

Christ Alone

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[0 : 00] Well, here we are. We're on the second part of a five-part series on the solas. Remember, last week we talked about sola gratis, which is only by grace we are saved.

And today we're finding out how we are saved. How is it that God's grace comes into our life? It is by Christ alone. So, solas Christus is what we're going to be talking about.

And the marvelous thing about these five solas, these five onlys that we're going to be talking about, is they all lead us to Jesus Christ.

It turns our eyes to Him so that we see Him in all of His glory. And that's what's great about this passage, or this series. As you all know, we've just gone through a period of about two weeks of having an air quality advisory.

And if it hadn't been for that smoke that has been descending on the lower mainland, we would have seen beautiful, blue, clear, sunny days that we had before.

[1 : 06] But you all know that smoke from the wildfires in the interior meant that we were a city that was blanketed with smog. So you couldn't see the mountains.

You couldn't see that beautiful blue sky. And the sun was pretty murky. It was red or orange for part of the day. And some of us had a lot of trouble breathing.

And I think that this is a good picture of the church at the time of Martin Luther, 16th century. Because in the place of the church where the Son of God should be most clearly seen, Jesus' beautiful salvation was obscured.

And that is because greed and power and corruption within the church were like wildfires that created a haze, hiding Jesus' glory and His saving power.

And even teaching that seemed good was being taught that said that you needed to contribute to your salvation.

[2 : 15] You needed to help Jesus to save, like a sheep helping a shepherd that we talked about before. And leaders were turning the sacraments and the structure of the church into methods of increasing wealth and power.

So it was a dark time. The church taught that there are things you must do and money that must be paid so that you can make Jesus' saving work effective in your life and in the lives of your loved ones.

So salvation was something to be accomplished. Well, that haze became very widespread because it really speaks to our human sinful nature.

We have a tendency to take our eyes off Jesus and to turn them on to ourselves for our salvation.

We, in a sense, want to control our salvation.

And that's true today. Outside the church, somebody who is not a Christian, they often will believe in their heart that I don't need a Savior.

[3 : 20] And so their response to that lost sheep parable would be, good for that lost sheep, he's doing his own thing. You know, he's finding his own way in life. He's his own Savior.

The shepherd is really a crutch. And so I can find my health and my wellness, my salvation, in my exercise program, in my recreation, in my fulfilling job, in my being socially responsible in this life. And inside the church, we can feel very tempted to try to take charge of our own salvation as well so that we become achievement-focused and we want to help God with our salvation.

So almost unconsciously, we take on this belief that I help Jesus save me by the things that I do, by the prayers that I pray, or by the money that I give, by the way that I'm serving.

And so just like those on the outside of the church, we turn inward. We do things that are good in themselves for my salvation so that God will accept me, so that God will be good to me, you know, that I will have this good.

[4 : 36] I will somehow make this happen. But when the haze became the thickest, obscuring Jesus' salvation, God brought a wind into the church to clear it away.

And he did it through Martin Luther and through others who discovered, who rediscovered Jesus, Jesus alone, that the church was really built on. They discovered his magnificent grace-filled salvation in the Bible, and they taught it boldly.

And that's because the reformers saw how powerful and loving Jesus' work on the cross was for them. They discovered the central truth of the good news, that we are far more sinful than we could imagine, but far more loved than we could ever hope for.

And we find that only in Jesus. He is the salvation so great that we can contribute nothing to it. So what does that sola mean for us today as we listen?

Well, very simply, it teaches us to have a complete confidence in Jesus Christ. You know, it's saying to turn our eyes from ourself and to Jesus.

[5 : 52] There is a deep, deep assurance here that Jesus begins and he finishes your salvation. You know, if you have been a Christian for even a short time, it is very likely that you have experienced doubts about your salvation.

I mean, I have had conversations with people who have been deeply committed Christians all their life, into old age, and they ask this question, you know, does God really love me?

That's because Satan wants us to question Jesus' power to save us and to love us. He is moving us to look within ourselves and not to Jesus to save.

And so we say to ourselves, my sins are too great to be forgiven. My faith is too weak. I don't repent enough. I won't be able to continue.

I don't have the joy that I should have. I waver in holding on to Jesus. You know, have you ever thought any of those thoughts? If you're honest with yourself, you have.

[6 : 58] Maybe Jesus, God doesn't love me. Well, as Jeremy said, Martin Luther had those same thoughts, and it led to a real crisis in his faith. He looked to himself.

He worked harder than anyone to try to make himself acceptable to God, and he knew it wasn't enough. Thank God he saw that. Because he read about Jesus in the book of Romans, and God turned his eyes to Jesus alone for his salvation.

He found peace with God. And I want you to briefly look at Romans 8. This was so profound for Martin Luther. Look at Romans 8, 31 through 39.

And you can see how God does this for us. I'll read it to you. What then shall we say to these things? And that's all the things he's written in Romans, the blessing God has for us.

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also give us graciously all things?

[8 : 06] Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of God in Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written, for your sake, we are being killed all the day long.

We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

God turns our eyes to Jesus here. And he says, Jesus alone takes away two fundamental things that are barriers between us and God.

Condemnation and separation. And that's why in 31 through 34, it says that Jesus alone takes away the condemnation for our sins.

[9 : 23] And Paul looks into our hearts here. He knows that in our experience, we feel condemned as we deal with our sins. Satan accuses us.

As with all his lies, there is a half-truth to this because, yes, true justice says that we should be condemned for our sins. But God brings us into a courtroom in those verses.

And he asks three questions. He says, who can be against us? Who brings charges against you? And who shall condemn you?

And the answer to all three questions is obvious if you've been reading Romans 1 through 8. And that is no one. No one can. Why? Because the only one who can rightly condemn us is God. But he is for us. He is for us. How do we know that? It's because he gave his son to die for us in verses 32 and 34. And verse 34 goes on to say that more than that, Jesus was raised.

[10:29] And he rules. And indeed, he intercedes for us. You know, the great Scottish pastor, McShane, said, if I could hear Jesus praying for me, interceding for me, in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies.

Yet the distance makes no difference. He is praying for me. You see, this is how God is for us. And what is happening here is what Luther called a wonderful exchange in which our sins are no longer ours, but Christ's.

And the righteousness of Christ is not Christ's, but it is ours. As he goes on to explain it, he says, Jesus has emptied himself of his righteousness that he might clothe us with it and fill us with it. And he takes away from us our evils upon himself that he might deliver them, deliver us from them. It is the wonderful exchange.

And that is what sola Christus is all about. Only Jesus can do this. It is so powerful in exchange that we're actually united to Jesus. And nothing can separate us from the love of God in this world or in the world to come on judgment day.

[11:56] That's what verses 35 through 39 is all about. All separation is taken away. Because of Jesus alone, on God's judgment day, he will embrace you with his love.

That's what judgment day will mean for us. And in this life, in every hardship and turmoil, God's love will surround you. And he will fill you and pour out on you his love.

You know, in this little passage, Paul chooses all the things that can really make us feel far away from God. He says, shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or the sword separate us.

No, he says emphatically, look to Jesus and you will be sure that in every hard time, Jesus' love will enfold you. And that is the main thing.

It is Jesus alone that has done this. He alone is our greatest good. It's not having a building program. It's not having great music. It's not having ministry initiatives.

[13:03] It is Christ alone saving us. This is our greatest good. This is the main thing. And that's why salvation by Christ alone actually transformed the church, the Roman Catholic church as well.

It revitalized people's relationship with God. The church began to evangelize with love. And they were moved to serve because of Jesus' love.

It is this new realization of the shining glory of Jesus alone saving us. And I want to close with some words but I'm going to tell the children in about one minute or less I'm going to have you come up and show us what you've done.

Okay? I want to close with Charles Spurgeon's words. Charles really understood what Christ alone saving him meant. And I think it's because he went through a lot in his own life.

Listen to his words. This is the implication for us. And it's this. Remember, therefore, it's not your hold of Christ that saves you.

[14:10] It is Christ. It is not your joy in Christ that saves you. It is Christ. It's not even your faith in Christ although that is the instrument.

It is Christ's blood and merits. Therefore, do not look so much to your hand with which you are grasping Christ as to Christ.

Do not look to your hope to Jesus but look to Jesus, the source of your hope. Do not look to your faith but to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith.

This is what it means to be the lost sheep that a shepherd is grabbing hold of and putting on his shoulder. This is what it means in our life to know Jesus alone as our salvation.

Now I want to ask the children to come on up and bring your stuff with you and I want to hear a little bit more about the sheep. We've been talking about it as well, what it means that the shepherd alone saves us and there's a joy in that.

[15:14] There's a change. I'll start with the lost sheep first. Does anybody have some lost sheep? There's a sheep that is lost in a very imposing forest. That's very good.

Yes. Any more lost sheep? Wow. Here, I'll give you this. Give them to me, guys. Ah. Now here, now tell me where that sheep is lost.

Oh. Okay, this sheep is lost in a cave. I was pretty sure that was a cave and it is. A very dark cave. And who has not felt that way at times?

Any other lost here? Oh, and is this a shepherd's staff? Yeah, so he is saving the sheep by a shepherd's staff.

You know the staff protects you and also pulls you from the hard places to get hold of. That's what the shepherd does. Okay, now tell me a bit about this. That's a cave.

[16:15] Oh, so this is a cave and this is, this is, this is the shepherd even as a crook and the sheep is in the cave.

Oh, very good. My goodness. That, that sheep is in desperate need of a savior. Good. Maybe we'll do one. Big parties. Oh, we have a party. Okay, let's do a party here.

There's a big party. Oh, very good. My goodness. That looks like a party that I'd want to go to.

There you go. And there's a party in the sheep pen. Oh, there's a party in the sheep pen.

Look at that. Those are very happy sheep. My goodness. And Clara. And Clara has a party. And this is one of the, thank you so much. And what is this? It's the party. Oh, there's the party.

Look at that. Now that is a colorful party. They are having an amazing time because of this most wonderful thing that has happened that Jesus the shepherd has saved the sheep.

[17:10] And that's the biggest thing that we celebrate in church as well. Okay, I'm going to have you all sit down and you can grab your stuff and take them with you if you'd like or leave them up here because we like to to display them.

And I'm going to turn things over to Jeremy. Here's one last. Oh, that's a sheep that's caught in the bramble. That's very good. Caught in the brambles and the shepherd comes to save him.

And the sun is shining. They must have been listening to my sermon.