

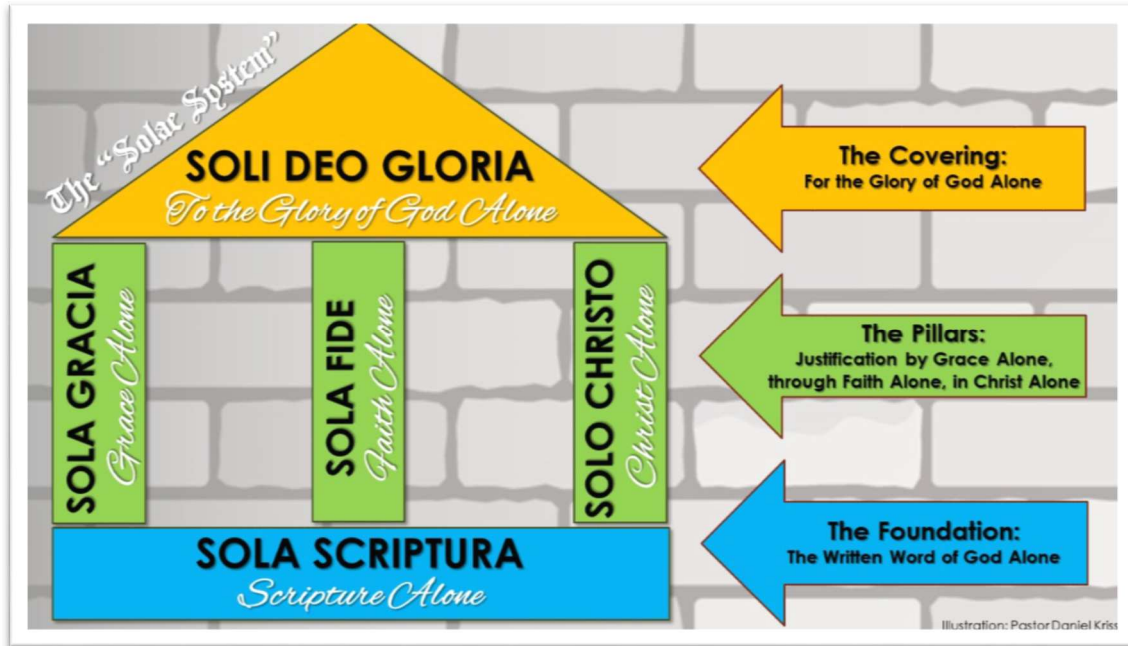
Reformation Month

Solo Christo

Various Texts

Introduction

Please refer to the PowerPoint presentation.



Before I commence my preaching, let me begin by reading a short summary of the life of Christ written by James Allen Francis entitled: "One Solitary Life."

Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village, where He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty, and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself. He had nothing to do with this world except the naked power of His divine manhood. While still a young man, the tide of public opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth while He was dying—and that was his coat. When he was dead He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone and today He is the centerpiece of the human race and the leader of the column of progress. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that

ever were built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that One Solitary Life.¹

Solo Christo (Through Christ Alone) is the doctrine that divides all religion from Christianity. It is this assertion that makes the world angry, and forces them to call us exclusive, arrogant, and unwilling to “play nice” with other religions.

Although Solo Christo was “recovered” at the time of the reformation, it is a truth that needs to be guarded throughout every generation. It is not simply the Roman Catholic Church that has obscured this truth, but every religion under the sun. From the enlightenment of the Buddhist to the black magic of the witch doctors, and everything in between, all belief systems outside of Christianity oppose the truth that salvation is through Christ alone.

The gospel at its core is not a series of creeds or doctrinal statements -it is a person, and that person is the Lord Jesus Christ. The heart of the gospel is Sola Christo – Through Christ Alone.

Solo Christo is exclusive, it cannot be earned, it cannot be altered, it cannot be improved, it cannot be purchased, and failure to believe this truth in life results in eternal damnation, which cannot be changed.

Join me this morning as I preach a message entitled: **Solo Christo – through Christ alone: The Final Pillar of the Reformation.**

1. A Brief Glossary of Terms

Each of the messages preached in this reformation series have included a brief glossary of terms to help us understand what the reformers were fighting for and against. This morning I would like to define three key terms.

Mediator:

The problem with this term during the reformation period was not the definition, but the application. A mediator is a “middle man” between two opposing parties. The one who mediates stands in the gap, and sympathises with both, and is trusted by both. The mediator represents each side to the other with the goal of mending a broken relationship.

In Roman Catholic Theology, Christ is considered **one** of the means of mediation between God and man. Others include: the pope, priests, saints, Mary, and many traditions and practices within the church. We will discuss this grave error in some detail in a few moments.

Propitiation/Satisfaction/Sufficiency:

These three inter-connected terms are central to the reformation. Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and others argued that Christ's sacrifice for sin met the demands of a holy God, and was sufficient to appease His wrath over sin.

The Roman Catholic Church, however, denies this fact, and demands penance, prayers, mass, confession, performing the sacraments, and many other man-made, extra-biblical traditions, as the means of continuing to appease God's wrath.

¹ James Allan Francis (1864–1928), "One Solitary Life", pp. 1–7

Merit

In Roman Catholic teaching, pardon for sin could not be attained without a meritorious act. By this is meant a deed which was so intrinsically righteous that it extinguished the effects of sin, and satisfied the justice of God, although temporarily.

Biblical theology teaches that only the substitutionary merits of Christ and His work upon the cross can bring about the pardon of a sinner. Protestantism as a whole rejects the notion that humans can earn rewards from God by performing "righteous deeds", placing them in spiritual credit.

2. Declaring and Delighting in the Exclusivity of Christ

By "exclusivity", I am asserting the fact that salvation is only possible through Jesus Christ. This was the teaching of Christ Himself, the apostles, the reformers and our church today.

In the preface to Luther's great commentary on Galatians he writes,

"In my heart reigns this one article: faith in Christ. From him, through him, and to him all my theological thinking is flowing and reflowing by day and by night"

To say that salvation is found in Christ alone is to place a target upon yourself in today's culture. However, nothing is more important in life than understanding that Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation from sin. All who would know the joy of pardoned sin, the privilege of adoption into the family of God, the freedom from sin's devastating yoke, must enter through the narrow gate that is Jesus Christ.

In marriage vows a couple proclaim their willingness to forsake all others in pursuit of their spouse, so too must the sinner avow to forsake all other perceived means of redemption, in order to apprehend salvation through Christ alone.

To help us understand what exactly this "exclusivity" means, and how it relates to the reformation, I have a number of sub-points.

Solo Christo vs. Sola Ecclesia

The word "Ecclesia" is the Greek word for "called out ones" and refers to the church.

Roman Catholic Theology teaches that the church is the means of redemption. In other words, the church of Rome is the mediator between sinners and God. It is through their pope, priests, and saints that forgiveness of sin is **realized**. It is through their sacraments, rites, traditions and rituals that salvation is **maintained**.

Although Jesus is involved in their message of redemption, salvation is not exclusively through Him, nor can it be maintained by Him.

There are many passages in the Bible which refute this heresy. Let's look at some of them:

Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:3-5; John 14:5-6; John 10:9

Solo Christo vs. Legalism

Legalism takes many forms. The first and most dangerous form is the belief that keeping the moral laws of God will bring about salvation.

We have already looked at this in some depth. Paul tells us that *“by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight.”*²

Another form of legalism is adding works or deeds to the gospel of Christ. For example, the Catholic church adds baptism, church membership, participating in the mass and many other rites and ceremonies, and by doing so, they preach another gospel.

If it is not Christ alone, it is not Christ at all. Jesus Christ plus or minus anything is not the gospel according to the Scriptures.

This form of legalism is seen even in the early church.

Read: Acts 15:1-11

With apostolic authority, Paul, Barnabas, Peter, and James all brought about a “mini-reformation” in the Jerusalem assembly.

The irony is that the Roman Catholic Church believe Peter is the first in the succession of Popes, and yet it was this apostle who so fervently opposed the legalism that had subtly crept into the early church.

Solo Christo vs. Inclusivism

This final sub-point was not so problematic for the protestant reformers, but it is a MAJOR player in today's “Christian landscape”.

Inclusivism teaches that Christianity is the only true religion, **but** that this salvation could be made available through means other than explicit faith in Christ. The inclusivist believes that those who adhere to other religions can be saved by responding to God's revelation in creation, or through the elements of truth contained within their non-Christian religion.

At the heart of the Inclusivist's View is the erroneous teaching that there is a way to be saved outside of Christ. In contrast to legalism which adds to Christ, Inclusivism removes from Him the salvation which He alone can provide.

The verses we have already looked up indicate that Christ alone, without addition or subtraction, is the only means of salvation.

Before we look to the next main point, let me take a moment to not only declare the truth about the exclusivity of Christ, but also to delight in it.

Application:

As Bible-Believing Christians we tend to defend the truth so much that we forget to delight in it. As a pastor, I am constantly contending for the faith once delivered to our fathers, and I often find myself wearied in that battle. One sure antidote for spiritual fatigue and apathy is to stop and simply bathe in the glory of the gospel.

Consider this morning the privilege that is ours to KNOW the exclusivity of Christ for salvation. Ponder where you would be today had God not revealed this grand truth to you. Imagine the religious rites and Sacramentalism that would pervade your life had you not learned and believed that Christ alone is the way, the truth and the life!

For surely our hearts say with the apostle, *“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable*

² Romans 3:20

his ways! For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”³

Let me also bring to your attention the urgent need for us to proclaim this truth to a culture that has entered the wide gate and travels the broad way that leads to destruction.

Every week millions upon millions of people are engaged in a form of worship which will damn their souls for eternity. We have been commissioned to bring the truth about Christ alone to them, and even die as martyrs in this endeavor.

We will be hated, persecuted, opposed, and ridiculed, but does not truth repel falsehood? Does not the darkness hate the light? Is this not a spiritual battle? Are the disciples of Jesus to simply stand by and watch religion destroy the souls of men?

We must stand like the reformers against Sola Ecclesia, legalism and inclusivism because we are called to uphold the truth in an age of increasing hostility towards the exclusivity of Christ and the message of the gospel.

3. Declaring & Delighting in the Sufficiency of Christ

The doctrine of the Sufficiency of Christ teaches us that every aspect of salvation is fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

He is not only the exclusive means of salvation, He is also the sufficiency in salvation.

To refer to Christ and His sacrifice as sufficient is to understand that we are insufficient, and that no works performed by us can ever bring sufficiency.

This then is the fundamental problem with religion and particularly the Roman Catholic Church. If there is a means by which we can procure salvation outside of Christ, He is insufficient and we are sufficient.

Only pride could ever cause us to think that we are able to save ourselves. It was God's intention to humble us by calling us to dependence upon someone other than ourselves, and that someone is His Son.

Let's look for a few moments at the sufficiency of Christ alone as it stands in contrast to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church

Sufficiency of Christ vs. Sacramentalism

Sacramentalism is the belief that performing rites on an ongoing basis will not only bring salvation, but also maintain it. The Reformation stood against these practices which included: mass, penance, good works, confession, and many other religious duties. Sacramentalism was the cornerstone of religion during the reformation period, and continues to this day.

Sacramentalism says that salvation is achieved by “doing”, Solo Christo says that salvation can only be achieved through Christ, and it is “done”.

The sufficiency of Christ speaks not only of His finished work on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead, but also His ongoing office as our Great High Priest, Advocate, and Mediator.

Let me at this point draw some comparisons between the prevalent teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, and the truths espoused by the Reformers.

³ Romans 11:33, 36

Roman Catholic Teaching	Reformer's Teaching	The Sufficiency of Christ
Partaking of the Eucharist was necessary to bring about and maintain salvation through transubstantiation.	Partaking of the Lord's Supper was a serious activity but the elements were symbolic reminders.	Hebrews 7:27
Intercession of the saints which held that other believers could function as a mediator between God and one's own soul.	Christ, and Christ alone, as our Great High Priest is the only One who holds the office of mediator in every sense.	Hebrews 7:23-25
The essential need to maintain one's right standing before God by means of the performing of rites.	Christ's sacrifice for sin was sufficient, is sufficient, and always will be sufficient.	Hebrews 9:11-12; Hebrews 10:12-14
The requirement to confess sins to a human priest who would act as an advocate before God.	Christ alone offers advocacy for the sinning believer, and He will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.	1 John 1:9; 1 John 2:1-2
The process of purging (purgatory) in the afterlife.	Either a human has trusted Christ for salvation and is wholly redeemed, or he has not, and remains under the condemnation of God.	1 John 5:12; John 3:36

There are many other aspects of the reformer's teaching that we could consider, but there are some important matters still left to consider before I close.

Let me read a number of quotes from the reformer's which give us an insight into their pursuit of biblical truth, and their tenacity for *Solo Christo*.

Martin Luther captures the reformer's affirmation of Christ alone in a letter that he writes to his supervisor, Johann von Staupitz:

"I teach that people should put their trust in nothing but Jesus alone, not in their prayers, merits, or their own good deeds."

Zacharias Ursinus, a sixteenth century German theologian in response to Christ's priestly office writes:

"All these things Christ does, obtains, and perfects, not only by His merits, but also by His efficacy. He is, therefore, said to be a Mediator, both in merit and efficacy; because He does not only by His sacrifice merit for us, but He also, by virtue of His Spirit, effectually confers upon us His benefits, which consist in righteousness, and eternal life."

John Calvin weighs in on this grand subject too.

"The mass inflicts signal dishonour upon Christ, buries and oppresses his cross, consigns his death to oblivion and takes away the benefit which came to us from it."

In Calvin's discussion of Hebrews 9-10 he writes:

"In the whole discussion the apostle contends not only that there are no other sacrifices, but that this one was offered only once and is never to be repeated."

The concern of the Reformers in their rejection of many of Rome's practices was not to be divisive, or an annoyance, but because of their *Solo Christo* conviction.

The Reformers contended that this was no mere debating point; life and death eternally hangs upon faith in Christ alone.

Stephan Wellum writes, *"To affirm Christ alone in all of his uniqueness and sufficiency is life, but to affirm anything else is ultimately a compromise of the gospel."*

Application & Closing Thoughts

It is at this point we must draw to a close. However, before we "close the book" on this subject, we must take a moment to make application and delight in these glorious truths.

The Sufficiency of Christ in salvation is a source of great delight for many reasons, here are some for our consideration today:

1. The present, continuous pardon and cleansing for sin because of Christ's effectual sacrifice (Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 1:7)
2. The present, continuous relationship with God as His children because Christ stands as our advocate (1 John 2:1)
3. The Boldness and confidence to enter into His presence and find mercy and grace in times of need because He is our Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14,16)
4. The assurance of eternal life because of Christ's ongoing mediatorial role in salvation (Hebrews 9:15)
5. The assurance that God will complete the work that He began in us at the moment of Justification (Philippians 1:6).
6. The privilege of knowing God's everlasting love because Christ presently intercedes for us (Romans 8:34-39)
7. The freedom from fear of God's wrath and judgment because Christ has set us free (Romans 8:1-2; Galatians 5:1).
8. The opportunity to perform truly "good works" because of Christ's righteousness credited to us (Ephesians 2:10).
9. The privilege of partaking of the divine nature, and increasing in our faith because of Christ's power to save (2 Peter 1:3-7).
10. The power to live a life that pleases Christ because He presently dwells in us and lives for us (Galatians 2:20).

Charitie Bancroft beautifully captured the Reformation truth of Solo Christo when she wrote:

*Before the throne of God above
I have a strong, a perfect plea,
a great High Priest, whose name is Love
who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on His hands,
my name is written on His heart;
I know that while in heav'n He stands
no tongue can bid me thence depart.*

*When Satan tempts me to despair
and tells me of the guilt within,
upward I look, and see Him there
who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died,
my sinful soul is counted free,
for God the just is satisfied
to look on Him and pardon me.*

*Behold Him there! the risen Lamb!
my perfect, spotless righteousness,
the great unchangeable I AM"
the King of glory and of grace!
One with Himself, I cannot die;
my soul is purchased by His blood;
my life is hid with Christ on high,
with Christ my Savior and my God.*

Solo Christo!