

The Ordo Salutis (The Order of Salvation)



The "Ordo salutis" is a Latin term which means "the order of salvation". It speaks of a way of organizing all the events and realities in the process of salvation, in the order that they show up in an individual's life when he is joined to Christ by the Holy Spirit. This first thing to remember is that we must never separate the benefits (regeneration, justification, sanctification) from the Benefactor (Jesus Christ). The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration, etc.) is the work of God in Christ and is by grace alone.

All the benefits of redemption such as conversion (faith & repentance), justification, sanctification and perseverance presuppose a renewed heart (the existence of spiritual life) which believes. The work of applying God's grace is a unitary process given to the elect simultaneously. This is instantaneous, but there is definitely a causal order (regeneration giving rise to all the rest). Though these benefits cannot be separated, it is helpful to distinguish them. Therefore, instead of imposing a chronological order we should view these as a unitary work of God to bring us into union with Christ. We must always keep in mind that the orders expressed in the following articles occur together or happen simultaneously like heat and fire. All aspects of the work of God continue together throughout the life of a Christian.

Jesus Christ is the source of all redemptive blessings, including regeneration, justification, sanctification (1 Cor 1:30). Election is the superstructure of our ordo salutis (a blueprint, so to speak, of what God intends to do for elect sinners in time), but not itself the application of redemption. Regeneration, the work of the Holy Spirit which brings us into a living union with Christ, has a causal priority over the other aspects of the process of salvation.

- God opens our eyes, we see.
- God circumcises/ unplugs our ears, we hear.
- Jesus calls a dead and buried Lazarus out of the grave, he comes;
- In the same way, the Holy Spirit applies regeneration, (opening our spiritual eyes and renewing our affections), immediately and infallibly resulting in faith.

Historically in the Church there has been disagreement about the order of salvation, especially between those in the Reformed and Arminian camps. The following two perspectives of God's order in carrying out His redemptive work reveals the stark contrast between these two main historic views. Keep in mind that both viewpoints are based on the redemptive work which Christ accomplished for His people in history:

- *In the Reformed camp, the ordo salutis is 1) election/predestination (in Christ), 2) Atonement 3) gospel call 4) inward call 5) regeneration, 6) conversion (faith & repentance), 7) justification, 8) sanctification, and 9) glorification. (Rom 8:29-30)*
- *In the Arminian camp, the ordo salutis is 1) outward call 2) faith/election, 3) repentance, 4) regeneration, 5) justification, 6) perseverance, 7) glorification.*

Notice the crucial difference in the orders of regeneration and faith. While the Reformed position believes spiritual life is a prerequisite for the existence of the other aspects of salvation, the Arminians believe that fallen, natural man retains the moral capacity to receive or reject the gospel of his own power. Even with the help of grace he still must find it within himself to believe or reject Christ. This has broad implications and raises questions like why does one man believe and not another? You might also notice that, according to Arminians, election is dependent on faith, not the other way around. This is no small matter ...understanding the biblical order, while keeping in mind its unitary process, is crucial and has a profound impact on how one views God, the gospel, and the Bible as a whole.

But how can regeneration (life) come before justification? some might ask. This is because causes and effects usually happen at the same time. God creates the world and it exists. It did not hesitate 5 seconds but sprung into existence the same moment he called it into existence. When a pool ball hits another, they touch at the same time, but only ONE is the cause of the other moving. Likewise, God breathes new life into us and we breathe. God opens our eyes and we see, He gives us a new heart and we believe. no time delay takes place. They occur simultaneously, but one actually CAUSES the other. Faith is the fruit of grace and as such we can only ascribe all glory to God.