

Solus Christus

Justin Deeter – October 22, 2017



The sum and substance of the Christian life is rooted in Jesus Christ. The Christian life orbits around him, just as the earth to the sun. The gravity of his glory grounds us in him. The light of his glory warms our hearts. The whole measure of the Bible points to Christ. He is the pinnacle of God’s revelation towards us, and our only hope in life and death. It is in Christ alone, that our wretched sin was paid for on the cross. In Christ alone, God graciously justifies us by faith. In Christ alone, unrighteous sinners are given the righteousness of God. In Christ alone, the throng of death disperses and eternal life comes. In Christ alone, the blessings of our heavenly reward have been won, secured by resurrected victory! In love God has given us every good thing, and all that blessing comes in Christ alone.

Yet, how quickly does the church depart from her foundation! Our hearts meander through life looking for hope where hope can’t be found, looking for peace where peace won’t come. The Church must cling to Christ, for he is our hope and peace! It is folly to look to the things of earth to satisfy our restless hearts. It’s utter foolishness to trust in our own efforts to earn forgiveness and redemption. Only when we fling ourselves upon Christ alone, will we know the blessings of joy and peace.

As the Gospel was reclaimed during the Protestant Reformation, the reformers centered their movement on Christ Jesus. The people had become distracted and had begun to build their hope on the church (rather than Christ)

for salvation. They depended on a Pope who sold indulgences, priests who forgave sins through private confession, or participation in the sacraments to receive God's grace. In addition, the Church encouraged praying to saints and the Virgin Mary. All this stole attention away from Jesus and began to provide alternative ways for salvation. As the reformers began to rediscover the Gospel of grace, they discovered that the entire hope of the Christian is dependent on Christ alone. Jesus wasn't a small part of the story of redemption, rather *everything* centers upon him!

Yet, church's today can still stray from this foundation. They've grounded their fellowship in allegiance to a particular political platform or promotion of a certain national agenda. They center their fellowship on their socio-economic status, enjoying fellowship with those of only the same skin tone or social class. Churches ground their identity on ministries and programs that cater to their own personal preferences, so they can build a private social club of their curated network of friends. Slowly, the church drifts from Christ. The gospel becomes old news that no one talks about anymore and everyone just assumes. Sermons stop focusing on Jesus and instead focusing on practical life skills that focus on people's therapeutic needs—or worse, American politics. Evangelism ceases because the church has lost its missional fervor. How many churches have forgotten that ALL our hope is in Christ alone! We are long over due for a reformation, a revolution of the gospel that awakens slumbering churches. May the Spirit breath valley over the valley of dry bones we call the American church and bring revival as prophets proclaim the Gospel. Renewal will not come without a Gospel awakening. Explosive evangelistic growth will not come until our hearts are made alive in Christ!

Reformation begins in our own individual hearts. It begins in your heart. Where is your heart this morning? Are you captivated that all of your hope is in Christ alone? Is your soul slumbering in light of all that's been given to us in Christ? My hope this morning (as it is every Sunday morning) is to direct your gaze to Jesus. Fix your eyes on him and him alone. We are going to take a look this morning at the fourth motto of the Reformation, *solus Christus* (in Christ alone). As we do, we will look at just three ways *solus Christus* impacts our hope from three different Scriptures. Though I hope to teach you of the truth of what Christ has done, my ultimate aim that you leave this morning loving Christ more. For those slumbering, I pray you'd awaken and give your lives to Jesus.

1. In Christ alone, our salvation is given (Acts 4:8-12)

Early in the book of Acts, Peter and John are brought before the religious leaders in Jerusalem. In the last few weeks, these disciples had seen the resurrected Christ and watched him ascend into heaven. A few days later they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. With great evangelistic zeal, they preached with great power and they reached many with the Gospel. Miracles even accompanied the ministry of the apostles, as Peter healed a man who could not walk. The Christian commotion of the early church attracted the attention of the religious leaders. As Peter and John are brought before the council, they were filled with the Spirit, and Peter spoke:

"Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:8–12, ESV)

In this bold passage we see Peter make it clear that it is in Christ alone that salvation comes. Salvation can be found in no other individual other than Jesus himself. Even though these religious leaders had rejected Jesus as the messiah, crucifying him, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. Salvation comes only to those who build their life on this cornerstone, who put their faith and trust in Christ alone. "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Solus Christus (in Christ alone) means that Jesus is the only way for salvation. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the father except by him. Salvation is exclusively found in Christ Jesus. Every other philosophy comes up empty and every other world religion rings hollow. Only in Jesus, can humanity be saved from their sin.

But, how does Jesus save us? Why is he the only one that can give us salvation?

I'll let one of the reformers, John Calvin answer that for us:

"Christ stepped in, took the punishment upon himself and bore the judgment due to sinners. With his own blood he expiated the sins which made them enemies of God and thereby satisfied him...we look to Christ

alone for divine favour and fatherly love! ...Hence Christ is called "King of peace" (Is. 9:6) and "our peace" (Eph 2:14) because he quiets all agitations of conscience. If we ask the means, we must come to the sacrifice by which God has been appeased. For anyone unconvinced that God is appeased by that one atonement in which Christ endured his wrath will never cease to tremble. In short, we must seek peace for ourselves solely in the anguish of Christ our Redeemer." ¹

You see, salvation was given to us through the anguish of Christ. Though we are convicted and condemned in our sin, Jesus brings peace by appeasing the wrath of the Father towards us. Through his death he atones for our sins, paying the penalty that we deserved to pay. As the apostle Paul puts it "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." ² God's love poured out for us as he poured out his wrath upon his son. Because of Christ alone, our sins are forgiven. Only Jesus, being both fully God and man, could endure the penalty for our sin. Only he possessed the righteousness we need to stand justified before God.

As we remember solus Christus, we must first remember that it is in Christ alone, our salvation is given.

2. In Christ alone, our suffering is purposeful (Philippians 3:7-11)

Secondly, we see that in Christ alone, our suffering is purposeful. When a person is saved by Christ, they embark on a lifelong journey of holiness and mission. We

¹ John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion 2.16.2

² 2 Corinthians 5:21, ESV

wage a battle against our own flesh, our own proclivity to temptation and sin. We also fight a war against the kingdom of darkness, as we seek to spread the good news of Christ to the ends of the earth. In the long and difficult journey called the Christian life, we will encounter sufferings of many kinds—persecution, mocking critics, aching sorrow, vicious abuse, debilitating sickness, and much more. The New Testament doesn't attempt to hide or obscure the difficulties that can befall Jesus' followers. Though we suffer, we do not suffer without purpose. Though we anguish, we do not do so in vain. Rather, in Christ alone, our suffering takes on purpose beyond what we could have imagined for ourselves.

The apostle Paul has such a singular focus on Jesus, that he gladly counted all things as loss, even if it meant certain suffering, because he gained Christ. Let me read you his words,

"But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, 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— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:7-11, ESV)

Christ alone was of such worth and value, that Paul gladly gave up everything to follow him. He was convinced of the Gospel, that he could not stand before God in his own righteousness, but he needed the righteousness from God that depends on faith. He believed he was saved by grace alone through faith alone. However, he gives up all things so that he could gain Christ alone. If he suffers all things, what is his ultimate loss? If he shares in the sufferings of Christ, even becoming

like him in his death, what did he lose? Rather, though the sacrifice and through the suffering, Paul gained a treasure beyond all comparison. Paul anchored his life in Christ alone, and through his sufferings as a follower of Jesus, he received more of Christ!

It is through suffering as a Christian, that we can know more deeply our savior. When our whole life is found in Christ alone, our life recapitulates the life of Christ. Just as we share in the sufferings of Christ, so too will we share in his resurrected victory!

Some of you deeply need to remind yourselves of this: Christ alone is enough in your suffering, and your suffering is a gift that allows you to more deeply know him. It is through the weakness and frailty that the strength and vigor of Christ comes upon us. Some of you face all sorts of sorrow and suffering in your life this morning, perhaps wounds and pains that are unimaginable. I'm here to tell you, that Christ is enough. He alone makes your suffering purposeful, and gives you hope in the midst of it. Christ alone will help you to endure the narrow way to life, a way that's often filled with heartache and disappointment. Fix your eyes on Christ alone. Count everything as loss, gladly! As long as you have Jesus, there is purpose and hope! In Christ alone, our suffering is purposeful.

3. In Christ alone, our victory is certain. (1 Corinthians 15:20-22)

Thirdly, in Christ alone, our victory is certain. Christ alone gives us salvation through his death on the cross as the only way to the Father. Christ alone sets his people on the difficult path of suffering, providing purpose and hope in life's long journey. However, Christ alone makes certain our victory! The only hope for a better future, our only hope both in life and in death is Jesus alone! Because he not only died, but he rose again, victoriously on the third day!

The Corinthian church had been questioning the reality of the resurrection, and the apostle Paul insists, that resurrection *must* be a reality. If it wasn't, than our hope is in vain. He goes on to say,

"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:20-22, ESV)

Christ alone makes the dead alive. He alone possesses resurrection power. In Adam, all of humanity is included under his condemnation. We are born sinners, and we are born with the certain consequences of death. However, Christ has been raised from the dead, and his resurrection is the first fruits of what's to come! Those who have fallen asleep in Christ, have done just that—fallen asleep! Because, just as death came through one man, resurrected life has come by the new man, Jesus. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."

It is in Christ alone that ensures our victory. He alone makes us alive. The believer in Christ Jesus never has to fear death. For death has lost its power over him. Death no longer holds sway over him. There is no need to fear the grave. At the death bed of every believer in Christ Jesus is certain victory! Anyone who finds their life in Christ, has received the certainty of resurrected life. Death is a defeated foe. As it is written, the dead in Christ will one day be raised, sharing the same resurrected body as Christ Jesus himself now has as he sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven!

We've witnessed a great deal of suffering lately in our church, and it seems like we must confront death often as we watch our brothers and sisters succumb to disease. As we comfort one another in suffering and loss, we empathize with tears but we must preach to one another the Gospel. We must remind each other of the power of the resurrected Christ who will shatter the shackles of death that enslaves us. We must proclaim to one another that death does not have the final word. Remember, Christ has been raised! We must never forget the last verse to the song we sang earlier in our worship:

*No guilt in life, no fear in death—
This is the pow'r of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home—
Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.*

In Christ alone, there is certain victory, promised to us by the historical actuality of Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead. Because he has been raised, those who placed their faith in him will also be raised. In Christ alone, our victory is certain.

Final Thoughts

Why does Solus Christus matter today? Because, we still have such a temptation to take our eyes off of Jesus. Solus Christus matters because all of our lives and all of our church must be centered on him! May God give us eyes to see the glory of the son of God, and may he lock our eyes permanently on him. For there is no other upon whom we can be saved, there is no other who provides purpose in our suffering, there is no other who ensures certain victory, even over death itself! Every good thing you've been given in the Gospel has been won for you by Jesus.

J. C. Ryle powerfully summed up what *solus Christus* is all about. He said,

In Christ alone, there is a full supply of all that we require for the needs of our souls. Of ourselves we are all poor, empty creatures . . .

*empty of righteousness and peace,
empty of strength and comfort,
empty of courage and patience,
empty of power to persevere in the way of holiness,
or make progress in this evil world.*

It is in Christ alone, that all these things are to be found – grace, peace, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. It is just in proportion as we live upon Him, that we are strong Christians.

It is only when self is nothing and Christ is all our confidence – that are we armed for the battle of life, and shall overcome. Only then are we prepared for the journey of life, and shall move forward.

*To live on Christ,
to draw all from Christ,
to do all in the strength of Christ,
to be ever looking to Christ –
this is the true secret of spiritual prosperity!³*

³ J. C. Ryle, Thoughts for Young Men.

If you need forgiveness from sin, look to Christ alone! If you need righteousness, look to Christ alone! If you need power and strength, look to Christ alone! May our church and our lives be centered upon Christ alone, and may all glory go to Christ!