



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: LESSON 147

**Ordo Salutis** – With respect to the doctrine of salvation, Reformed theologians often refer to three Latin phrases – “Pactum Salutis,” “Historia Salutis,” and “Ordo Salutis.” With pactum salutis they are talking about the covenant of redemption, the eternal intratrinitarian decree and agreement of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, to save sinful man. With historia salutis they are referring to the history of salvation, broadly looking at how God saved His people in history, but more specifically what Christ actually accomplished once for all, in time and history, in order to fulfill the eternal decree of God and accomplish redemption for His people. And finally with ordo salutis they are talking about the order with which God applies Christ’s work of salvation to individuals, throughout time and history.

While theologians throughout church history have looked at various elements of salvation, at varying levels of detail, the significance and systematization of the order of salvation is an outcome of Reformed theology. The 17<sup>th</sup> century Westminster Confession of Faith clearly outlines such an order of salvation.

Though the Bible does not present an exact or complete list of events, it does clearly imply an order in the application of the work of salvation. In John 1:12 it is clear that faith is prior to adoption; in Acts 13:48 we see that God’s appointment of people to eternal life precedes their faith; in John 3:3 we see that regeneration is prior to entering the kingdom of God; in 1 Peter 1:23 the hearing of the Word of God precedes regeneration; in Ephesians 1:13-14 we read that the hearing of the gospel message comes first, then believing it, and then being sealed with the Holy Spirit, which is a guarantee that we will possess our full redemption in glory; in Galatians 2:16 we see that faith precedes justification; in Romans 10:8-9 it is clear that first the gospel is proclaimed, then there is confession and faith in Christ, and then salvation (justification); in Romans 6:22 we are told that having been saved, we are now slaves of God, which leads to a life of progressive sanctification, with its end being eternal life; in Romans 5:2 we see that salvation through Christ is received by faith, which will lead to our ultimate hope of eternal glory; in Jude 1:24 believers are comforted that God will preserve them, and will present them blameless, fully glorified; and in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 we see some of the key elements of the doctrine of salvation presented in relation to one another, such as election, calling, faith, sanctification and glorification.

Though salvation is often referred to as a single event, from these verses it is clear that there are a number of distinct elements involved in the process of salvation, and that there is a logical order or priority of arrangement in this process, which must be correctly understood and their order maintained.

The most detailed passage with respect to such an intended order of salvation is Romans 8:29-30. Though this is not an exhaustive list of elements, nevertheless it is the broadest outline in Scripture of the various elements of salvation in relation to one another. The elements presented are foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification and glorification. This is often referred to as the golden chain of salvation, depicting an unbreakable chain or order by which God saves His people. From eternity past God chose and predestined some to be saved, and those whom He predestined will all be called, will all be justified, and will all be finally glorified. Paul is saying that salvation, from the beginning to the end, from its conception to its accomplishment and its application, is wholly the work of God and God alone.

From a Reformed perspective, a more detailed order of salvation is commonly outlined as calling, regeneration, faith and repentance (also as conversion), justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification. However, as stated above, the source and fount of the order of salvation rest in the foreknowledge and predestination of God, being part of His decree, established in eternity. Looking at salvation from such a perspective, brings about great clarity and precision to the doctrine of salvation, and ultimately enables us to see that this work, from its conception to its consummation, is wholly the work of God, who is the “author and finisher of our faith” (1 Corinthians 4:7; Hebrews 12:2).