

Reformation Theology: Solus Christus

July 2, 2017 - Rev. Brian Hand

- A. "Jesus Christ is the only savior of sinners and his atoning sacrifice is sufficient to save them." 4 points. Jesus Christ is the Savior of sinners. Jesus Christ is the sole savior of sinners. Jesus Christ is the sacrificial savior of sinners. Jesus Christ is the sufficient savior of sinners. 4 S's- Savior, Sole, Sacrificial, Sufficient. RC- A person is saved through a cooperation of the work of Christ and the work of the believer through good works, penance, and purgatory.
- B. Roman Catholic view
- Atoning work of Christ significant, even central, but not "the whole deal", doesn't secure our salvation from start to finish.
 - Work of Christ needs to be "supplemented"
 - Christ's work merited the grace of justification, to be received in the sacrament of baptism (washing away original sin)
 - When "mortal sins" are committed in life, we lose that state of grace.
 - This is to be recovered through confessions and penance (good works, self punishment).
 - After we die we don't go straight to heaven, we must be purified in purgatory. These sufferings are a form of punishment for the remission of sins.

Summary: A person's final salvation depends not only on the good works and sufferings of Christ but on that person's own good works and sufferings working in cooperation with those of Christ.

In Contrast the Reformers insisted we are saved by the work of Christ alone.

Continued significance: RC official doctrine has not changed and we deal with religious pluralism.

C. Solus Christus in the Westminster Confession

"The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience, and sacrifice of himself, which he, through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father; and purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him." (8.5)

Fully satisfied- nothing to be added.

"Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after his incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefits thereof were communicated unto the elect, in all ages successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types and sacrifices, wherein he was revealed, and signified to be the seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent's head; and the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world; being yesterday and today the same, and forever." (8.6)

OT saints saved by Christ just as NT saints. Always, only Christ.

"To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same;...(8.8)

When Christ purchases redemption for you, that is sufficient for your salvation. You will most surely be saved.

“By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein... But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.” (14.2)

The Christian rests on Christ alone for all aspects of salvation.

“Religious worship is to be given to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and to him alone; not to angels, saints, or any other creature: and since the fall, not without a Mediator; nor in the mediation of any other but of Christ alone.” (21.2)

Sinners cannot approach God without a mediator and Christ is the only mediator given.

It is also key to note what the Westminster Confession doesn't say in relation to our salvation:

- No mention of another redeemer or mediator.
- No mention of the church supplementing the work of Christ.
- No mention of our own works, good deeds, etc. making a meritorious contribution.

D. Some implications of *Solus Christus*:

1. Faith in any other 'savior' than Jesus Christ is worthless **Mary, the Saints, the church, our own works no reference in the Bible of any of these making any contribution to our salvation**

2. Non-Christian religions are false religions that lead no one to salvation. 2008-76% of Americans identify as Christian- 65% of Americans believe other religions can lead to eternal life 37% of white Evangelicals believe many religions can lead to eternal life.
3. Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and sinners. This is also an argument for the deity of Christ, to be a mediator you must be able to represent the interests of the party you are mediating for. None but God can represent the interests of God.
4. We must put no confidence in any efforts to save ourselves. Total Depravity, that we will get to later this summer says that every aspect of us is tainted by sin, so anything we might do to attempt to save ourselves will be tainted with sin. Additionally, Our own efforts are superfluous, Christ's work is enough, they don't need to be added to.
5. There is no alternative to the saving work of Christ. If Christ is the ONLY Savior then there is no alternative. You are either saved by Christ or you are not saved at all.
6. There is no need for anyone to supplement the saving work of Christ. Christ's work is not only necessary but it is all sufficient.
7. It is greatly dishonoring to Christ to attempt to supplement his saving work. Imagine trying to improve upon a Van Gogh with crayons.
8. The saving work of Christ is complete, effectual, and cannot be nullified.

II. Solus Christus Demonstrated

A. Exegetical basis:

1. John 3 as a whole can be summarized as Christ is the only Savior of the world. V18-whoever believes is not condemned but whoever does not believe is condemned already. V35-36, the father loves the son and has

given all things into his hand. Whoever believes in the son has eternal life, but whoever does not believe the son shall not see life but the wrath of God remains on him.

2. John 14:6 Thomas: How can we know the way? Jesus: I am the way...no one comes to the Father except through me.
 3. John 17- High priestly prayers sees Jesus functioning as a mediator. Also see his deity and uniqueness here. Who could represent God except for God. v. 5 Glorify me with the glory I had with you. God will not share his glory. This means that these Solas are not just doctrinal debates. Life and worship is at stake here. If anyone other than God is to be credited with some part in the salvation of sinners then that person is worthy of Glory and we see in Isaiah 42:8 that God will not share his glory. Whenever we place our own works, the work of the church, Mary, Saints, etc in an exalted position we are robbing God of the glory he is due and that is idolatry.
 4. Acts 4:12 Peter speaking- There is Salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given by which we may be saved.
 5. Romans 10:9-15 all who call on the name of Jesus will be saved, and only those who call all the name of Christ will be saved
 6. Hebrews 7:25 he is able to save to the uttermost (we need not add) since he always lives to make intercession (mediator)
- B. Theological basis:
1. We are fallen in sin and therefore under God's wrath and judgment.
 2. Therefore, we need atonement to be made for our sins.
 3. We cannot make a sufficient atonement for our own sins, because we are fallen in sin. Anything we could offer will inevitably be tainted with sin

4. We need a mediator to make a sufficient atonement for our sins on our behalf.
5. The mediator between God and us:
 - a. Cannot be less than divine. Because only God has the right and authority to represent God and only God can take the credit for successful mediation otherwise a mere creature would receive glory for it.
 - b. Cannot be less than human. In order to represent us. To bear the penalty for human sin
 - c. Must be both divine and human.
6. Jesus Christ alone is both divine and human.
7. Therefore, only Jesus Christ can be the mediator between God and us.
8. Therefore, only Jesus Christ can make a sufficient atonement for our sins.

III. Solus Christus Defended

- A. Objection 1: "How could God condemn those who have never heard of Jesus? In fact this is not what we are claiming. They are condemned based on what they do know. Not on what they do not know. Romans 1, all people have a sense that there is a God and they are condemned based on their rejection of God. Also, salvation is by grace and so is the opportunity to be saved. No one deserves to be saved, God is not obligated to anyone. We can also say that those who do hear the gospel and do not acknowledge the Lord will be judged more severely.
- B. Objection 2: "I refuse to worship a God that would send people to Hell. TO me God is..." Those who would define God's love in a way that denies His holy wrath do not worship the Creator God as he is revealed in the Bible. It really doesn't matter how we define God, it only matters how he defines himself.

- C. Objection 3: "Jesus taught us that his Father is a God of love, not a God of wrath." False dichotomy, we don't have to choose. Jesus doesn't say God is this way and he isn't that way. God's divine perfection implies that he is both perfect in his love and his justice and holiness. Therefore he must be wrathful and have a righteous anger against sin. The cross is the focal point at which his justice and mercy, his wrath and love are perfectly reconciled.
- D. Objection 4: "God isn't a cosmic child abuser!" Some describe the Penal substitution view (Steve Chalk, Brian McLaren, Jesus Seminar). 1. Jesus wasn't a child he was a grown man. 2. Jesus willingly went to the cross, it was "for the joy set before him". 3. He was not sent to suffer to satisfy some perverted sadistic desire, it was for the sake of his mercy and love for sinners and for the Joy and the Glory that Jesus would receive. This is a ridiculous caricature.

IV. *Solus Christus* in the Christian Life

- A. *Solus Christus* drives us to exalt Christ (and Christ alone!) in our *worship*. We should be asking if they actually do this or do they in some way exalt us.
- B. *Solus Christus* drives us to keep Christ and his cross central in our *evangelism*. However we do evangelism we should be pointing people to Christ and the cross. We don't point people to Jesus for their marital, financial, problems or their general lack of satisfaction or loneliness but to deal with the guilt of their sins
- C. *Solus Christus* means that we can have full assurance of *forgiveness* in Christ. There is no sin that God will not forgive if we come to him through faith in Christ
- D. *Solus Christus* means that we can have full assurance of *perseverance* in Christ. It is not only sufficient to underwrite the forgiveness of sins but to bring us right to final salvation.
- E. *Solus Christus* means that we can have full assurance of God's *love for us* in Christ. Romans 5

- F. *Solus Christus* makes clear how serious our sin is in God's eyes. If you would understand how serious it is look to the Cross.
- G. *Solus Christus* makes clear how important justice is in God's eyes. This should lead us to promote justice in all areas of life.
- H. *Solus Christus* makes clear how utterly unable we are to save ourselves. It is because we cannot begin to save ourselves that we need Christ to save us from start to finish.
- I. *Solus Christus* makes clear how far God was prepared to go to save us. If we fail to understand Christ's work in the atonement we won't understand of just how merciful and gracious and loving God is toward us. Christianity Explored inquirer's course through Mark's gospel. We are more wicked than we ever realized but more loved than we ever dreamed.
- J. *Solus Christus* guards us against both *legalism* and *license* in the Christian life. Legalism that we can earn God's favor, license that we can live anyway we please. In regards to legalism we understand that Christ alone has payed the full price there is nothing to add. In regards to license we know just how much it cost Christ. To understand this and continue to live however we want is a great insult to Christ.

- A. Is *Solus Christus* necessary to the gospel? (Explain your answer!) Yes!
Objectively it is Christ alone. In Preaching we must proclaim only Christ and invite people to rest in Christ alone for their salvation. Paul condemns in no uncertain terms the idea that we need to put our trust, even partially, in anything that would add to the cross in both Colossians and Galatians.
- B. Is the cross of Christ (i.e., the Atonement) central to Christianity? What about the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Second Coming? We don't have to choose. The Cross has to be central because the gospel is central and the cross is central to the gospel. To be good news it must answer the problem of sin and guilt before a holy God. Also, all these other doctrines are necessary parts of the atonement or consequences and outworking of the atonement (Ascension and second coming). The cross is the focal point of the

4 gospels and the Epistles. We could say that Jesus lived to die and to live again.