

Solus Christus

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As mentioned earlier, this is Reformation month, and [today] we are looking at the doctrine of solus Christus, that salvation is by Christ alone. If you have your Bibles, turn to Acts 4. We're going to be looking at verse 12 eventually.

There are different ways of denying that salvation is by Christ alone. Let's say you [are] a Jew. You could deny that Jesus [is] the Messiah, that He [is] the Redeemer and King of Israel, the Son of God. In doing that, you would be denying the doctrine that salvation [is] by Christ alone. If you believed there was more than one way to heaven, if you believed that Jesus was just one of many ways, [or] you trusted in some false religion, or maybe good intentions, then you would be denying that salvation is in Christ and Christ alone. If you say you believe in Jesus, [but] you believe in Him only in part, [you don't believe] everything the Bible says, then you're denying that salvation is in Christ and Christ alone because you have made up your own version of Jesus. You have modified Jesus into something He's not, and you're trusting in what Jesus isn't to save you. If you believe all of the right things about Jesus, and yet also add to Jesus' work your own work, your own efforts, your own religion, you have again denied the doctrine that salvation is by Christ and Christ alone.

Because this is Reformation month, we are trying to look at each of the Reformation cries in a little bit more detail, giving you some historical

background, and looking at a key text that teaches each of the Reformation cries. We learned in previous weeks that Martin Luther did not start out trying to reform the Roman Catholic Church in a way [with which] he thought that the pope would be displeased. He thought that the pope probably didn't know what was going on, [that] he didn't understand the abuses in indulgences, and some of the things that were happening in Germany. [Luther] was actually trying to right what he thought was wrong in the Roman Catholic Church so that it could be restored back in a way that would please the pope. He had no understanding that his little ninety-five theses that he nailed onto the [door of] Castle Church in Wittenberg would actually have such a huge impact. Immediately, those statements, those propositions, were copied, translated, and spread all over Germany in just a matter of a few weeks. Thus, Luther became the questioner of what the people were feeling as oppression and tyranny from the Roman Catholic Church.

Luther's biggest deal [was] with indulgences. Indulgences are basically pardons that the pope can grant to those of the Roman Catholic faith so that they can spend less time in Purgatory. At [that] time, there was a notorious indulgence seller by the name of John Tetzel who was going through Germany and was very greedy. You could tell he was more interested in gaining revenue than [in] caring for people's souls. This is [to] what Luther objected. He was still not even against indulgences themselves, only the abuse of indulgences. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that when believers die, they go to a place that is a hell for believers. You go there to suffer and pay the penalty of the sins that you have committed so that you can then purify yourself and be fit for heaven. Therefore, [through the purchase of] indulgences, instead of spending 2 million years in Purgatory, you might get out in a million and a half, or something like that. Indulgences are still offered today by the Roman Catholic Church. For instance, if the pope gives a benediction and you hear it in person or on the radio, you are offered an indulgence. Not only that, if you were to visit any number of approved Roman Catholic sites, you could receive indulgences for [those visits], and spend less time in Purgatory.

Keep in mind that the Roman Catholic Church cannot change. Its doctrine says the Roman Catholic Church is infallible and [that] the pope is infallible. So, as we talk about these things, and you think, “Man, I can’t believe they *used* to believe that,” [you need to realize that] they *always* will believe that. They still believe it and still offer indulgences today. It may not be common in America, but the American Roman Catholic Church is very liberal.

Well, after being saved, Luther was still in favor of these indulgences. He was trying to reform things. But, the ninety-five theses had this huge impact that he wasn’t ready to [have] come about. He didn’t think [his suggestions for reform] would cause [that] much [trouble]. Yes, he did nail those theses on the door on All Saints’ Eve just so that people coming to church would be able to see it, [and he would] get more looky-loos to look at his theses and to promote some discussion and hopefully reform things a little bit. But he had no idea that it would spread throughout Germany, and pretty soon would have reverberations from the pope himself, who then sent people to debate and set up councils. Luther was told to recant, and of course, at this time, Luther was saved, and he began to increasingly understand that the Bible, and the Bible alone—*sola Scriptura*, which we’re getting to in weeks to come—was the authority [from] which we should take all of our doctrine and all of our practices. So, when he was pushed to defend his views, he went to the Scriptures, and then he began to understand that indulgences were wrong altogether—it wasn’t their abuse that [was] wrong, [it was the fact that] they aren’t even taught in the Scriptures.

At one council in Leipzig, [Johann] Eck, an archrival [and] brilliant debater, showed to all, piece by piece, by arguing with Luther, that [Luther] was, in fact, outside the pale of Roman Catholicism for two reasons: his authority was the Bible, and [he believed] that salvation was in Christ and Christ alone and not the Church. Luther thought his loss in the debate—because Eck did win the debate, [and thus] did show that [Luther] was outside the pale of the Roman Catholic Church—was a huge, tragic blow to his cause. Yet, little did he know that his defeat was the very victory

[for which] the German people were looking. They were looking for one man who would stand up in front of the public eye and defy the Roman Catholic Church. They were tired of the oppression [and] tyranny. They wanted somebody to give them assurance that they were saved, to teach them how to know God, and so they wouldn't constantly be paying money, and doing all of these rituals in an attempt to please a God who was perfect.

Soon, Luther became the champion of all Germany, though it was never his intention. A papal bull, or decree, was written, telling Luther to recant or he would be excommunicated and summarily burned at the stake as a heretic. Luther took the papal bull out into the open square and burned it in the fire along with the canons of the Roman Catholic Church. It was at this point [that] there was no turning back. Luther was summoned to another council—the councils then were often called “diets”—this one was the Diet of Wyrms, which sounds like an unappetizing thing. (In German, I guess [it's pronounced] “vrms.”) That's where he went. There, he stood before Emperor Charles V, bishops, cardinals, [and] other learned doctors in theology, and he stood up for what he believed was true. He knew that others before him, having done less than he had done, were burned at the stake. John Huss, [for instance], was given safe passage to come to one of these councils, was captured, and burned at the stake. So, [Luther] knew he was risking his life, but he was compelled to go to stand up for the truth, because he knew that's what God would have him do.

At the end of the council, it became obvious that Luther was not going to recant. He no longer trusted in the councils of the Roman Catholic Church. He no longer believed that the pope was infallible. He no longer believed [that] the writings of the Church fathers, the pope, [and] all of these other councils and meetings were of equal authority to the Bible. He was therefore outside the Roman Catholic Church because he believed that salvation did not come from the Church, but through Christ and Christ alone. In acknowledging these things, Luther became a heretic that anybody could kill at any moment. For the rest of his life, he became an outlaw. That is,

if you were to find Luther and kill him, you'd be doing the Church a favor, and the emperor would have no recourse against you.

Luther was given safe passage [from the diet], but everybody knew that [such promises had been] given before and violated. So, on his way back to Wittenberg, friends basically kidnapped him and snuck him away to a castle owned by Frederick the Wise—Wartburg Castle. It was in that castle that Luther, then, went into hiding. He studied, translated the Bible from Greek into the German language in ten weeks, [and] wrote massively—books, sermons, and letters—and began to fill all Germany with the teaching of the truth of God's Word. As he studied, he began to realize that not just indulgences but many other doctrines [that the Roman Catholic Church taught] were not even mentioned in Scripture. One of the major doctrines that he had a problem with [was] that the Roman Catholic Church had supplanted the primary doctrine that salvation was through Christ and Christ alone: *solus Christus*.

Luther realized that the Roman Catholic Church, by degrees, had erected doctrines that stood like a wall between the sinner and Christ, a wall that was so huge and formidable that no one could get to Jesus. Therefore, Luther took it upon himself to knock that wall down with the truth. Some of the things that Luther objected to were these. First, [while] a monk, Luther [had] believed that a person showed repentance by going to confession and confessing his sins to the priest. [Later, as] Luther [realized] the wickedness of his own heart, he knew how often he had wicked thoughts and [committed wicked] deeds, and at one point, he wrote: "If one were to confess his sins in a timely manner, he would have [had] to carry a [priest to confess to] in his pocket."¹ That's how it is. If you know your own heart, and you know what kind of sinner you are, you know that you'd need a priest in your pocket to [whom you could] confess. The Roman Catholic priesthood was borrowed from Judaism, and in Judaism, God commanded the priests to be intercessors for the Jews. [The people] would bring their sacrifices to the

¹"Luther the Early Years," *Christian History Magazine*, Issue 34, Vol. XI, No. 2, pg. 9.

priest, the priest would then be the intermediary between the layperson and God. Only the priests could enter the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, but never the laypeople.

The Roman Catholic Church, then, adopted this view, but applied it to the Church, and then put priests, bishops, cardinals, [and] the pope in between Jesus and the people. But Luther discovered, from his study of the Bible, that this was wrong. When Jesus died, the curtain of the temple was torn from top to bottom [see Matthew 27:51], symbolizing that God was now opening the Holy of Holies, the very throne room of God, to the common people. He read in 1 Timothy 2:5: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” Jesus Christ is the great High Priest, and every believer [himself] is a priest. Luther then began to preach what is known as the doctrine of the priesthood of believers.

Where did he get this? From texts like 1 Peter 2:5 and 9, where Peter, supposedly the first pope, writes: “You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Then down in verse 9, he says: “But you are *a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession*, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” Thus, Luther discovered that we didn’t need somebody to stand between us and Jesus. We could go directly to Jesus because Jesus’ shed blood and His righteousness allowed us to enter the throne room of God. The author of Hebrews says we can boldly approach the throne of grace to find grace, mercy, and help in a time of need [see Hebrews 4:16]. Thus, [Luther saw] the Roman Catholic priests as blocking the believer’s access to Christ.

Second, Luther also discovered that salvation was by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, and yet this fundamental idea, that salvation was of God, was being supplanted by the worship and veneration of Mary, the mother of Jesus. In the fifth century, the Roman Catholic Church started to undermine the biblical doctrine of Christ alone by elevating Mary to a position of deity. It all started in [AD] 431, when the Church gave Mary

the official title “Mother of God.” [This meant that] instead of her being the mother of the incarnate Son of God, [acknowledging that] Jesus always existed as the second Person of the Trinity, they said she was the Mother of God. That first step [then] led to the Roman Catholic teaching that Mary was perpetually a virgin, even though the Scriptures say that she had other sons and daughters.

Then, the Church began to say that she was born without a sin nature, had never sinned, was actually sinless like Christ. This was a contradiction of the Word of God, which says that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” save Christ [see Romans 3:23]. This, then, led to them teaching that Mary never died, but that she rose bodily and ascended into heaven like Christ. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* says: “Mary was not subject to the law of suffering and death, which are penalties of the sin of human nature, even though she knew these, experienced them, and endured them for our salvation.”² Pope John Paul II declared: “It was on Calvary that Mary’s suffering, beside the suffering of Jesus, reached an intensity which can hardly be imagined from a human point of view but which was mysteriously and supernaturally fruitful for the Redemption of the world.”³

The classic Roman Catholic work *The Glories of Mary* by Saint Alphonsus Liguori affirms, “sinners receive pardon by Mary,” and claims that Mary “is truly a mediatrix of peace between sinners and God.”⁴ Luther saw that this whole elevation of Mary was far beyond the honor that she deserved as being Jesus’ mother, and that she was actually becoming an idol, was replacing Christ, mimicking Christ. She was [said to be] sinless, resurrected, [and] co-Redeemer with Jesus. Pope Leo XIII said, “nothing is imparted to us except through Mary.” He also said, “nothing comes to

²John Ankerberg, *The Facts on Roman Catholicism* (Wheaton, IL: Harvest House Publishers, 2003), p. 23.

³James G. McCarthy, *The Gospel According to Rome* (Wheaton, IL: Harvest House Publishers, 1995), p. 207.

⁴Text available at: <http://www.catholictradition.org/Mary/glories.htm>.

us except through Mary's mediation, for such is God's will."⁵ The Roman Catholic Church's teaching about Mary is a direct attack on the doctrine of *solus Christus*. Mary was replacing, and in many cases, has replaced, Jesus in the minds of Roman Catholic believers.

Third, Luther discovered that the Roman Catholic Church denied the biblical doctrine of Christ alone in the mass. In the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the Roman Catholic service, Christ is brought down from heaven, and supposedly transubstantiated. That is, [they believe that] the body and blood of Christ actually become real in the bread and the wine. The bread and the wine are transformed and become, literally, Jesus Christ, who is then crucified on that altar over and over again in the mass. This was to deny the sufficiency of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice, which, of course, the Bible affirms over and over again.

[Fourth,] Luther also discovered [that] the Roman Catholic Church taught that believers had to pay the penalty of their sins in Purgatory, and that this, too, was an attack on the sufficiency of Christ's death. Why would you have to go to Purgatory and suffer for your sins if Jesus was the perfect sacrifice? If Jesus' sacrifice was perfect and infinite, and it cleanses us from all unrighteousness, then why would you have to suffer for your sins? It became obvious that Purgatory was nothing more than a doctrine invented—it wasn't found anywhere in the pages of Scripture, not even a speck—as a means to extract money from believers. In conjunction with Purgatory was this whole idea of the treasury of merit. When an indulgence is given, the reason you can spend less time in Purgatory is that the good deeds of other saints—those saints [who] were so good, like Mary [that they had extra good works left over]—were put in this repository called the “treasury of merit.” Therefore, the pope's giving of an indulgence would allow you to take somebody else's good works and apply [them] to yourself so that you could then spend less time paying the penalty for your sins in Purgatory. Of

⁵McCarthy, p. 20.

course, this is not taught in the Bible, and again, this is a direct attack on the sufficiency of the work of Christ alone for salvation.

Fifth, Luther also discovered [that] the Roman Catholic Church had replaced Christ [with the pope] as head of the Church. Luther himself admitted that in his early years as a Roman Catholic monk that “I was so drunk, nay, submerged in the doctrines of the pope that I could have happily killed [anyone who tried to keep me from obeying them.]”⁶ The Roman Catholic Church was everything to Luther at the beginning. [To him], the pope *was* the head of the Church, everybody knew that, everybody knew that he was infallible, that *he* was the one who spoke the word of God. They got this from a wrong interpretation of Matthew 16:[18], where Jesus tells Peter that “you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church.” They interpreted that to mean that Peter [was] the head of the church and Jesus was affirming that Peter was the head of the church, the pope. Not only that, but [they also believe that] Peter as pope could then pass down this pope-hood to other men following him.

Yet God says differently. In Ephesians 1:22–23, we read that the Father “put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Ephesians 4:15, 5:23, Colossians 1:18, 2:10, and 2:19 all say the exact same thing: that Christ is the head of His Church. Luther reasoned, “If Christ is the head of His Church, then we need to listen to Christ, because the head is what directs the body. If the pope is the head of the Church, then the Church is a two-headed monster.” Luther rightly saw that the pope was an imposter who was weaseling in on Christ’s rightful place as head of His Church, therefore making the pope an antichrist.

Six[th], Luther also came to realize that Christ alone is worthy of worship, that we are to pray to Christ, not to dead saints, statues, stained glass windows, any other icon, or even Mary, the mother of Jesus. Luther was raised as a Roman Catholic to pray to saints. One historian, Herbert Jacob-

⁶*Christian History Magazine*, p. 11

son, writes: “When walking back to law school in 1505, Luther encountered a frightening thunder storm. During the storm he cried out in fear, ‘Help me, St. Anna! I will become a monk.’”⁷ Think about that. When something happens to you, what’s your first thought? “Help me Saint Ann[a]”? “Help me Saint Francis”? “Help me Saint Whoever”? That was Luther’s thought, because that’s what the Church taught: you appeal to the saints rather than to the Savior. The saints were put in between the believer and Christ.

Luther, in his commentary on Galatians, writes:

The best religion, the most fervent devotion without Christ is plain idolatry. It has been considered a holy act when the monks in their cells meditate upon God and His works, and in a religious frenzy kneel down to pray and to weep for joy. Yet Paul calls it simply idolatry. Every religion which worships God in ignorance or neglect of His Word and will is idolatry. They may think about God, Christ, and heavenly things, but they do it after their own fashion and not after the Word of God.

They have an idea that their clothing, their mode of living, and their conduct are holy and pleasing to Christ. They not only expect to pacify Christ by the strictness of their life, but also expect to be rewarded by Him for their good deeds. Hence their best “spiritual” thoughts are wicked thoughts. Any worship of God, any religion without Christ is idolatry. In Christ alone is God well pleased.”⁸

These are just a few of the errors [in Roman Catholic doctrine] that Luther, in his study of the Bible, began to realize. The Roman Catholic

⁷Ibid., p. 2.

⁸Available at:

<http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/gal/web/gal5--14.html>.

Church had put so many obstacles in between the sinner and Christ that it was almost impossible for anybody to get to Jesus. Luther wrote: “Others before me have contested practice [in the Roman Catholic church]. But to contest [Roman Catholic] doctrine, that is to grab the goose by the neck.”⁹ Luther grabbed the supposedly infallible doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church by the neck with the Word of God, and he strangled many of them to death.

[The] doctrine I wish to turn your attention to this morning [is] in Acts 4. I would [like to] give you a little bit of background [on] Acts. Luke wrote two works: the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. He wrote them both to a man named Theophilus, apparently a friend of his. The book of Acts begins where the Gospel of Luke ends. In Acts 1, Christ appears to His apostles after His resurrection, He gives them some instruction, ascends into heaven, [and] a replacement for Judas is given so the apostles are again twelve in number. In Acts 2, we have the birth of the Church at Pentecost. Peter preaches, [and] the Holy Spirit is given with visual and audio confirmation. Peter, who denied Christ three times, [but who is] now filled with the Holy Spirit, preaches with incredible power and boldness. The rest of the apostles are also preaching so that everybody is hearing Christ preached in their own native tongue. Thousands are saved. This apparently took place at the south end of the Temple Mount, where [a] large set of steps [goes] up into the Temple Mount.

In Acts 3:1–11, Peter and John were going up to the temple through the Beautiful Gate. If you’ve come to the archeology class, you know about this: the Beautiful Gate is the one that faces east. It’s also called the Golden Gate. It faces toward the Mount of Olives to the east. Apparently there was a man there who had been lame [for] over forty years. [He] made it his habit to beg as worshippers would come up into the Temple Mount. It’s a good time to beg [because] people are trying to go up to be right with God, and there you are, [asking] “Can I have a handout?” It’s a good time to mix

⁹*Christian History Magazine*, p. 9.

guilt in, and make a good living. I saw this in Brazil recently. One town that we went to had incredible idol factories. [The town had] this gigantic idol, which was so tall that they actually had to put a light on it so that airplanes wouldn't run into it. It's actually a saint that supposedly was pierced for our transgressions. They worship this giant idol—people come from all over [to do so]. (Yes, the pope knows about it. He was there recently affirming all of this.) The [Roman Catholic] Church teaches [that] you have to give to the poor, and that's one of the ways that you can do good works to get into heaven. So, all along the road there are beggars all the way to church every Sunday morning. It encourages begging and sloth rather than working.

This is what this guy [in Acts 3:1–11] was doing. Guys like this didn't have welfare back then, they needed somebody to take care of them, so they would go to a public place—have friends carry them [and] set them down—and there they would beg all day so that they could make a living. Well, Peter and John are walking up into the Temple Mount, and here this man is, [asking], “[Do] you [have] a little change you can spare?”

Of course, Peter says, “No. But what I have I will give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk” [see Acts 3:6]. So he heals the man. Of course, the man is ecstatic. He's leaping around and praising God. They go into the Temple Mount [with] the man, [who] stands up, crying, and everybody is looking at him. He's the lame man—everybody knows him. He's been there for over forty years. Peter then goes to the south end of the Temple Mount, and what is called the Portico of Solomon. (It wasn't built by Solomon—it was the so-called portico. [It is] this big colonnade area.) He then stands there in the south end of the Temple Mount, and he preaches Jesus to this huge crowd of people who have gathered because of the commotion that has been caused by this lame man being healed, and thousands are saved.

The end of Acts 4:4 says: “the number of the men came to be about five thousand.” Well, of course, this disturbed the Jews quite a bit, you can imagine. When 5,000 plus people come to Christ, rejecting Judaism at the same time, on your Temple Mount, [that's probably upsetting]. So they

arrest John [and] Peter and throw them into jail. The next day, they bring them out to ask them questions about what they were doing, what they were preaching, and how they ended up healing this guy [who] everybody knew.

That is the context of our passage. Follow in your Bibles as I read Acts 4:5–12.

On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. He is the *stone which was rejected* by you, *the builders*, but *which became the chief corner stone*. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

I want to focus your attention on Acts 4:12, which teaches us two very closely related truths about the Reformation cry *solus Christus*, that salvation is by Christ alone. [I want you to] understand this doctrine so you can evaluate your own life to make sure you are trusting in Christ alone.

First: There is no other Savior but Christ alone. Look at the beginning of Acts 4:12: "And there is salvation in no one else." Peter states the matter negatively here. He says, "You can't go anywhere else to find a Savior. No other Savior will do it." If you want to offend somebody, just go into a crowd of unbelievers, [and] tell them, "Listen, I want you to know something. There's only one way to heaven. If you're a Muslim, you will perish

in hell; a Hindu, you'll perish in hell; a Buddhist, you'll perish in hell; a Jehovah's Witness, you'll perish in hell. If you're any religion, even a Protestant denomination, and you're trusting in anything other than Christ and Christ alone, you will perish in hell." You will be... not well received, and you know it. The world has no problem with Jesus being *a* savior. They have a problem with Jesus being the *only* Savior. They don't have any problem seeing Jesus as *one* of the ways; they have a problem with Jesus being the *only* way. And yet, He *is* the only way.

Most English translations [of this passage] read something like: "There is salvation in no one else," or something similar. What you can't see in the English is the word "the" before the word "salvation." It's called the "article." It really reads something like this: "In none other name is there *the* salvation." Why is that important? [It is] because it makes it definitive. There is only one salvation you need, and that is the one salvation that only comes through Jesus. Jesus is the salvation of sinners, and He alone.

You [may] think, "Is this taught elsewhere?" Yes. In Matthew 7:13–14, Jesus describes Himself as the narrow gate that leads to life that few find. Remember, there's the broad way that leads to destruction, but Jesus is the narrow gate. We just learned from Luke 13:24 that Jesus is the narrow door that one must enter in order to be saved.¹⁰ In John 10:7–8, Jesus says: "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them." Jesus alone is the door; He alone is the gate. If you don't go through Jesus, you can't get to the Father. Period. Jesus even stood before the religious leaders when He was talking to them about their hypocrisy, and He told them this in John 8:24: "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." [He is saying], "If you don't believe I am the great *I am*, the ego ami, Yahweh, God Almighty, you will die in your sins. That's it. It's either Me or nothing."

¹⁰Sermons on Luke 13:22–30 are available at:

<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/Reference/LUK/MTM6MjItMzA=>.

One of the most definitive statements Jesus ever made about *solus Christus* is found in John 14:6, a familiar text to many of us, where Jesus says: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” You either go through Jesus to get to heaven, or you don’t get to heaven. Yet the fear of man [and] the desire to please men, has lead both the Roman Catholic Church and many mainline Protestant denominations to deny the doctrine that salvation is by Christ and Christ alone. They teach, “Oh, you can be a good Muslim. You can be a good Jehovah’s Witness. As long as you have good intentions, you can reject Jesus. But if you have good intentions you’ll get into heaven.” No, you won’t.

J.C. Ryle, in his sermon on Acts 4:12 entitled “Only One Way of Salvation,” writes of those who deny the truth in order to appease men, [and] says:

They think it uncharitable to say anything which appears to condemn others. For my part I cannot understand such charity. It seems to me the kind of charity which would see a neighbor drinking slow poison, but never interfere to stop him; which would allow emigrants to embark in a leaky, ill found vessel, and not interfere to prevent them; which would see a blind man walking near a precipice, and think it wrong to cry out, and tell him there was danger. The greatest charity is to tell the greatest quantity of truth. It is no charity to hide the legitimate consequences of such a saying of St. Peter as we are now considering, or to shut our eyes against them.

Luther, commenting on Galatians 1:4, a text which says of Christ, “who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,” commented:

This passage, then, bears out the fact that all men are sold under sin. Sin is an exacting despot who can be vanquished by

no created power, but by the sovereign power of Jesus Christ alone. All this is of wonderful comfort to a conscience troubled by the enormity of sin. Sin cannot harm those who believe in Christ, because He has overcome sin by His death.

There is nothing wrong with traditions. There's nothing wrong with rituals, with wearing robes, pointy hats, [or] gold trim. But, whenever those things take away from Christ, whenever they begin to supplant the truth, and supplant Christ, then they are doctrines of hell. Luther began to see how the Roman Catholic Church had fallen so far from Christ. Peter, in our text, says the same thing. He says: "I'm sorry, but you crucified your Messiah. I'm sorry, religious leaders, but you disowned the Righteous One. You're the builders, and you rejected the cornerstone. I just want you to know, [if] you reject Him, [then] there's no one else who can save you."

Second: You must be saved by Christ alone. Look in the middle of [Acts 4:]12: "For there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." Here we are told several things. First, notice that word "for." "For" tells us [that] Peter is now going to give us the reason why there are no other Saviors but Jesus Christ alone. He [also] says "there is no other name under heaven." What is this word "name"? Well, the word "name" describes a person's power [and] authority [and] who a person is. For instance, when the police knock on your door, and say, "Open up in the name of the police," what are they saying? They're saying, "By the power invested in us as police officers, we command you to open up the door." We know this is what is being referred to [in this verse] because if you look at Acts 4:7, halfway through the verse, the religious leaders ask: "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" The word "power" is a literal term; the word "name" is figurative for power. They're saying, "By whose power and authority did you heal the lame man?"

Peter, in [Acts 4:]12, is answering their question. He says: "There is no other name, no other power, no other authority, than the name of Jesus." When Peter says there is no *other* name, the Greek word "other" means

“any other of any other different kind.” There isn’t any other kind. To make it just absolutely crystal clear, he says, “under heaven.” [He is saying that you can] search the whole globe and you can’t find any other power, any other kind of Savior. There is no other kind of Savior—[not] Buddah, Mohammad, Allah, [or] whatever. You can’t take a god and adjust him to your own liking and then have that god save you. It’s either the God of the Bible, the Lord Jesus Christ, or it’s nobody.

Thomas Manton, commenting on this text, said:

Mark, when God threatened a deluge to sweep away the old world, there was no safety but in the ark; if the world had devised other ships, yet they would not hold out against the flood; so whatever you do, unless you close with Christ, and are grafted and implanted into Christ, as members of his body, (for he is the only savior of his body), you are not safe.¹¹

Picture in your mind here what’s going on. Peter has been in jail all night. He has been [dragged] out [to defend himself in front of a bunch of people.] Rumors have gotten out, and so pretty much every single religious person of any sort of stature is there—the high priest and all the others of high-priestly descent, all of the bigwigs, [including] the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes, [and] the lawyers—everybody who knows anything. They’re all there, looking at Peter, and they say, “So, tell us, by whose authority did you do this?”

What does Peter tell them? “I want you to know something. There is only one name that can do this—save a person physically and spiritually—and that name is Jesus. You killed your Messiah. You crucified your own Messiah. He has resurrected from the dead. He’s coming back in glory. I want you to know [that] if you reject Him, there is no other name given among men by which you must be saved.” I’m telling you, that would take

¹¹Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, vol. 16 (London: James Nisbet & Co., n.d.), p. 239.

some courage. That would take a huge amount of courage. Luther was in a very similar position at the Diet of Wyrms. He's standing there among the emperor, who was staunchly Roman Catholic, Roman Catholic cardinals, bishops, and professors, and is telling them, "I just want you to know something: You're all wrong, every one of you." Luther was right.

Third, the text [in Acts 4] also says the name of Jesus Christ alone has been given among men. Here we see the grace of God, don't we? Notice that Jesus is not only the only Savior, there's no other, only Jesus, and He's the one whom God has given to us. Here we see God's grace, as in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He" what? "gave His only begotten Son." Romans 8:32 [says]: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" First John 5:11 [says]: "And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." God is a loving God. He is a compassionate God. He is a gracious God. You can't fault Him because He made [one] way of salvation. A lot of people act like God is a criminal because He didn't make ten ways. You only need one, and that way is Jesus.

John Calvin wrote:

Therefore, seeing we are so far from the kingdom of God, it is necessary that God not only invite us to himself, but that he reach out his hand and offer to us salvation, that we may enjoy it. Peter teaches in this place, that he has done that in Christ, because he came down to the earth for this cause, that he might bring salvation with him."¹²

Fourth, you can see in the text [in Acts 4] Peter's urgency. Notice [that] he says, in front of all the religious leaders: "[you] *must* be saved," which implies something—they're all sinners, and they're all on their way to hell. Today is always the day of salvation [see 2 Corinthians 6:2]. It's never

¹²John Calvin, *The Acts of the Apostles 1–13*, Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, Acts 4:12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), n.p.

tomorrow. It's never, "OK, here's Jesus, here's what He did, you need to believe in this. Think about it for a couple months." No. It's always today. Today is always the day of salvation.

Fifth and finally, implied by this single verse is a warning to all who hear it—to you, to me, to everyone: There is no other way. If you reject Jesus, you can't stand before God on judgment day, and say, "But, Lord, I didn't know. I didn't know it was Christ alone. I thought it was Christ plus..." whatever you want to put in there. It's not going to work.

"Oh," says one, "but I'm a Buddhist. I'm a good Buddhist." Sorry.

Another says, "But I'm a Hindu, and I have many gods, and Jesus is one of them." Sorry.

"I'm an atheist, and I am my own god." Sorry.

"I'm a Muslim and I believe in Allah and his prophet Muhammad, and Jesus, too." Sorry.

"I am a Mormon. I believe Jesus was once an angel." Sorry.

"I believe Jesus was a good man," says a Jehovah's Witness. "Not God Almighty, but a good man." Sorry.

"I'm a Roman Catholic. I believe the pope is the head of the Church. I believe that we get to Christ through Mary. I believe that we have to add our good works to the work of Christ. I believe we have to suffer for our own sins. I believe Mary is co-Redeemer." Sorry.

The Holy Spirit, speaking through the Apostle Peter, is letting us know there is salvation in no one else but Jesus, there is no other name but Jesus given under heaven but Jesus, that has been given among men but Jesus, by which we must be saved.

J.C. Ryle, in his classic work *Holiness*, writes:

Is Christ all? Then learn the enormous folly of joining anything with Christ in the matter of salvation. There are multitudes of baptized men and women who profess to honor Christ, but in reality do Him great dishonor. They give Christ a certain

place in their system of religion, but not the place which God intended Him to fill. Christ alone is not all in all to their souls.

No! It is either Christ and the church, or Christ and the sacraments, or Christ and His ordained ministers, or Christ and their own repentance, or Christ and their own goodness, or Christ and their own prayers, or Christ and their own sincerity and charity, on which they practically rest their souls.¹³

When Martin Luther was at Wartburg Castle, hiding, he dialogued with his friend, Melanchthon. Melanchthon was kind of the exact opposite of Luther. Luther probably would have never been what he was if it wasn't for Melanchthon. Melanchthon was calm, not contentious at all, passive, and cautious. He was the one who was always trying to hold Luther back from being burned at the stake. Luther just wanted to write something and run out there and preach it, and die at the stake. Melanchthon [tried] to [calm Luther down, saying], "You can still write it and print it, but let's not go out there in public." Melanchthon [was] a very timid soul; Luther [was] a very brash, aggressive soul, and together they temper[ed] each other. Melanchthon [was] tempering Luther, [and] Luther [was bolstering] up Melanchthon. Melanchthon was a brilliant scholar, and he was the one [with whom] Luther dialogued about things in the Scriptures.

Well, Melanchthon had a fear of being a timid sort, and he wrote one day to Luther while [Luther] was at Wartburg Castle: "I wonder if I trust Christ enough? Perhaps I do not? What then?" Luther, seeing error in Melanchthon's statement, fired back with definitive force a letter [that said]: "Melanchthon, go and sin bravely! Then go to the cross and bravely confess it! The whole Gospel is outside of us!" [Do] you see what he's saying there? Luther is saying, "Melanchthon, you are going to sin. You're going to sin and you're going to commit high-handed rebellion. Christ died for that. So, when you sin, and you sin bravely, just go and confess your sin to Christ, but realize this: the gospel is outside of us." See, Melanchthon is

¹³Text available at: <http://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/h20.htm>.

asking, “*I wonder if I trust Christ enough. Perhaps I do not?*” And so, in his mind, his salvation was resting on who[m]? [He thought it was resting on] him, and his ability to save himself by his own faith.

In his commentary on Galatians, Luther wrote: “By the grace of God we know that we are justified through faith in Christ alone. We do not mingle law and grace, faith and works. We keep them far apart.” So I ask you today: Where are you? What are you trusting in for salvation? Is it [in] Christ alone, or Christ and the Church, or Christ and that time you came forward, or Christ and that sinner’s prayer you uttered, or Christ and your giving, or Christ and your parents, or Christ and any other thing? If you’re holding on to anything else but Christ for salvation, you need to let that go. You need to just let it go. Drop all your good works, all your good deeds, all your religious achievements, drop it all, and then humbly approach the cross. There is Christ, who did it all, whose sacrifice is all-sufficient, whose righteousness is enough to make you justified before God. You come wicked, a sinner, a rebel needing pardon, and Jesus will save you from hell. He will do it by His grace, sacrifice, [and] mercy, and that alone. There is nothing else that can be added with it.

As you leave here today, if you have never received Christ as your Savior, if you have never trusted Him and Him alone, I would encourage you to do that. I command you to do that because the Scriptures command you to do that. If you know Christ, then leave here with this thought: “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” [Acts 4:12]. Let’s pray.

Father, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. We thank You for Martin Luther, who, though a sinner himself with many flaws, yet was used by You to bring the gospel out into the public eye, and that many, seeing it, believed and were saved. We’re thankful for the heritage we have of those men and women who held the truth up, passed it on to their children, to their friends, to their families, to their neighbors, and coworkers, so that we, too, could understand that salvation is by Christ alone. If there [are people] here who [don’t] know You, may they turn right

now, in faith, to You. And, Father, if there are people here who are not sure [of their salvation], may they seek counsel, that they might know for sure so that they might live the abundant life by Your grace. And, Father, for the rest of us, may we go out not fearing man, but telling the world that there is salvation in no one else but Christ alone. We pray this in Christ's name, Amen.

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