

The Order of Salvation

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God has granted us the blessings of salvation in an orderly and experiential manner. The distinct order in which the blessings are applied to God's people is based on three important truths. First of all, this plan of salvation is based on the sovereignty of God. God is sovereign over all things, specifically the salvation of man. God exercises His perfect will and sovereignty in this area according to Ephesians 1:11: "in whom (Christ) we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

The second truth, upon which the order of salvation depends, is the truth of man's total depravity. Due to the total unworthiness of man to atone for his own sins, man is dead in sin, totally unable to do any type of good. The fact that man is saved, therefore, is totally of grace.

The third truth is that salvation is a wonderful gift which has been given to us by God through His Son. The scriptures teach that salvation is entirely of grace: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8) The wonder of this gift is that God does not give it to us in an automatic nor mechanical manner, but has chosen to work it out experientially in our lives by the Holy Spirit. Throughout our lives as children of God we experience more and more the blessings of salvation as we grow in our Christian life. In order to better understand and experience the joy of our salvation, it is important that we know and understand the steps of our salvation. These steps are: regeneration, calling, faith, conversion, justification, sanctification, preservation, and glorification.

There are a few things which we must understand concerning the order in which we experience this gift. First, the experience of our salvation is a life-long process. Many of the steps of salvation are repeated throughout the life of the child of God, as again and again he experiences the joys of conversion, faith, and sanctification.

Secondly, although there are definite steps in this process, the steps do not occur in a purely temporal manner. The order of salvation is better described as experiential. The believer experiences a logical progression from one benefit to another so that the steps overlap and occur simultaneously at times.

Thirdly, the order in which the Spirit leads us to experience the joys of our salvation is a logical order, based on the teaching of Romans 8:29, 30:

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Election is the source of every good gift, including the gift of salvation. As a result of being elected, the child of God is born again, or regenerated. The order which I have given, of regeneration preceding calling, has often been challenged in the Reformed tradition. The calling has been understood to come before regeneration. Most attempts to switch these two steps can be traced to different emphases and definitions. As the steps of salvation are defined in the coming months we will be given an insight into this controversy.

More important than the order, however, are the steps themselves as they display the great love of God for His people. Every step in the plan of salvation has been merited by the blood of Christ, and has been made our own by means of the Spirit's saving work in our hearts. As we discuss and define the various steps, thank God for these wonderful gifts which we are privileged to experience even now already in this life!

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