

“Solus Christus” - Christ Alone

Colossians 1:15 ESV (Pg. 572) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16** For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. **17** And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18** And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. **19** For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. **21** And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, **22** he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, **23** if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

- I. We are in a series called “The 5 Solas”. This refers to 5 affirmations that define true Christian belief, and expose false teaching in it’s many forms. Believers can hold various opinions about many things (the method of baptism, church government, chronology of the last days, etc.), but if we fail to embrace any of these five truths, we cease to have any basis to call ourselves Christians. They are that important.
 - A. These 5 affirmations are a belief in the authority of Scripture alone, the centrality of Christ alone, the power of grace alone, the necessity of faith alone and the the over-arching supremacy of the glory of God alone.
 1. In the 2,000 year history of the church, you would find that every heresy in the church was because of the abandonment or alteration of these truths.
 2. Every departure from true Christianity happens by neglecting at least one of these foundational realities. They work together. You can’t have three or four of them right, and neglect 1 or two of them. It’s an “all or nothing” deal!
 - B. For Example, last week Paul Landers spoke to us about “Sola Scriptura”-scripture alone is inspired (authored by God), inerrant (reliable, without error), clear, sufficient, and affirmed by Christ. Right belief recognizes the Bible as the final word. As Luther said “my conscience is captive to the Word of God.”
 1. Because of this, the other truths of Christ alone, grace alone, faith alone, and to the glory of God are dependent upon the authority of Scripture alone. Without a scriptural basis, all the other solas are meaningless. That’s why we start with the inspiration, inerrancy, clarity, and sufficiency of scripture alone.
 2. Jesus, correcting his opponents said **John 5:39 ESV** “You search **the Scriptures** because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that **bear witness about me.**” Today we focus on the centrality of Christ alone. That centrality is asserted by the Bible, God’s holy Word.
- II. Christ’s centrality is vital to the life of the church corporately, and is the essence of being a true believer. Often you will hear so-called “Christian” scholars who challenge (or deny) the deity, humanity of Christ; or worse, they will attempt to put him on equal footing with religious leaders like Mohammed or Buddha; saying that “all roads lead to the same place”, meaning all religions have the same goals.
 - A. But this is the description of Christianity if the Bible to supplies our definitions!

1. Christ is one of a kind: He is fully God and the perfect man; simultaneously 100% God and 100% man; not more of one and less of the other.
 2. He is the obedient Son, who modeled flawless servanthood, **Philippians 2:9 ESV** Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him **the name that is above every name, 10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
 - a) Jesus has no equal, and no rival. Mohammed and Buddha have long since rotted in their graves, along with 1,500 years worth of Popes.
 - b) At this moment, Christ sits alive, enthroned at the Father's right hand, making intercession for you and I, and all he purchased with his blood.
 3. All religions claim to help man on his search for God. Only Christianity tells of a God who came searching for man. The religions of the world make unending prescriptions to tell people how to be acceptable to God through faulty rites, ceremonies and sacrifices, but only Jesus gave his life to grant the worst of sinners his very own righteousness, making them acceptable through his work and merit, and through none of their own.
- B. In our text, Paul tells the Colossian church of the uniqueness and preeminence of Jesus Christ. It is his great declaration of "**Solus Christus**" - Christ alone.
1. He tells us several things about Christ. First, he is God; He is creator; He is sovereign; He is eternal. All of these attributes prove his divinity.
 2. As the holy God-man, Christ is the undisputed head of the church; he is the model of our future resurrection; he is mediator between God and mankind, that works salvation for us. We'll take some time to look at each of these.
- C. "**He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation**"
1. God told Moses that no one could see his face and live¹. Were our sinfulness exposed to his holiness, it would destroy us entirely. But Paul calls Christ "the image of the invisible God", indicating what was once unseen has been made known to us in Christ. John begins his 1st letter with these words:
 - a) **1 John 1:1 ESV** That which was from the beginning, which we have **heard**, which we have **seen with our eyes**, which we **looked upon** and have **touched with our hands**, concerning the word of life— **2** the life was **made manifest**, and we have **seen it**, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was **made manifest to us**— **3** that which we have **seen** and **heard** we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed **our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ**.
 - b) John also says that that no one has seen God, but Jesus has made him known²; or "has put him on display". Jesus told the disciples if they've seen him, they've seen the Father³. The writer of Hebrews calls Jesus "the exact imprint of (God's) nature". Jesus has shown us God in himself!
 2. Paul also calls him "the firstborn of all creation". This is not to indicate that Jesus had a physical beginning, the Bible is clear in other places that he did not; he is eternal. Rather, this speaks of Christ's rights and worthiness.

- a) In ancient cultures, the firstborn got first right of inheritance, and took over the family business when the time came. In days of Kings, it was the firstborn who inherited the throne and royal honors of his father.
 - b) Paul is saying that Jesus is the inheritor of all creation and all of it's worship, not in place of the Father (who never dies), but alongside of him.
- D. "For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities" Paul attributes the work of creation to the Son (not just the Father) to reaffirm that Jesus is fully God and always has been. Genesis 1:1 declares: "In the beginning, God..." (Jesus)
- 1. Jesus the created "all things" "in heaven and on earth". Jesus exercised creative thought and energy, forming the universe and everything in it.
 - 2. He also created things "visible and invisible", meaning not only material things, but the immaterial domain - heaven, hell, angels, and other spiritual realities. As the creator, Jesus has ultimate authority over everything.
- E. All things were created not just through him, but "for him". This proves Jesus' sovereignty! Jesus is King, and he alone is the goal of all creation!
- 1. **Romans 8:19 ESV** For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. **20** For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope **21** that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. **22** For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.
 - 2. All creation is waiting for the glorious culmination of God's plan through Jesus! When death is no more, and everything in all creation is made new and set free from decay and deterioration - including we who believe!
- F. "And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together" Jesus is eternal and he has eternal purposes for his creation and his people.
- 1. There are many voices telling us the earth is on the verge of a cataclysm! Coronavirus, global warming, or terrorism, we're gonna die a horrible death!
 - 2. When I was a kid, we sang, "He's got the whole world in his hands". Nothing will happen to this world until Jesus gives the final word. And when he does, he will remake this world entirely defect-free! But today, he still sees every sparrow that falls to the ground and has every hair of your head numbered.
- Hebrews 1:3b ESV** he upholds the universe by the word of his power.
- III. Christ alone-Solus Christus-is the Lord of Creation. He is also the Lord of redemption. In his ministry, he didn't tell people how to invite him into their hearts; he called people to repent and recognize him as sovereign King and only Savior.
- A. For Paul, this begins with Jesus proper place in his kingdom. "And he is the head of the body, the church". Jesus doesn't grant authority to popes, cardinals, councils, denominations, bishops, priests, pastors, missionaries, worship leaders, or Sunday-school teachers to lead his church. And he does not recognize the claim of any person who would usurp such authority.
- 1. Anyone who leads in the church must never forget that it is **his** church, that they are not the head, that they serve at the pleasure of their sovereign King, and that his model was to be the servant of everyone, not the dictator.

2. He is not only the head that sits atop the church, but the foundation that upholds it as well. **1 Corinthians 3:11 ESV** For no one can lay a foundation (for the church) other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
 - a) Therefore, Christ is the only thing worth preaching. We can't call people to pursue a God that helps them to be good, meeting all of their felt needs, and yet is ultimately Lord of nothing in their day-to-day lives.
 - b) We believe that Jesus matters in every aspect of our lives, but not as an accessory. He won't ride shotgun, he demands the driver's seat. This is why Paul boiled his entire ministry down to the preeminence of Christ.
 3. **1 Corinthians 2:2 ESV** And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. **2** For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.
 - a) Problems in your marriage? Try the gospel that says, "bear each others burdens and fulfill the law of Christ"⁴? Finances spiraling out of control? There's an app for that! It's called the gospel, and it says "lay up treasures for yourselves in heaven where thieves don't steal and moths and rust don't corrupt"⁵ and "you can't serve God and money"⁶!
 - b) The problem with too much preaching these days is that it trains us to manage our sin, and strive to become better versions of ourselves, instead of teaching us to bow the knee to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
- B. "He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent". Christ demonstrated the kind of life for believers when he emerged from the tomb. It was a new kind of life, over whom death would have power.
1. This doesn't just mean you'll go to heaven someday, it means that you can live your life this week with no fear of anything. **Hebrews 13:5 ESV** Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." **6** So we can confidently say, "**The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?**"
 2. We live with so much fear of hard times, rejection and ridicule. Why? Christ has removed any reason to fear! We need not fear the wrath of God, the persecution of people, or our own shortcomings. He is daily making us new.
- C. All of this is due solely to the reconciling work of Jesus' cross. God became man to reconcile us to himself through death! "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross". I found a great description of this aspect of Christ's ministry. I'd like to read to you verbatim:
1. "God is not only perfectly holy, but the source and pattern of holiness. He is the origin and the upholder of the moral order of the universe. He *must* be just. The judge of all the earth *must* do right. Therefore it was impossible by the necessities of his own being that he should deal lightly with sin, and compromise the claims of holiness. If sin could be forgiven at all, it must be on some basis which would vindicate the holy law of God, which is not a mere code, but the moral order of the whole creation. But such vindication must be supremely costly. Costly to whom? Not to the forgiven sinner, for there could be no price asked from him for his forgiveness; both because the cost is far beyond his reach, and because God loves to give and not to sell.

Therefore, God himself undertook to pay a cost, to offer a sacrifice, so tremendous that the gravity of his condemnation of sin should be absolutely beyond question even as he forgave it, while at the same time the love which impelled him to pay the price would be the wonder of the angels and would call for the worshiping gratitude of the redeemed sinner. On Calvary this price was paid, paid by *God*: the Son giving himself, bearing our sin and its curse; the father giving his Son, his only Son whom he loved. But it was paid by God become man, who not only took the place of guilty man, but also was his representative... He offered himself as a sacrifice in our stead, bearing our sin in his own body on the tree. He suffered, not only awful physical anguish, but also the unthinkable spiritual horror of becoming identified with the sin to which he was infinitely opposed. He thereby came under the curse of sin, so that for a time even his perfect fellowship with the Father was broken. Thus God proclaimed his infinite abhorrence of sin by being willing to suffer all that, in place of the guilty ones, in order that he might justly forgive. Thus the love of God found its perfect fulfillment, because he did not hold back from even the uttermost sacrifice, In order that we might be saved from eternal death through what he endured.”-H.E. Guillebaud⁷

2. Only Jesus could have done this. **Solus Christus!** It is for this reason, we look to him alone to be the Author and Finisher of our salvation, from our calling in eternity past, to the moment we first believe, to that glorious day when we stand before him, free from sin and death, in thanks and worship forever.
 3. It was Christ alone who **“has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him”**. And Paul says our hope is secure as long as we stay grounded in faith, not shifting from the hope of this Gospel of Jesus Christ alone!
- IV. **1 Corinthians 11:23 ESV** For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” **25** In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **26** For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.
- V. **Benediction: 1 Peter 2:21 ESV** For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. **22** He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. **23** When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. **24** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. **25** For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

¹ Exodus 33:20

² John 1:18

³ John 14:9

⁴ Galatians 6:2

⁵ Matthew 6:20

⁶ Matthew 6:24

⁷ Quoted by James Montgomery Boice in *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace?*