

## Part Four: The End of *Solus Christus* or *Solo Christo* —"Christ Alone" or "Through Christ Alone"

Peter Ditzel

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*Solus Christus* "Christ alone" or *Solo Christo* "through (or "by") Christ alone" was one of the Five Solas of the Reformation. They were: 1. *Sola Scriptura*—"By Scripture Alone," 2. *Sola fide*—"by faith alone," 3. *Sola gratia*—"by grace alone," 4. *Solus Christus* or *Solo Christo*—"Christ alone" or "through Christ alone," 5. *Soli Deo Gloria*—"glory to God alone." As we have seen in previous installments in this series, these Five Solas are today often distorted or even completely abandoned. In this article, we will see where "Christ alone" is taught in the Bible, and see some examples of how it has been abandoned.

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One would think that believing that Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man and that Christ alone brings justification would never be questioned by anyone calling himself a Christian. Yet the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches have placed a myriad of "saints" in the place of mediator, praying to them for their intercession with God. And they also teach that Jesus Christ gained an infinite treasure of merit for us but that this merit becomes ours only when we cooperate with grace by doing good works. Additionally, they say that temporal punishments for sins can also be cancelled by good works. If this is not done, then satisfaction must be done in purgatory. Thus, the Catholic churches do not believe in "Christ alone." In response to this, the Reformers reaffirmed from Scripture the doctrine of *Solus Christus*, there is no mediator but Christ. Its ablative form, *Solo Christo*—through Christ alone or by Christ alone (or, even more theologically accurate, because of Christ alone)—specifically means that we are saved or justified by Christ alone.

While Catholics continue to pray to saints and teach that salvation is by the grace obtained by Christ plus our own works, many Protestant, Reformed, and Evangelical Christians are also forsaking the doctrine of "Christ alone." In this article, I want to establish the biblical basis for *Solus Christus* and *Solo Christo* and to point out some of the errors being taught today.

### ***Solus Christus* in the Bible**

Nothing could be clearer regarding Jesus Christ's role as the only mediator between God and man than 1 Timothy 2:5: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." One mediator means one mediator and no other. Now read John 14:6: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." All those definite articles are in the original Greek: *the way, the truth, the life*. Jesus is the only way to the Father. Speaking of Christ, Hebrews 7:25 says, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

### ***Solo Christo* in the Bible**

*Solo Christo* refers to the fact that we are justified because of the atonement of Jesus Christ alone. In response to the errors I will mention below, I will there give a number of Scriptures that prove this point. But I will give a few here, too. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, we read a brief account of the Gospel: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." Before Jesus was born, an angel announced to Joseph, "And [Mary] shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Such a thing was never said of anyone else. No work of anyone else, including ourselves, saves us from our sins. And even the name Jesus means, "Jehovah [the Lord] is salvation." Jesus said, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). What deity, founder, or leader of another religion has done that? Galatians 3:13 tells us, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Again, this is said of no one else.

Colossians 1 tells us that in Christ "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.... For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (verses 14 and 19-20). Peter says, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18). Similarly, Hebrews 9:28 states, "So Christ was once offered to bear

the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Romans 5 teaches,

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.... For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Verses 8-11, 17-19

Notice the three times the word "one" is used in these verses to refer to Jesus Christ alone. It is only by the one man, Jesus Christ, that we are justified, made righteous, and reign in life. There is no other way.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.... Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

John 10:1-5, 7b-9

And yet there are those who will try to tell you that the thieves and robbers are another, legitimate way to salvation.

### **"Salvation" Through Other Gods**

C.S. Lewis is just one of many Christian teachers who have undermined the doctrine of "Christ alone." In Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* series of children's books, Aslan the Lion represents or symbolizes Jesus Christ. In the particular book, *The Last Battle*, soon after meeting Aslan, the Calormen soldier Emeth tells him, "Alas, Lord, I am no servant of thine but the servant of Tash." Tash is the name of the false god in the story. But Aslan responds, "Child, all the service thou hast done to Tash, I account as service done to me" (C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* [New York: Harper Trophy, 1956] 205). Through this little dialog, Lewis is teaching the innocent minds of our children a doctrine that is called inclusivism. It is the belief that the followers of religions other than Christianity can, in fact, be serving the true God even though they don't know Him; that they can be saved by a name other than Jesus Christ.

Here is Lewis's teaching in plain words: "There are people in other religions who are being led by God's secret influence to concentrate on those parts of their religion which are in agreement with Christianity, and who thus belong to Christ without knowing it. For example a Buddhist of good will may be led to concentrate more and more on the Buddhist teaching about mercy and to leave in the background (though he might still say he believed) the Buddhist teaching on certain points. Many of the good Pagans long before Christ's birth may have been in this position" (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity: A Revised and Enlarged Edition, with a New Introduction, of the Three Books, the Case for Christianity, Christian Behaviour, and Beyond Personality* [New York: Macmillan Pub., 1960] 176-177). Consider that this not only teaches that a person can be saved without placing his trust in Jesus Christ alone as Savior, but it also asserts that salvation is possible by a combination of "God's secret influence" and the person's good works. Thus, Lewis taught a salvation based upon human works, and not upon Jesus Christ.

In 1997, Billy Graham, certainly the most famous evangelist of the twentieth century, in an interview with Robert Schuller (<http://vimeo.com/63369474>), said the following:

Well, Christianity and being a true believer, you know, I think there's the body of Christ which comes from all the Christian groups around the world, or outside the Christian groups. I think that everybody that loves Christ or knows Christ, whether they're conscious of it or not, they're members of the body of Christ. And I don't think that we're going to see a great sweeping revival that will turn the whole world to Christ at any time.

Before continuing this quote, I want to ask a question. How can someone love Christ or know Christ and not be conscious of it? Certainly, being conscious of someone is a prerequisite to knowing him. In fact, to say that someone can know Christ and not be conscious of it is the same as saying that someone can know Christ and not know Him. This is utter nonsense! You either know someone or you don't.

Continuing:



What God is doing today is calling people out of the world for His name. Whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world, or the non-believing world, they are members of the body of Christ because they've been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus, but they know in their hearts they need something that they don't have and they turn to the only light they have and I think they're saved and they're going to be with us in heaven.

Understood correctly (which is apparently not the way Dr. Graham meant it), I have only one problem with the first half of the quote directly above. Certainly, God is calling people out of the world and out of many different religions. But the key phrase is "out of." God is calling His people out of many false religions. He causes them to see the errors of those religions, and they leave them and come to the truth. But Dr. Graham means that they stay in their religion. And it is not, as Dr. Graham says, "because they've been called by God" that they are members of the body of Christ. They are members of the body of Christ because of Jesus' perfect obedience to all the law,

including His dying on the Cross in accordance with the requirements of the law for sin—He died for their sins. When Jesus died on the Cross, He died for those people who will come to believe. When they believe the Gospel, trusting in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior, God places them into the body of Jesus Christ. But their right to be in the body of Christ is not based on their being called; it is based on Christ.

By making calling the basis for one's membership in the body of Christ, and leaving Christ's obedience out of it, Dr. Graham opened up the way for the error that he states in the latter part of his paragraph. In it, he says that people "...may not even know the name of Jesus, but they know in their hearts they need something that they don't have and they turn to the only light they have and I think they're saved...." Before going on, I want to quickly point out that Dr. Graham here lowered "calling" to mean merely knowing "in their hearts they need something." Now let's go on. It should be immediately obvious that what Dr. Graham said directly contradicts Acts 4:12. Speaking of Jesus Christ, Peter says, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Here are just a few of the additional Scriptures I could cite that emphasize the importance of the name of Jesus Christ (and, thus, of knowing Him): "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31); "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12); "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Corinthians 1:2); "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11); "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment" (1 John 3:23).

Yet, flying in the face of all of this biblical evidence, Dr. Graham specifically said that these people he claimed are being saved, "may not even know the name of Jesus." In place of consciously trusting in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior, Billy Graham substituted knowing "in their hearts they need something that they don't have" (what he apparently thought of as a calling) and turning "to the only light they

have." This means, according to Dr. Billy Graham, that when a Muslim has a yearning for something and turns to the Quran, he is saved. When a Hindu wants something more and turns to more of his uncountable number of deities, he is saved. When a Buddhist feels something lacking and turns to the Noble Eightfold Path, he is saved. When an atheist feels empty and turns to science or philosophy, he is saved.

Aside from the fact that the Bible says there is salvation only in the name of Jesus, Dr. Graham's idea contains this glaring error: He calls these non-Christian religions "the only light they have." But they *are not light!* They *are darkness!* Jesus Christ said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12); "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:5); "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness" (John 12:46).

Jesus told Paul He was sending him to the Gentiles, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (see Acts 26:15-18). Paul wrote of God, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). Peter wrote to God's people, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Anyone who does not consciously believe on the name of Jesus Christ, trusting in Him alone as his Savior, is not saved and lies in darkness. This teaching is found throughout the Scriptures. Yet Billy Graham, a man of enormous influence, taught just the opposite. This is what is known as apostasy.

Billy Graham and C.S. Lewis were nothing if they were not influential. Nor were they alone. Many others have similar teachings, teachings that are taught in seminaries today. You can be sure that there are people today on radio, television, and in local churches who are continuing to teach these works-based, Christ denigrating errors.

Another way of denying justification because of the finished work of Jesus Christ alone is through legalism. Since I have addressed this problem many times on this website (see, for example, "Dead to the Law" <http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/deadtothelaw.htm>), I will not

detail it here. Suffice it to say that when we add the works of the law, or any human works, to the completed work of Jesus Christ, we are abandoning "Christ alone" and substituting a false gospel for the true Gospel. It is the error of those who were trying to persuade the Galatians to keep the law, and of those people Paul said, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8-9).

### **Conclusion**

I can hardly think of a worse apostasy than the denial that Jesus Christ is the only cause of our justification, and that He is the single way to God, the only mediator between God and men. To say that people who have never even heard of Christ can be saved denies both the Gospel message and the reason for its being spread. If God saves people apart from their hearing about Christ, why evangelize? Why did the apostles go throughout the world in peril of their lives when the people who were saved after hearing their Gospel message would have been saved anyway? Why did Paul undertake arduous and dangerous journeys, suffer being shipwrecked, endure beatings, stonings, imprisonment, whippings, death threats, and eventual martyrdom for the sake of the Gospel? Was it all a mistake?

No. All of those men were obeying the orders of their risen Lord: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15). Primitive Baptists believe that people are saved apart from the Gospel or even hearing the name of Christ. The best the Gospel does, they say, is let people know about the salvation they already have. But, as we saw earlier, Jesus sent Paul to the Gentiles, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (see Acts 26:18). The implication, of course, is that without the evangelizing, the people would have stayed spiritually blind, remained in darkness, not turned from the power of Satan, and would not have received forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ.

Several years ago, I was discussing this subject with a Primitive Baptist elder and deacon. With my Bible closed, I started quoting verbatim Romans 10 beginning at verse 9, and I intended to go to

verse 17. All through the quote, they were shaking their heads, and I had gotten to the end of verse 14—"how shall they hear without a preacher?"—when the elder interrupted me and said, "We don't believe like that!" Apparently not realizing I was quoting Scripture, they revealed themselves as rejecting the Word of God so they could keep their tradition.

Let us keep our ears and eyes tuned through diligent study of God's Word and make sure we are not listening to anyone who denies *Solus Christus* and *Solo Christo*.

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias [Isaiah] saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Romans 10:9–17

*Soli Deo Gloria*—"glory to God alone" will be the subject of the next installment in this series.