virtue in following God because, according to this pernicious doctrine, man has had his power of consent removed from him. We understand this principle of consent very well when we talk about rape. If a man applies a drug to a woman who, when sober, denies his sexual advances, then once the drug is applied, she allows him, of her own volition might I add, to have sex with her, he is considered a rapist. Why? In her natural, sober-minded state she wants no part of his sexual advances. According to the doctrine of IG, man wants no part of God and is resistant to His advances. So instead of God convincing man of the virtues of following Him, He, like the date rapist, applies a mind altering power (the Holy Spirit) to the man and robs him of his power to consent. Can we not see the similarities? I feel like we do not even need to go to Scripture to refute this foolishness because it does not stand up to honest, reasonable scrutiny.

REBUTTED. So, can we find one place where Scripture explicitly states that man resisted the Holy Spirit when He was trying to bring him to the fold? Of course we can! From a cursory glance at Stephen’s sermon recorded in Acts 7 we see that, indeed, the Holy Spirit **CAN** be resisted. Even if we make the case that Stephen was talking about the past and not the men in front of him, we still have an explicit statement from an inspired speaker, recorded by an inspired writer, that the Holy Spirit, God, has been resisted. Therefore He can be resisted. *“Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye”* (Acts 7:51). Here we have the explicit statement that these men to whom Stephen preached Christ were resisting the Holy Spirit. One might

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well ask, how does this affect the issue of IG? Well, IG is based on the presumed truthfulness that man has absolutely no free will and cannot, under any circumstances, defy God’s sovereign will concerning salvation. Therefore, if we find but one instance where God’s will in salvation is defied, the whole notion of IG and other RT/CV doctrines fall apart. Sproul comes mighty close to making our argument for us: *“Therefore, I prefer the term effectual grace, because the irresistible grace of God effects what God intends it to effect”* (<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/tulip-and-reformed-theology-irresistible-grace>).

“God effects what God intends it to effect,” meaning, if you are elect, that is, specially chosen by God according to His sovereign will, you will be given a regenerated heart in spite of your attempts to the contrary. God has changed your desire so that you will come to God so He can effect you with grace. How sad to serve a god like that! You want to resist, but your mind is changed against your will. What was the Holy Spirit trying to do through Stephen’s preaching if not regenerate the hearts of the men who were hearing? Since the Holy Spirit’s efforts at regeneration were resisted, then the grace was resisted, thus making the idea of IG a fool’s folly.

Another tenet of RT/CV is the false concept known as “preservation of the saints.” Some have referred to it as “perseverance of the saints.” However, the concept behind “perseverance” implies action on man’s part, and RT/CV doesn’t believe that man contributes one whit to the salvation of his soul. On the contrary, the concept behind “preservation” more accurately describes the position of RT/CV. The etymology of the word “preservation” signifies the idea of “guarding beforehand.” RT/CV believes and teaches that God “guards beforehand” those who have been unconditionally elected, and there is nothing they can do to be lost eternally. RT/CV proposes that since the “elected” can do nothing to be saved, he needs to do nothing to remain saved and that anything he would do in any way that would affect his salvation would negate the “miraculous” work of God in saving him. Essentially, RT/CV denies that a child of God can ever apostatize so as to be finally lost. When biblical examples are introduced to the contrary, it is claimed that either such souls were never saved, or else their loss was merely temporal. Clearly, RT/CV is concerned about defending their theology instead of honestly examining the Scriptures in order to arrive to the truth on this matter. Admittedly, this doctrine is full of comfort (a deceptive comfort). For example, the idea that no matter what sort of evil the Christian does or how long he does it, he will never be consigned to hell brings comfort and convenience to an individual. No doubt, Satan could not have concocted a more alluring teaching.

The doctrine of “preservation of the saints” is based upon the assumption that the elect individual is clothed in the personal righteousness of Jesus Christ. Therefore, when God looks at him, He does not see the sins of the elect one, rather He sees the perfection of Jesus. Thus, one does not have to be concerned with doing righteousness if he is one whom God has elected to save. This is the Calvinistic doctrine of imputation. RT/CV believes and teaches that the guilt of Adam’s sin was imputed to the whole human race and that all are sinners by virtue of the fact that being descendants of Adam they inherited the guilt of his sin. RT/CV goes on to propose that the perfect life of Christ is imputed to the elect individual. God, in viewing that individual, only sees the personal righteousness of Jesus, not the sins of the sinner. Friends, this implies that the “elect” can continue to sin because Christ lived a sinless life in his stead and the innocence of Christ now clothes him. Thus, he is relieved of any responsibility for living a godly life. He doesn’t even have to correct his wrongs because he will not be judged by his own actions, but by the perfect life Jesus lived. How absurd! No wonder people follow this false doctrine. It allows man to live the way he wants and still be saved. The Bible clearly states that one who is considered righteous is one who practices righteousness (1 Jn. 3:7), not the one who has had the personal righteousness of Jesus imputed to him. A sinner becomes righteous by pardon made possible by the

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atonement death of Jesus, not by imputation of His perfect life (Matt. 26:28; Rom. 5:8-9). The atoning death of Jesus provides for the sinner’s pardon if he will face up to his responsibility to repent and then obey God’s law of pardon (Acts 2:38; 1 Jn. 1:7-9). There are a multitude of passages that RT/CV use in order to promulgate their ideology of “preservation of the saints.” Let’s notice some.

John 15:1-6. In these verses, Jesus warns His disciples to continue to abide in Him. If it is impossible for a Christian to depart from Christ, then Jesus’ warning has no meaning. If Jesus’ personal righteousness is imputed to me, then why should I find any motivation to follow the words of Jesus in these verses? Jesus’ affirmation is clear. Abiding in Him is essential to avoid being burned in the fire! I am not sure Jesus could have made it any clearer! The possibility of losing one’s salvation is clearly implied!

Acts 8:9-24. Simon believed and was baptized (v. 13). Therefore, he was a child of God. After becoming a child of God, he sought to buy the gift of God with money (vs. 18-19). He was told he was “poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity” (v. 23). He was commanded to “repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart can be forgiven you” (v. 22). So, one inspired man, Luke, called Simon a baptized believer. Another inspired man, Peter, told him he would perish with his money. Simon, though a child of God, had sins that needed to be forgiven or he would perish (v. 20). Simon had fallen from grace. What other logical conclusion could be drawn?

Romans 11:22. This text is a warning to Gentile Christians who were in God’s “goodness”. If they failed to continue in God’s goodness, they would be “cut off.” Why didn’t Paul say, “don’t worry, Jesus’ personal righteousness will be imputed to you?” The possibility of losing one’s salvation is clearly taught!

1 Corinthians 9:27. Not even the staunchest Calvinist would deny that the apostle Paul was a Christian. Yet, in this text, Paul said, that even after preaching to others, he could be “disqualified.” The idea is, he could be lost even though he was a Christian. Thus, the doctrine of “preservation of the saints” does not stand!

Hebrews 6:4-6. The people under consideration in this passage were: “once enlightened,” “tasted the heavenly gift,” “partakers of the Holy Spirit,” and had “tasted the good word of God.” Even RT/CV believes these descriptions are referring to Christians. Not only could these Christians fall away, but they could fall so far away that it would be impossible to renew them to repentance. The possibility of losing one’s salvation is concretely asserted!

The Bible teaches that the believer is secure in his salvation as long as he remains faithful to the will of God (2 Tim. 4:7-8). The Word of God also teaches that a child of God can voluntarily, by his sins, separate himself from God and be lost. RT/CV’s concept of “preservation of the saints” is a false doctrine that must be rejected!

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- 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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