

Dear People who stand in Christ Alone,

I have a picture depicting the five “solas” of the Lutheran Reformation. These could easily be called St. Paul’s five solas or even the five solas of Jesus.

They are as they are on the screen: Scripture Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Christ Alone, Glory to God Alone.



As the German Reformers, around 1500, dug into Scripture they discovered truths that had been hidden. Scripture is the highest authority. It determines all matters of doctrine and faith. The Scriptures teach that salvation is a gift from God that comes by grace through faith. The one thing that all three solas have in common is Christ Jesus. Scripture speaks of salvation in Christ alone by his grace through faith in him. Christ alone is the foundation of three solas. Christ alone leads us to the last sola. All glory goes to God because of the salvation we have in Christ Alone.

Today, we continue to remember the Lutheran Reformation which began over 500 years ago. We celebrate this truth that has been handed down. We do so borrowing from the hymn we just sang, **In Christ Alone**. The parts of the message for today are based on the hymn.

### 1. Scorned by the ones he came to save. (1-3, 5-7)

In stanza 2 of *In Christ Alone* we sang, *In Christ alone-- who took on flesh, Fullness of God in helpless babe. This gift of love and righteousness, Scorned by the ones he came to save...* There is a great irony highlighted in these poetic words. Christ was “scorned by the ones he came to save.” In Act 4 Peter and John experienced that scorn for Christ.

A. Peter and John spent the night in jail. They were thrown in jail because they had been found in the temple preaching Jesus.

1. What did they say that was so bad? You need to know the rest of the story. When they came to the temple they found a man who had been crippled from birth. Peter healed the man in the name of Jesus. People were curious about the miracle. How could they heal in the name of a dead man? So Peter and John explain that Jesus had been killed, but God had raise him to life. The apostles promised that those who repented would receive forgiveness of sins

because through Jesus' death the people's sins had been wiped out. (3:19)

2. What Peter and John were preaching is salvation in Christ alone. He is the one and only Savior sent by God. Would the leaders listen and believe? Do you and I listen and believe? Let's continue with the account.

B. The next morning court was in session. The rulers, teachers of the law and the elders who make up the Sanhedrin have Peter and John brought forward. Annas, the high priest, was in charge of the hearing.

1. These were the leaders of God's people. We would think they would have God's kingdom at heart. They start asking questions. The one that is provided as a sample tells us what we need to know. **"By what power or what name did you do this?"** They were aware that Peter and John had been preaching about Jesus and his resurrection. The news had spread all over Jerusalem. An appropriate question would have been, *"You speak of Jesus as the risen Savior. Can you show us some scriptural proof?"* That would have led to a good discussion. However, they don't believe in Jesus and ask **"By what power or name did you do this?"** They seem to infer that since the Sanhedrin represented the Lord and his people, anyone not working for them was working for the devil. They didn't want a discussion, they wanted a retraction. Doesn't that remind you of another, similar trial?

2. *At about 6:00 P.M. on April 18, 1521, in a crowded, candle-lit assembly room in Worms, Germany, John Eck pointed to a pile of books that Martin Luther admitted he had written (some devotional works, some critical of the papacy's false teachings and the scandalous lives of some church leaders, and some against those who defended false teachings). Then Eck asked if he would retract and recant those writings.* (pp. 61-63, Luther's Protest; Braun, NPH) At Worms the church and secular leaders wanted no debate, but a simple retraction from Luther. They did not want to hear Christ alone.

Application: You and I are appalled by the stubborn unbelief of the church leaders in these two stories. Should we be appalled by our own selves? Yes! We may willingly confess Jesus as our Savior, but by nature we are against Christ alone. Down deep we want help save ourselves. We naturally want to do something to make up for all the horrible sins in our life and if we can do a few good works, we can feel good about ourselves.

We also have the Devil and the world persecuting anyone who stands in Christ alone. When you and I are being threatened with misery and death, our selfish nature wants us to run to safety even if it means denying Christ.

## 2. Our cornerstone, our solid ground (8-11)

Peter and John stood firm and we can too. We sang in the hymn, *Christ alone is our cornerstone, our solid ground.*

A. How do we know Jesus is our cornerstone, our solid ground? We learn from the evidence presented in Acts 4.

1. Notice that Peter, speaking for Jesus, is courageous. These are the leading rulers, yet Peter speaks confidently. He says the right words. This is because he is filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus had promised the Holy Spirit would help.

2. Peter and John testify in court that Jesus had risen from the dead. This is the greatest proof of Jesus' power. Peter and John had seen Jesus on Easter Sunday with their own eyes. Many other people also saw the risen Jesus. The authorities could have easily confirmed their story with other witnesses.

3. The most obvious proof of that moment was the lame man who was now walking. This man had been healed in the name of Jesus. The authorities could not deny so evident a fact.

Jesus was alive and powerful. What does it mean?

B. Peter turns to the Old Testament Scriptures to explain the significance.

**11 Jesus is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.'** The church of Jesus' day had rejected Jesus, but he had become the cornerstone of God's plan of salvation.



1. The leaders were educated men and they knew what a cornerstone was and its significance. The cornerstone was the first stone laid down for the construction of a building. (picture) When the stone was set properly all the lines of the building would flow from that cornerstone. If the cornerstone was crooked, the whole building would be crooked and would fall down.

2. The imagery is clear. Jesus, God's Son is the cornerstone of salvation. His perfect life and his sufferings and death at the cross took away sin. Everyone who rests on Jesus trusting in the forgiveness of sins is on a firm foundation. Jesus alone has worked out a perfect salvation for us. If you look to yourself or anyone else for salvation, all your efforts will be crooked and come crashing down.

## 3. Here in the power of Christ I'll stand. (4,12)

The devil, the world and even our own human mind and body will never stop trying to get us to turn away from Jesus. Martin Luther experienced this

and yet he stood firm until he died. We can stand too as we sing in the hymn, *“Here in the power of Christ I’ll stand.”*

A. The Holy Spirit shows us the power of Christ in verse 4, **“But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.”**

1. Do you see the power of Christ in that verse? You will if you remember the context. The authorities were putting out of the synagogues anyone who was a Christian. Yet we are told the numbers of the church were growing. They had gone from a few hundred to over 5000. The 5000 were just the men. There were very likely 10,000 or more Christians at this time.

2. The way the power was working was through the message. **“Many who heard the message believed.”** In Martin Luther’s day the word was not only preached, but it was printed with the newly invented printing press. Many people came to know Christ better through this spread of the word. Part of the celebration of the Lutheran Reformation is spreading God’s word by any means we can. We now live in the time of transmitting messages not on paper, but electronically with emails, texts and other similar methods. Over 100,000 people in Latin and South America have been learning about Jesus through our WELS electronic communications.

B. We must remember it is not the technology, but the message of Christ Alone that touches people’s hearts. Peter puts it this way, **“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”** (12) Jesus himself said, **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** Jesus name saves because he is the one who took away sin. He is the one who rose from the dead. He is the one who guarantees that all who repent of their sins and trust in him will be saved. Peter and Luther stood on Christ Alone and so do we. We will not be disappointed.

Conclusion: *The last words of the two men executed with Savonarola (in Florence, Italy) were “Jesus, Jesus.” Salvation by grace was and is not an exclusive Lutheran idea. It is a Christian idea that stretches back to the ancient church and crosses denominational boundaries.* (Luther’s Protest, John Braun, p.13)

Christ Alone was around long before Luther. We see that with Peter and John in Acts 4. We want to hang on to this sola. We will want to share it with others. In the power of Christ we can. Because we confess Christ Alone we are giving the Glory to God Alone. Amen.

General theme- Christ Alone

Context: Peter and John have just healed the lame beggar at the Temple. (Acts 3) They have been brought before Annas and the Sanhedrin.

Malady: The religious leaders did not believe in salvation in Christ alone despite the miracles, especially the miracle of Jesus' resurrection.

Proposition: There is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved. Christ alone is the cornerstone of salvation.

---

The First Lesson – Isaiah 45:5,6,18-25

*The prophet Isaiah spoke the word of the Lord over 700 years before the birth of the Savior, Jesus. Yet Isaiah's book, more than any other book in the Old Testament, contains prophecies about the person and work of the coming Messiah. In this excerpt, the Lord says that he is the only saving God. In the New International Version of the Old Testament, when the English word "LORD" is printed in all uppercase letters, it indicates that the Hebrew name for God used there is the name that means "Savior God" or "Redeemer." In other words, this is none other than the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Lord Jesus, speaking.*

"I am the LORD, and there is no other;  
apart from me there is no God.  
I will strengthen you,  
though you have not acknowledged me,  
so that from the rising of the sun  
to the place of its setting  
people may know there is none besides me.  
I am the LORD, and there is no other."  
For this is what the LORD says—  
he who created the heavens,  
he is God;  
he who fashioned and made the earth,  
he founded it;  
he did not create it to be empty,  
but formed it to be inhabited—  
he says:  
"I am the LORD,  
and there is no other.  
I have not spoken in secret,  
from somewhere in a land of darkness;  
I have not said to Jacob's descendants,  
'Seek me in vain.'  
I, the LORD, speak the truth;  
I declare what is right.  
"Gather together and come;

assemble, you fugitives from the nations.  
Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood,  
who pray to gods that cannot save.  
Declare what is to be, present it—  
let them take counsel together.  
Who foretold this long ago,  
who declared it from the distant past?  
Was it not I, the LORD?  
And there is no God apart from me,  
a righteous God and a Savior;  
there is none but me.  
“Turn to me and be saved,  
all you ends of the earth;  
for I am God, and there is no other.  
By myself I have sworn,  
my mouth has uttered in all integrity  
a word that will not be revoked:  
Before me every knee will bow;  
by me every tongue will swear.  
They will say of me, ‘In the LORD alone  
are deliverance and strength.’”  
All who have raged against him  
will come to him and be put to shame.  
But all the descendants of Israel  
will find deliverance in the LORD  
and will make their boast in him.

The Second Lesson— Romans 3:19-24

*Saint Paul says that the law of God silences us. It will not allow us to say, “But I’m better than...at least I haven’t...” The law forces us to be conscious of how sinful we are. We are freely declared righteous in God’s sight through the redeeming work of Jesus.*

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

The Gospel – John 14:1-6

*Jesus tells his disciples that he is going away and that he will come back and take them to his Father’s house. He makes it very clear that he is the only way to heaven.*

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”