

Christ Alone

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[0:00] Amen. So Jesus Christ is an amazing and all-sufficient Savior, isn't He?

That's what it's all about. That's what stands at the very center of our faith. So we could talk about this Reformation stuff that we've been talking about all day.

Now if you're concerned about my saying that, that I actually intend to do that, I want to assure you not to worry. But we could write more books about it than we could read in a lifetime.

I could probably preach on the doctrines of the Reformation every week for the rest of my life. But at its core, the Reformation is very simple. It boils down to this.

It is all about Jesus. So we've talked about salvation by grace alone through faith alone. We've talked about Scripture alone as the sufficient source for all that we believe and all that we practice.

[1:39] Because it's in the pages of the Bible, of course, that we find the Gospel message. And what do we need beyond that? The Gospel is sufficient. So is our Savior. And all of these doctrines find their source and their center in the person of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Christ and Christ alone saves. Jesus saves. If you don't remember anything else from this morning's sermon, remember that. Jesus saves.

To hold to the biblical Gospel doctrine recovered and reaffirmed at the Reformation is simply to say from the bottom of our hearts, my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. That's what it's all about. That's what the Reformation is about. That's, of course, what sound biblical doctrine is about. That's what saving faith is about.

That's what the Christian life is about. The absolute centrality and sufficiency of Jesus Christ alone for our salvation.

[2:52] So let's think about this Reformation slogan of Christ alone this morning. Talking about Christ alone. What does this tell us about Christ?

What does it tell us about the Gospel? Again, I could preach all day on this topic, but I'm not going to. I want us to focus in on a couple of points this morning.

Jesus is the only Savior. And Jesus is the sufficient Savior. Jesus is our only Savior.

Our only hope of salvation. We read in John 14. Where Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me.

Now that had to be reasserted by Luther, the other reformers in his day, because the church had accumulated so much extra stuff on top of the basic gospel message.

[3:56] Fundamentally, many in the church were, first of all, teaching that salvation is something that we merit. The idea that our standing before God depends on us racking up merit through good works.

Now throw in the fact as well that many people didn't have any knowledge of the Bible. Worship was conducted in a language they didn't understand. Indulgences were being sold for the remission of the punishment that was said that was due to sin.

And is it any wonder that so many people didn't really understand how to be saved? Is it any wonder that so many people didn't have any real assurance that they would be saved?

The reformation from the start was a Christ-centered movement. Jesus was central. All of this other stuff couldn't save.

Just sitting in church as a spectator in a worship service you don't understand doesn't save anyone. Just doing your best to do good works doesn't save anyone.

[5:07] The reformers realized that all of these accumulations, these corruptions of the biblical gospel, distracted people from Jesus and led to the false impression that salvation is found in salvation.

Some other way than through faith in Christ's blood. And let's be real. We need to hear the centrality of Christ and Him crucified afresh in our day.

We need to be reminded that Christ is the only Savior, the only way to the Father. Because, let's be honest, we live in a time when if we're going to say that salvation is found only in Christ, that He and He alone is the way, the truth, and the life, that He is the only way to the Father, that He is the only way to the Father.

Well, people are going to think we're a bunch of closed-minded fanatics. But that's okay, we should say it anyway. And some of the same errors in Luther's day are still with us.

That basic assumption that I can be saved by doing good works, that that will please God. The assumption that I can be saved by simply showing up to church from time to time.

[6:32] Or the assumption that I can be saved by being respectably religious. Those errors are still with us. And then we've added to more. Our culture has added to more.

I'm right with God because I try my best to be a good person. I'm right with God because I try to be nice. I'm right with God because, well, I feel like I'm right with God. I'm right with God because I'm spiritual, whatever I mean by that.

I'm right with God because He blandly approves of everything as long as a good time was had by all. Or I'm right with God because I'm sincere. Do I need to go on?

But what does Jesus say? I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Now, there is this natural reaction against what Jesus is saying here, isn't there?

There's a reason that people didn't like Him saying that then, and many people still don't like Him saying that now. This impulse to say, well, man, that is really unfair, that there is only one way to the Father just doesn't seem right.

[7:50] But if we're thinking that, I believe it's a clear sign that we don't understand the depths and seriousness of our own sin. How horrid it really is.

And that we don't understand what it costs God to send His only Son so that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have everlasting life. But when we think about it rightly, we see that the offer of the Gospel goes out to the undeserving.

It goes out to people like me. Sorry, don't mean to offend, but it goes out to people like you.

Undeserving people like us. And that's the really amazing thing.

The amazing thing is for me to know that I am saved in Christ alone, not because of what I've done, but because of what He accomplished on the cross.

Because of what He accomplished when He rose victorious from the grave on the third day. That is amazing. So I'm not shy to say, I know, my good works can't save me.

[9:05] My sincerity can't save me. My being spiritual, whatever that means, can't save me. Just showing up to church, as good as showing up to church is, still can't save me.

My best attempts to be a nice person can't save me. So what can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. It can and it does.

Praise the living God. So Christ is the only Savior. Christ is our only hope of salvation. And that's part of what we mean by our Reformation slogan of Christ alone.

But, that is not all that we mean. We mean that Christ is an all-sufficient Savior.

That Christ is all that we need. And that's absolutely central, not only to what the Reformation is about, but to what the Gospel is about.

[10:09] See, our reading from Hebrews for this morning sets up this sharp contrast. On the one hand, we have the Old Testament priests who offered the blood of bulls and goats time after time.

And yet all those sacrifices could never put away sin. Right? But Jesus is our high priest and He's a different kind of priest.

Because the Old Testament priests would stand and offer their sacrifices daily. And again, never take away sin. But Jesus is different, isn't He?

We read Hebrews 10, starting at verse 12. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until His enemies should be made a footstool for His feet.

For by a single offering, He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. He offered Himself for us on the cross once.

[11:17] That's all it took. One sacrifice of Himself. And He's perfected us for all time if we believe. What a great privilege to be a believer and a Savior who has perfected us for all time.

Is there anything else we need? Praise Jesus. And as we read in Hebrews 7, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him.

Save to the uttermost. Is there anything else you could need beyond the uttermost? Praise Jesus. We've really gotten to the heart of our Reformation doctrines.

We're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, because Christ's one sacrifice is all it takes to save us, is sufficient to save us.

Because Christ is able to save to the uttermost those who call on His name. That's what this Reformation thing is all about. While we're on the topic of Christ's sufficiency, though, it has to be said that sometimes this has been misunderstood.

[12:35] So Luther's opponent, the opponents of the other Reformers, went on the attack, basically by saying, so if you believe that your salvation is secure, that Christ has done everything, you believe that salvation is found only in Christ alone, if you really believe that, then that basically means that you're saying that people can live in any way they want.

It doesn't matter. Let me be clear. That is not what the Reformers were saying. And that's not what Luther was saying.

It's true that we are justified by faith alone, but as Luther reminded us, the kind of saving faith that justifies is always accompanied by good works. So, let's talk about sanctification.

So we can't talk about the sufficiency of Christ without raising that topic. Sanctification. The process of being transformed by the Holy Spirit into deeper obedience to God and deeper holiness always follows justification.

If we're justified, if we're right with God and our sins are forgiven, that means that an obedient and godly life will follow. Granted, not perfectly in this life, but over the course of our lives in Christ, we will be changed by the Holy Spirit from the inside out.

[14:12] Raise this point because if we are to say otherwise, we're to ignore sanctification, to ignore the importance of Christian holiness, to ignore the importance of obeying Christ as Lord of our lives.

If we do that, we're actually undermining the sufficiency of Christ as our Savior. A Savior who saves us not only from the guilt of sin, but from the power of sin in our lives.

Lately, I've been reading the classic work Holiness by the great evangelical Anglican Bishop J.C. Ryle. Ryle puts it this way, He who supposes that Jesus Christ only lived and died and rose again in order to provide justification and forgiveness of sins for his people has yet much to learn.

Whether he knows it or not, he is dishonoring our blessed Lord and making him only half a Savior. The Lord Jesus has undertaken everything that his people's souls require.

Not only to deliver them from the guilt of their sins by his atoning death, but from the dominion of their sins by placing in their hearts the Holy Spirit not only to justify them, but also to sanctify them.

[15:31] Sanctification is something that we cannot overlook if we really believe that Christ is an all-sufficient Savior. Savior. But he is an all-sufficient Savior in every way.

So we exalt Christ. We exalt Christ. We exalt Christ alone. That little slogan of Christ alone is a challenge to everyone.

It's a challenge to the unbeliever when confronted with the reality that faith in Christ is the only way to salvation, the only way to eternal life, the only way to the Father.

It's a challenge to the believer too. Isn't it a challenge to really believe that Christ is sufficient? On the one side, we're always tempted to fall into that mindset of self-righteousness, of thinking that somehow it's our works making us right with God instead of the finished work of Christ, instead of His shed blood.

And on the other side, we're tempted to forget the call that forgiven people have to be holy people, to be obedient servants of Christ, and to wage war against sin, against the flesh, and against the devil.

[16:52] Not so that we might be forgiven, but because we have been forgiven. But I will tell you, my brothers and my sisters, I cannot overstate how important it is for us to fix our eyes and our hearts on Christ alone.

He is exalted. He is the Savior. He is sufficient. And the guilt and the power of our sin are no match for Him. Let's look to Him with confidence. The Reformation boldly proclaimed these truths, and so should we.

The great revival since then have boldly proclaimed these truths, and so should we. Because when Christ is exalted, when sinners place their trust in Him as their only and their all-sufficient hope, when God's people are dedicated to living holy lives, even in the midst of an unbelieving world,

amazing things happen.

revival comes, the Spirit moves, when salvation in Christ alone is proclaimed and treasured as it should be.

Christ is seen. Christ is trusted. Christ is loved. Christ is obeyed. And Christ is glorified. So I pray, Father, we look to Your Son, we look to Christ and Him crucified, we exalt Christ and pray that You would pour out Your Spirit, that it would begin in our hearts today, that Jesus might be glorified in us and through us.

[18 : 33] So we eagerly await that day when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to Your glory. Amen.