

Sequences of Redemption #1

This may seem to be an odd title, but it refers to several places in the NT where it records a sequence of determinations, actions, events, and states of our relationship to God, from eternity past to eternity future. Although we think of these as sequential in time, yet to God they are not sequential, because he is outside of time. We should rather see them more as a logical sequence. Several of these are in Romans, so we will start there.

Rom. 8:28 – “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

This shows the general sequence of how God deals with us: He had a purpose for us from the very beginning, even before we existed. This resulted in our being called, and brought into right relationship with God. This in turn produced love in our hearts to him that saved us. Then for us (who are “the called” and have genuine love in our hearts for God), all things work together for good.

Then in verses 29 and 30 Paul goes into much more detail about what I am referring to as a “sequence”.

Rom. 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.”

If this may seem confusing, but here is the order of the “sequence”:

1	Foreknowledge	God is omniscient (“all-knowing”), and therefore “foreknows” all events. That is, he knows beforehand everything that will happen. Nothing takes God by surprise – he doesn’t have to react to unforeseen circumstances in any part of his creation. This is why he can give predictions through the prophets of what would happen with Christ, of Israel, or end-time events, etc., centuries or even millennia before they actually happened (or will yet happen). Ac. 2:23 – Jesus was delivered “by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”, but it was still the responsibility of men who slew him. 1 P. 1:2 – “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father ...”
2	Predestination	Some people get all bent out of shape at the idea of predestination, but the word plainly occurs here and in other places (like Eph. 1), so it has to mean something. Another term, probably synonymous, is “foreordination” – that God has ordained things to occur. Ac. 4:28 – the enemies of God gathered together “to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done”. 1 P. 1:18-20 - We were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, “who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.” People disagree on what predestination means, but to deny it outright is to deny what these verses plainly state, and it would make predictive prophecy impossible. How can a prediction be valid if it is not destined to actually take place? How can God predict something that “might” happen, as if people and circumstances and history had to “cooperate” with his plan?

3	Calling	Predestination refers to all events of history, but as a part of his overall perfect plan, he gives a calling to men - not just the general call that goes out to all, as in the preaching of the gospel, but an effectual call that goes to the very heart of those that are saved. As a part of that call, he gives them new, spiritual life (the new birth), convicts them of sin and gives them repentance, opens their understanding to the redemption that is in Christ, and gives them the faith to act on all this, making a living profession of faith in Christ as their Saviour. He then seals them with the Holy Spirit as the earnest of their inheritance.
4	Justification	The result of the new birth experience described above is that the sinner is justified – made right in the eyes of God. It is the miracle of God’s love and wisdom whereby a guilty sinner whose life demands punishment and death, can justly be made right with God, and even come before him in bold confidence as a new son of God, by faith in Christ. God is totally just, and will not overlook sin. It MUST be punished. Yet he loves a people and is determined to bring them into his kingdom as sons. How can this be? Only by the offering of a perfect and spotless sacrifice to take the place of the sinner. Christ bore our guilt and punishment, and through his offering of himself (not only the perfect sacrifice, but the perfect high priest), we can be be justly forgiven. The price has been paid.
5	Glorification	The result of our justification is that we are glorified. Notice that it does not say that he <u>will</u> glorify us, but that he already has. We may not look like it, but in God’s eyes we already bear the glory of Christ himself! He is the head and we are the body. There will be a time when the redeemed will shine forth in the glory of God’s kingdom, clothed in linen white and clean, but even now, God and the angels can look at the lowliest saint on earth and see, not the dirt and grime or the rags, or our weakness and failures, but “Christ in you, the hope of glory”. Our future glorification will be visible to all, whereby now it is not evident to the world, or even to ourselves. It is one of the things we take by faith, without seeing it (yet). Yet to us who are saved, we can sometimes recognize the glory of salvation in others, through their countenance and conversation. It is “the joy of the Lord”.
6	Conformation to Jesus’ image	The ultimate purpose of our calling and justification is not merely that we be glorified as reflectors of God’s glory, but that we should be conformed to Christ’s image. That is, we are to actually become like he is. We will never have his position as the Son of God, but we are even now real, adopted sons of God, and should be like him. In the future eternal state (after we die or are raptured and are dwelling in his heavenly presence), this will be quite true and apparent, but here in this life it is a gradual transformation (Rom. 12:2) whereby we are metamorphosized, or transformed from selfish and filthy sinners to what God desires us to be. How? By the renewing of our minds, through the Word, and prayer, and active participation in a living, local body of believers, through trials, and tribulations, and chastenings, and the experiences of trusting God now, in this physical world.

This lesson has largely been about the sequence of redemption from God’s perspective. The next lesson will show some sequences for the here-and-now, in our daily walk with Christ.

This lesson and most of my previous lesson notes and audio recordings are available at <https://hnslack.wixsite.com/mysite>. Although it is possible to access it on a cell phone, it is definitely easier to navigate and read on a computer screen. It is possible to have the notes open in one window while listening to the recording in another window.