

The Reformed Doctrine of Redemption

Justification by Faith Alone

1. Romans 3:28 – “For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.”
2. Romans 4:5 – “And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.”
3. Romans 5:1 – “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
4. Galatians 2:16 – “Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”
5. Galatians 3:11 – “Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’”
6. Philippians 3:9 – “...not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.”
7. Genesis 15:6 (quoted in Romans 4 and Galatians 3) – “And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.”

Total Depravity

“Scripture clearly teaches that justification is by faith alone. Romans 3:28 says we are ‘justified by faith apart from works of the law.’ Romans 4:5 says faith, not works, is counted as righteousness. Galatians 2:16 repeats three times that we are justified by faith in Christ and not by works. Philippians 3:9 contrasts the righteousness of the law with the righteousness from God through faith. From Abraham in Genesis 15:6 to Paul’s teaching in Romans and Galatians, the testimony is consistent: we are justified by faith alone in Christ alone.”

“Total depravity means every part of human nature is corrupted by sin—mind, will, heart, and affections—so that apart from God’s grace no one seeks Him or can please Him. Scripture says man’s thoughts are only evil continually (Gen. 6:5), the heart is desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9), none is righteous (Rom. 3:10), the natural mind is hostile to God (Rom. 8:7), and we are dead in

sin by nature (Eph. 2:1). This shows we cannot save ourselves but are utterly dependent on God's sovereign grace."

Universal Sinfulness

- Genesis 6:5 – "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."
- Psalm 14:2–3 / Psalm 53:2–3 – "They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one." (Paul quotes this in Romans 3).
- Romans 3:10–12 – "None is righteous, no, not one... no one seeks for God."

Sin in Heart, Mind, and Will

- Jeremiah 17:9 – "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"
- Ephesians 4:18 – "They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart."
- Titus 1:15 – "To the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled."

Bondage to Sin

- John 8:34 – "Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin."
- Romans 6:17 – "You were once slaves of sin."
- Romans 8:7–8 – "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God... it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

Dead in Sin

- Ephesians 2:1–3 – "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked... by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."

- Colossians 2:13 – “And you, who were dead in your trespasses... God made alive together with him.”

Unconditional Election

Unconditional election is the Reformed doctrine that God chose, before the foundation of the world, certain individuals to salvation, not based on any foreseen merit, faith, or works in them, but solely out of His sovereign grace and good pleasure. Here’s how you’d want to handle it in an exam setting:

“Unconditional election means that before the foundation of the world God chose a people for Himself, not based on any foreseen faith or merit in them, but solely out of His sovereign grace and good pleasure. Scripture says He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), that His choice was not because of works but because of Him who calls (Rom. 9:11), and that as many as were ordained to eternal life believed (Acts 13:48). Thus, salvation depends not on man’s will or effort, but on God who shows mercy.”

- God’s election is unconditional—it does not depend on human decision, works, or worthiness (Romans 9:11, 16).
- It rests entirely in God’s sovereign will and love (Ephesians 1:4–5).
- Those whom God elects, Christ redeems, and the Spirit calls effectually.

Chosen before time, not based on works

- Ephesians 1:4–5 – “He chose us in him before the foundation of the world... In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.”
- Romans 9:11–13 – Jacob and Esau chosen “though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls.”
- Romans 9:16 – “So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.”

Election unto salvation

- Acts 13:48 – “As many as were appointed to eternal life believed.”
- 2 Thessalonians 2:13 – “God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.”

Not by our merit

- 2 Timothy 1:9 – “[God] saved us and called us... not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.”
- John 15:16 – “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.”

Limited Atonement

Limited atonement teaches that Christ's death was designed to actually secure salvation for the elect, not merely make salvation possible for all. His atonement is sufficient for all, but efficient only for those given to Him by the Father.

“Limited atonement means Christ died specifically and effectually for the elect. He lays down His life for His sheep (John 10), loves the church and gives Himself for her (Eph. 5:25), and secures eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12). His death and His intercession are for the same group (John 17), showing His atonement cannot fail. While the atonement is sufficient for all, it is efficient only for those the Father gave to the Son (John 6:37–39).”

Christ dies for His sheep / people / church

- John 10:14–15 – “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me... I lay down my life for the sheep.”
- John 10:26–28 – Jesus contrasts His sheep (who believe) with those who are not His sheep.
- Matthew 1:21 – “He will save his people from their sins.”
- Ephesians 5:25 – “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”
- Acts 20:28 – “...the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”

Christ intercedes for the same people He died for

- John 17:9 – “I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.”
- Romans 8:33–34 ties Christ’s death and intercession together, showing they apply to the elect.

Effectual accomplishment

- John 6:37–39 – “All that the Father gives me will come to me... and I will raise him up on the last day.”
- Christ’s mission succeeds — He loses none of those given to Him.
- Hebrews 9:12 – Christ “entered once for all into the holy places... by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.”

Addressing the “All” Passages

- 1 Timothy 2:6 (“ransom for all”) = all kinds of people, not all without exception (context: rulers, Gentiles, etc.).
- 2 Peter 3:9 (“not wishing that any should perish”) = any of His elect, not universalism.

Irresistible Grace (Effectual Calling)

Irresistible grace means that when God, by His Spirit, effectually calls a sinner to salvation, that call cannot finally be resisted. It does not mean people never resist God outwardly (Acts 7:51 shows they do), but that when the Spirit intends to bring someone to Christ, He inwardly renews the heart so that the sinner willingly and certainly comes to faith.

“Irresistible grace, or effectual calling, is the Spirit’s work of drawing the elect to Christ so that they certainly and willingly come to Him. Jesus says all the Father gives Him will come (John 6:37), no one can come unless drawn by the Father (John 6:44), and those whom God calls He also justifies (Rom. 8:30). Lydia’s conversion shows this: the Lord opened her heart (Acts 16:14). Irresistible grace does not mean God drags sinners unwilling, but that He renews the heart so they freely embrace Christ.”

Effectual Calling

- John 6:37 – “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”
- John 6:44 – “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.”
- Romans 8:30 – “Those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified...” (God’s call unfailingly results in justification).
- 1 Corinthians 1:23–24 – To the called, Christ is “the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

New Heart / Regeneration

- Ezekiel 36:26–27 – “I will give you a new heart... I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.”
- John 3:5–8 – One must be “born of water and the Spirit” to enter the kingdom of God.
- Acts 16:14 – The Lord “opened [Lydia’s] heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.”

Clarifications

- Irresistible grace does not mean God saves people against their will; rather, He changes their will so that they freely and joyfully come to Christ.
- This is the Spirit’s inward work that makes the outward call of the gospel effective.

Perseverance of the Saints

Perseverance of the saints means that all those whom God has elected, redeemed by Christ, and effectually called by the Spirit will never finally fall away, but will persevere in faith to the end and be saved.

“The perseverance of the saints means that those whom God has elected, redeemed, and called can never finally fall away but will be kept by God’s power through faith to the end. Jesus said no one can snatch His sheep from His hand (John 10:28–29), Paul assures us that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Rom. 8:38–39), and Peter says we are guarded

by God's power for salvation (1 Pet. 1:5). Perseverance rests not on our strength but on God's preserving grace."

- It does not mean believers never sin, but that God preserves them through faith.
- This doctrine rests not on human strength but on God's unchanging grace and Christ's finished work.

Jesus' promise of preservation

- John 10:28–29 – "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father... is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."
- John 6:37, 39–40 – "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out... I will raise him up on the last day."

God's preserving power

- Philippians 1:6 – "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."
- 1 Peter 1:5 – "[You] by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."
- Jude 24 – "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy..."

Paul's assurance

- Romans 8:30 – "Those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." (The golden chain cannot be broken).
- Romans 8:38–39 – Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord

The Ordo Salutis

The ordo salutis (“order of salvation”) is the way Reformed theology describes the logical (not strictly chronological) sequence by which God applies redemption to the elect. Presbytery examiners will want to see that you know both the key steps and how they fit together biblically.

The ordo salutis is the Spirit’s application of Christ’s redemption to believers, moving from God’s eternal decree to glorification, in an order that highlights the connections between each grace.

“The ordo salutis is the Spirit’s application of Christ’s redemption to the elect. From God’s eternal election, the sinner is effectually called, regenerated, brought to conversion in repentance and faith, justified, adopted, sanctified, preserved, and finally glorified. Scripture shows this golden chain in Romans 8:29–30 and expands it throughout the New Testament. The order is logical rather than strictly chronological, but it highlights that salvation is all of grace and that each benefit flows from union with Christ.”

Typical Reformed Order

1. Election (Ephesians 1:4; Romans 8:29–30)
 - God’s eternal choice of the elect before the foundation of the world.
2. Effectual Calling (Romans 8:30; 2 Thess. 2:14)
 - By Word and Spirit, God summons the elect into fellowship with Christ.
3. Regeneration (John 3:3–8; Titus 3:5)
 - New birth; God implants new spiritual life.
4. Conversion (Acts 20:21)
 - The human response to God’s work: repentance and faith.
5. Justification (Romans 5:1; Galatians 2:16)
 - God declares the sinner righteous on the basis of Christ’s righteousness imputed and received by faith alone.
6. Adoption (Romans 8:15–17; 1 John 3:1)

- Believers are received as God's children and heirs.

7. Sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3; Hebrews 12:14)

- Progressive growth in holiness, by the Spirit's work and our active obedience.

8. Perseverance (John 10:28–29; Philippians 1:6)

- God preserves believers so that they continue in faith to the end.

9. Glorification (Romans 8:30; 1 John 3:2)

- Final transformation into Christ's image in body and soul.