

ALONE : SOLUS CHRISTUS

The Protestant Reformation was a critical period in church history and in Christian thought. Bruce Shelley, in *Church History in Plain Language*, asks the question: "What is Protestantism?" and cites Ernst Troeltsch, in noting that Catholicism had formulated key questions, which the Catholic church had particular answers for. People such as Martin Luther grappled with these questions anew as they read Scripture.

"four questions that Protestantism answered in a new way, are (1) How is a person saved? (2) Where does religious authority lie? (3) What is the church? And (4) what is the essence of Christian living?"¹

This week, we look at the idea that we are saved in, through and by Christ alone. This was an offensive statement during the Reformation, as it challenged the role of the Pope, the priests and the Catholic church, in administering grace through the sacraments. Salvation is not tied to an institution or to traditions, but to the person and work of Christ. This remains an offensive statement for many today, as we declare:

"There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12 NRSV)

GETTING STARTED: Phil commented that we live in an age of information overload and where information is constantly changing. Because of this it is hard to keep up with the latest changes. One major challenge is to sift information and discern: (1) What is important? and (2) What is true? What do you use as the primary source of news and information? How do you 'sift' this information? How do you ascertain whether information is true, credible and / or reliable?

READ: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-28 (Note: this is longer than the sermon passage)

🗨️ What things stood out for you, from the sermon this week?

⚠️ This section of Scripture is firstly a creedal statement. Paul was providing the Corinthians with a snapshot summary of certain facts about Jesus and the reason why he knew these facts to be true.

"In verses 1-11, Paul argues for the fact of bodily resurrection, making the case that Christ's resurrection was observed over a period of time, in a variety of settings by a variety of trustworthy people and groups."²

Paul was at pains to remind the church of "the good news that **I proclaimed** to you, which **you** in turn **received**, in which also **you stand**, through which also **you are being saved**, if **you hold firmly** to the message that I proclaimed to you ..." (1 Cor 15:1-2) For Paul, there was an essential link between holding onto right beliefs about the person and work of Jesus and us being saved. In Rom 10:9-10, Paul links belief in Christ's resurrection and confession of Christ as Lord to being saved. Discernment of this truth comes by the Spirit revealing it to us. (1 Cor 2:6-16) Conversely, refusal to acknowledge Jesus is not from God. (1 Jn 4:2-3) Seven things to consider about the person and work of Jesus, are:

- Jesus is divine, the son of God, and he has divine authority;
- Jesus became fully human, aka the son of man, and entered into our human experience;
- Jesus lived a sinless life;
- Jesus died for our sins;
- Jesus rose from the dead and defeated death
- Jesus expects us to submit to him as both Lord and Saviour, which requires our obedience.
- Jesus now is exalted at the right hand of the Father, and will judge the living and the dead. Ultimately everyone will have to confess that Jesus is Lord

🗨️ Zeph 3:17 tells us that the Lord our God, in our midst, is mighty to save. Jesus repeatedly demonstrated his authority. He taught with authority. He also showed that he had authority over both the natural and supernatural realms. He demonstrated his power to heal the impacts of sin, including disease and death. Why, as humans, are we so unable to save ourselves, let alone each other? If Jesus is the only one who is able to save, what does that tell us, about who Jesus is?

🗨️ Read Phil 2:6-8 and John 1:14. We refer to the idea of God becoming 'flesh', as the 'incarnation'. What do these verses tell us, about what it meant for Jesus to become fully human? Is there some similar situation, that you can think of, where someone intentionally left behind their former (elevated) circumstances, and took on a far diminished role, for the benefit of others?

🗨️ Read Heb 4:14-16, 1 Pet 2:21-25, 1 John 3:2-10 and 2 Cor 5:17-21. Why was it so important that Jesus was sinless, in order to save us?

¹ Shelley, BL. (1995) *Church History in Plain Language*. 2nd Edn. Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 238.

² Vang, P. (2014) *1 Corinthians*. Teaching the Text Commentary Series. Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 200.

☞ Re-read 1 Cor 15:3-4. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus are pivotal to the salvation. In 1 Cor 15:12-23, we read that, if Christ hasn't risen from the dead, then we are still in our sins and people should pity us (possibly, for being so gullible). However, if Jesus has risen from the dead, then we share the hope of the resurrection of the dead (and that is really awesome!) What things did Jesus achieve by his death and resurrection?

☞ Read Phil 2:9-11 and 1 Cor 15:24-28. In these verses, we read of the glorification of Jesus. In Phil 2:10-11, note the two body parts mentioned and why. Imagine yourself standing there, as this situation 'plays out'. What will you be doing? What will everyone else in the world be doing?

☞ If Jesus is Lord, what are the implications for how we live our lives, in the 'here' and 'now'?

❗ Phil commented in his sermon that the word 'Lord' wasn't a 'light' concept. It was a word that was also substituted for God's name in the Greek version of the Old Testament that had been translated in the inter-testamental period, which was familiar to Jews in the early church, (eg Paul), who spoke Greek. "There is a more general type of argument for the deity of Christ. The New Testament writers ascribe the term *kyrios* ("Lord") to Jesus, particularly in his risen and ascended state. ... there are several considerations that argue that the term signifies divinity when applied to Jesus. First, in the Septuagint, *kyrios* is the usual translation of the name *Jehovah* and of the reverential (name) *Adonai* which was ordinarily substituted for it. Further, several New Testament references to Jesus as "Lord" are quotations of Old Testament texts employing one of the Hebrew names for God (eg Acts 2:20-21 and Rom 10:13 [cf Joel 2:31-32]; 1 Peter 3:15 [cf Is 8:13]). These references make it clear that the apostles meant to give Jesus the title *Lord* in its highest sense."³

☞ Below are a number of verses from the New Testament, that tell us that we are saved by, in and through Christ. Which ones have you memorised? What do these verses tell us about how we are saved? What do they tell us about the benefits of salvation?

❖ Then he brought them outside and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:30-31)

❖ For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, (1 Tim 2:5)

❖ So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. (John 10:7-9)

❖ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

❖ "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17)

❖ No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. (John 6:44)

❖ Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

❖ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God (Eph 2:8)

❖ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 6:23)

❖ But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. (Rom 5:8)

APPLICATION: Phil challenged us that Jesus alone is worth living for. He asked: is what you are striving for divine? Perfect? Will it outlast and survive death? Jesus alone is what we should live for.

☞ **HEAD** – Reflect on: If Christ alone can save us, is there anything else that you are relying on, to ensure that you 'get to heaven' or so you are 'good enough'?

♥ **HEART** – If Jesus is Lord, then Jesus wants to be the number one priority in our lives. He demands our obedience and our trust. What things stand in the way of you trusting and obeying Jesus?

☞ **HANDS** – Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Saviour.

³ Erickson, ML. (1998) *Christian Theology. Second Edn.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 707-708.