

500 Years of Grace

Solus Christus: Christ Alone

Colossians 2: Selected Verses

preached @ Hawkwood Baptist Church
by Shafer Parker, Jr.
October 15, 2017

Intro.

First, I want to thank Pastor Grant for preaching a wonderful sermon last Sunday on “Grace Alone.” I think he touched on precisely the right issues and scriptures. I also deeply appreciated how he linked Lazarus being raised from death to how Jesus raises us from spiritual death. Just as Lazarus came to life at Christ’s call, so we come to spiritual life when He calls us by the Spirit (Eph. 2:5).

Now let me quote myself from two weeks ago. “The Bible is the only book in the world whose Author comprehends and incorporates all the facts of existence. It is the only book that never lies, and it is the only book that tells us true facts that we can be sure will never be contradicted.”

Dear friends, if this statement is true then everything else fades to insignificance. God help us to see today that according to the Bible, Christ is not merely the world’s only Saviour, as important as that is, but that in one way or another He is the only thing that matters at all, both now and forever!

Today’s text

Colossians 2:1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you, for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me in person. 2 I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God’s mystery—Christ. 3 All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him.

Solus Christus

1. *Christ Alone* means that Jesus of Nazareth is the only person to ever possess both a divine nature and a human nature. Specifically, in his person he is the Son of God, God in the flesh, uniquely and exclusively Lord and Saviour over everything that ever was or ever will be. And by everything I mean the entire universe plus whatever may be beyond the universe.

2. *Christ Alone* means that God’s Son is the world’s only Saviour, that no one other than the eternal Son of God was born of a virgin, baptized, tempted, transfigured, betrayed, arrested, condemned, and crucified, who shed His blood, who rose again, and who ascended to the throne of glory, and in doing all that, who secured salvation for all who believe in him. Within the human race only the Son of God perfectly lived up to God’s righteous demands for perfect obedience. Only Jesus qualified to die in such a way that justice could be satisfied and God could justifiably forgive those who repent and believe in him.

Propitiation

There's a word for this last bit that is almost unique to the Bible: *propitiation*. It means that Jesus' blood 'propitiated' or satisfied God's wrath, so that his holiness would not be compromised by forgiving sinners. His blood did not merely wipe away our sins, it satisfied God's just wrath and made it possible for God to justifiably be favourable to all who believe in his Son. What Jesus did on the cross satisfied God's holy anger against sin.

One story in the O. T. is a dramatic illustration of what propitiation means. You can read about it in Numbers 25. When the Israelites were on their journey from Egypt to the Promised land they camped for awhile near the Moabites. The Moabites worshipped Baal, and to properly understand the point of this story you have to know that Baal worship involved sexual intercourse with male and female priests.

Many men from Israel went over to worship Baal and the Scripture says "the Lord's anger burned against Israel." God told Moses to kill every man who had aligned himself with Baal. But one Israelite was so "gone" into depravity that he brought a woman back to the camp, back to his tent and started having sex with her, basically in front of everybody. But one of Aaron's grandsons, a man named Phinehas, took a spear, entered the tent, and ran it through both of them in one plunge.

Listen to what God said, "Phinehas . . . has turned back My wrath from the Israelites because he was zealous among them with My zeal so that I did not destroy the Israelites in My zeal" (Numbers 25:11).

Do you get what is going on here? Phinehas knew that sin is like cancer. If it isn't stopped it can metastasize and spread throughout an entire community. And so he hated it enough to kill the offenders and thereby propitiate God's wrath. That is why Jesus went to the cross. He loved us so much and hated so badly what sin had done to us that he gathered it all to himself and assuaged the wrath of God for us.

Perfect man

We all agree that Christ is unique in being the Son of God in flesh, but have we considered that He is also the only perfect man, the only man to perfectly be all that God intended for man to be when he breathed life into Adam's nostrils and formed Eve from Adam's rib. Genesis declares that man was "made in the image of God," and for more than 4,000 years people have argued over what that means. But whatever it means we can be satisfied that Jesus Christ was the only perfect example of it. Thus he alone qualified to represent the human race as a spotless lamb and a willing sacrifice.

3. *Christ Alone* means that Christ's life and work is everything needed for our full salvation; that is, we can say that his life, his suffering and death, his resurrection, his present heavenly reign, and his work in our lives through the Spirit is a perfect, complete, and all sufficient work, making him our covenant head and mediator and qualifying him to be a complete Saviour.

Let me give you some Scriptures to help you understand what we mean by Christ alone being an all sufficient saviour.

Luke 23:39 Then one of the criminals hanging there began to yell insults at Him: “Aren’t You the Messiah? Save Yourself and us!” 40 But the other answered, rebuking him: “Don’t you even fear God, since you are undergoing the same punishment? 41 We are punished justly, because we’re getting back what we deserve for the things we did, but this man has done nothing wrong.” 42 Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!” 43 And He said to him, “*I assure you: Today you will be with Me in paradise.*”

What could a crucified thief do to add anything to Christ’s salvation? Obviously the answer is nothing. Here’s the thing. Suppose he had been given a reprieve, taken off the cross and allowed to live another hundred years. At the end he would be as dependent upon Christ for His salvation as he was while hanging on the cross.

But here’s the other thing. Suppose by some miracle he was taken off the cross after his conversion, and lived a hundred years devoted entirely to worship and good works. Even if that had been the case *he would have added nothing to the perfection of the salvation he received when he first trusted in Christ.* Why not? Because salvation is entirely the work of Christ alone! And because Christ’s work is a complete work, our salvation is complete the moment we trust in him.

Here are some Scriptures to demonstrate for us that our salvation is complete in Christ at the moment we believe.

John 3:16 “For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. . . . 18 Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the One and Only Son of God.

John 5:24 “I assure you: Anyone who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life. 25 I assure you: An hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.” (This is exactly what Grant was illustrating last Sunday when he compared the resurrection of Lazarus to the spiritual resurrection we receive in Christ. Just as Jesus’ call gave Lazarus the strength to rise from the dead, so Jesus’ call to faith gives us the strength to repent and believe.)

Hebrews 7:23 Now many have become Levitical priests, since they are prevented by death from remaining in office. 24 But because [Jesus] remains forever, He holds His priesthood permanently. 25 Therefore, He is always able to save completely those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede for them.

Grace plus works?

Unfortunately, for more than a thousand years major branches of the church have strayed from Biblical truth and have ended up teaching that Christ is not enough in himself, that somehow salvation is a combination of Christ’s work and man’s work. Let me give you a couple of quick examples of what I mean.

1. The Roman church teaches that through baptism and participation in all the sacraments, we are given a grace that makes it possible to cooperate with God in saving ourselves, essentially that God's grace is only designed to make it possible for us to become holy in ourselves. A dear friend of mine once told me that he looks forward to Purgatory because even though he is sure to suffer horribly for his sins, just being there will finally give him a certain hope of heaven. That statement is blasphemy. Our hope is built on nothing less—and nothing other—than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

2. The Roman church also teaches that the church is Christ on earth, that she speaks with His authority, and is therefore able to grant saving grace to some and withhold it from others. I'm not making this up. Rome believes that it has the power to dispense salvation through the priesthood and the sacraments, thus infusing grace into her followers and enabling them to merit eternal life.

Christ alone!

This is baloney! The Bible teaches exactly the opposite. We contribute nothing to our salvation while Christ alone contributes everything.

Jude 1:24 Now to Him who is able to protect you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless and with great joy, 25 to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority before all time, now and forever. Amen.

Romans 5:6 For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly. . . . 8 But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us! 9 Much more then, *since we have now been declared righteous by His blood*, we will be saved through Him from wrath. 10 For if, while we were enemies, *we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son*, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by His life! 11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have *now* received this reconciliation through Him.

No wonder Martin Luther could exclaim: "One should think of no other God than Christ. The god who does not speak through Christ is not God. In Old Testament times God would hear prayers because of the mercy seat (Ex. 25); just so He will hear no one except through Christ. But the greater part of the Jews ran hither and thither, burned incense and offered sacrifices here and there in order to serve God. They looked for God in many places, to the neglect of the mercy seat. So it is now. Men search for God everywhere; but because they do not search for Him in Christ, they do not find Him."

The current crisis

The Reformers battled Rome over the question of Christ's *sufficiency*. Was He, as the writer of Hebrews explained, truly "able to save to the uttermost those who come to God by Him? I hope you have seen from today's message that the Bible's answer is a resounding "Yes." But in today's world, where religious pluralism reigns, the battle is over Christ's *exclusivity*. Is Christ the only *Saviour*, the only way to God.

Unfortunately, because we live in a post-modern world in which "knowledge" is merely opinion and "God" or "Jesus" are empty words to be interpreted any way you like, most people deny that

Christ is the world's only Saviour.

What can we do in such a world?

1. Make sure you are committed to Christ alone, the all sufficient and exclusive Saviour of the World. Recognize that if you are a Christian you are a missionary, a vessels of light in a world of darkness.
2. Do what Paul did: "We proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom so that we may present everyone mature in Christ" (Col. 1:28)! When you proclaim Christ you release the Holy Spirit to convict the world of the "truth that is in Jesus" (Eph. 4:21).
3. Live out the fullness of the Christ-filled life.

Colossians 2:9 For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ, 10 and you have been filled by Him, who is the head over every ruler and authority.