Title: Christ Alone {Solus Christus}

Series: Reformation Solas

Scriptures: Acts 4:1-12

**Theme:** Having healed a lame beggar in the temple court, the Apostles Peter and John, appear before the Jewish religious ruling body and proclaim that the power of Christ alone restored a physically crippled man to complete health and also is able to restore spiritual life to those who are fatally crippled by sin

**Proposition:** Christ alone has power and authority to completely heal you: body and soul

Are you well today? {pause}

If you are not physically well, if you are sick, disabled, in pain, you have a range of medical professionals available to you in our modern, 21st century western world. There are many doctors: general practitioners, cardiologists, orthopedic surgeons, oncologists. We have available to us an extensive range of pharmaceutical drugs to assist with pain relief and healing. If you are mentally unwell you could meet with a psychiatrist, a psychologist or a counselor. I would strongly recommend only Biblically-based counselling in this area.

If you are spiritually struggling or searching, then there are many different faiths, religions, churches and cults represented here in NZ. However, none of these means can give you salvation – complete restoration of body and soul…not even a faithful Christian church.

Today’s message is simple and central: Salvation – the complete restoration of body and soul- is only possible in Christ Alone. The word ‘salvation’ in the Bible has a range of meanings covering both the physical and spiritual realms of human existence. Salvation conveys the idea of deliverance from physical danger or moral distress (e.g. Ps 85.8; Is 62:11). It is also used for physical preservation or healing (Jam 5.15). In the spiritual realm, salvation delivers a person from the wrath of God, the dominion of sin and the power of death (Rom 1:8; 3:9; 5:21; 1 Thess 5:9). Salvation results, **not only** in spiritual wholeness and peace, **but also** in physical healing (e.g. Mat 9:21;22 –woman with a 12 year discharge of blood; Mark 10:52 – Blind Bartimaeus).

500 years ago, at the time of the Protestant Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church offered a variety of means by which people could aid and secure their salvation (membership of the church, the sacraments, holy relics, prayers to Mary and the Saints, purchase of indulgences). In contrast, *Solus Christus* – Christ Alone is the teaching that [Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_in_Christianity) is the **only mediator** between God and man, and that there is salvation through no other. Martin Luther said: *"I must listen to the gospel. It tells me not what I must do, but what Jesus Christ the Son of God has done for me."*

The Reformers looked at Scripture and saw the clear teaching of God that people like you and me are saved **only** by Christ. This salvation is a restorative work of God in which both body and soul are made completely whole.

We’re going to see this precious truth this morning from our text in Acts 4:12: “*There is salvation in no one else (that is no one apart from Jesus Christ), for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

Both two points in this sermon focus on the power of Christ, firstly to restore the body and secondly to restore the soul:

**1. The power of Christ to restore the body**

With the rise of homelessness and poverty in New Zealand, we do increasingly see people begging for money in the streets, despite our government welfare system and economic prosperity. In 1st cent. Roman occupied Israel, where there was little or no financial assistance for those who could not work, beggars were many. Blind people, like Bartimaeus, begged by the roadside (Mark 10.46). If you had look at that time in the Jerusalem temple by the gate called ‘Beautiful’ you would likely have seen a man laying where each day he was carried and set down so that he could beg.

He was a cripple, this man. He is not named in the Bible. He was a person who had been lame from birth. This is a distressing condition for anybody, but especially so back; then if a person had no education. Even if he or she did have some clerical training desk-jobs were few and far between in the 1st century!

This man would have been well-known to all the Jews who worshipped in that place. Then one day, after the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, after his ascension and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the Apostles – Peter and John - passed by, and when they had this man’s attention, Peter simply said:

“*In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!*" {Acts 3.6b}

There was no advanced reconstructive surgery on the man’s twisted limbs, no smoke&mirrors, no casting of some spell…just the powerful name of Jesus. Just Jesus Christ- alone. The incredible result of the power of Christ unleashed: ‘his feet and ankles made strong’ {3.7}. He lept up, stood and began to walk {3.8}. He went into the temple with Peter and John, ‘walking&leaping &praising God’ {3.8}. The people there were, not surprisingly ‘filled with wonder&amazement at what had happened to him” {3.10}. They would never have seen anything like it back then. You and I have never seen anything like it today…despite the many health professionals working in our society.

This was a **supernatural healing miracle** resulting from the name of Jesus Christ being invoked on the lips of the Apostle. Then Peter spoke in Solomon’s Portico a colonnade, or cloister, located on the eastern side of the Temple's Outer Court in Jerusalem. He spoke to the Jews in the temple about Jesus Christ, the Author of Life who they had killed, but whom God had raised from the dead. Then he said “*Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus*” {Acts 3.19}.

Many of those who heard the word believed. The number rose from the 3,000 on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2.41) to about 5,000. However, **not everybody** was filled with wonder and amazement. The Sadducees – who did not believe in a bodily resurrection - were ‘greatly annoyed’ and they took Peter and John into custody. Then the top Jewish religious rulers gathered. Annas, the previous high priest who retained the title ‘High Priest’ – he had been deposed by the Roman government in AD15 was there. He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas – who was now officially the high priest (John 18.13). Also present were other members of the high priestly family.

This was effectively the ‘executive committee’ of the Jewish Council …these were the ‘top guns’. Then Peter, filled with Holy Spirit, declared that they had rejected Jesus in fulfilment of the OT prophesy in Ps 118:22:

“*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone*”.

Christ is the foundational ‘building block’ for God’s work of restoration…the rebuilding of a temple where His people will worship Him forever…the rebuilding of people who will form the ‘living stones’ of this spiritual house {ref. 1 Peter 2.5}. The cripple could not go into worship in the Jerusalem temple...he was laid outside the inner sanctuary…unable to go in. However, when he was healed he then went in ‘walking&leaping &praising God’. The man was saved in the physical sense that he was given ‘perfect health’ (3.16b). It wasn’t due to some magical therapeutic abilities possessed by the Apostles. This was a demonstration of the power of Christ to restore the body.

Here is the truth which applies to each one of us: ‘*The dead will be raised imperishable and we shall be changed*’.

The Sadducees were wrong; every single human being who has ever lived will be raised up bodily when Christ returns. When he comes again to this earth from which he bodily departed about 2,000 years ago, there will be a complete restoration of all human bodies. Everyone will go to one of two places in their bodies:

Those **saved by Christ alone**…to eternal life (Matt 25.46).

Those **not saved by Christ alone**…to eternal punishment (Matt 25.46).

Do you know where you are going? {pause}

The souls of those **not** saved by Christ will **not** be restored to fellowship with God…they will be separated from him in the place the Bible calls ‘hell’.

Whereas all those (including the five thousand mentioned in Acts 4.4) who repent and ‘turn back’ so that their sins may be blotted out, will continue forever to experience times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord in the New Jerusalem.

Their souls will be restored to full fellowship with God where they will dwell forever with Him…which brings us to our 2nd point:

1. **The power of Christ to restore the soul**

There is a clear **parallel** presented in the history recorded in Acts 4 between physical and spiritual restoration. As we’ve seen, the word ‘salvation’ applies both in the physical and spiritual realms of life. To be saved is to be restored physically. To be saved is to be rescued, delivered from spiritual death; that is from separation from God. A restored human soul is a soul living in the presence of God.

All religions fundamentally seek to deal with the spiritual problem which affects all humanity. We have a natural sense of being estranged from God, of an impending disaster, a coming day of reckoning, an Armageddon. This is one reason why apocalyptic movies and books are so popular. They resonate with our innate sense that something is **just not right** in this life. Solomon wisely puts it this way God ‘has put eternity into man’s heart’ {Eccl 3.11}.

Essentially all world religions ask the same question as the rich ruler who said to Jesus “*Good Teacher, what must I* ***do*** *to inherit eternal life?*" {Luke 18.18}. The Moslem will say “follow the teachings of Mohammed and if you are faithful enough you may well get to heaven”. The Hindu will say “*make enough sacrifices to appease the gods*”

The atheist will say “*you can’t have eternal life, so live for the present*” – make yourself your own god and worship yourself for as long as you can before you die.

At the time of the Protestant Reformation, the Roman Catholic church taught, amongst other doctrines: That salvation came from Christ through the church, the church being essential for personal salvation (Catechism of the Catholic Church 846). That salvation was attained through faith, baptism, and the observance of the commandments (CCC2068). That Mary is a Mediator, an Advocate, a Helper and a Benefactress to believers (CCC 969), she is able to deliver souls from death {CCC966}. This remains the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church today. Roman Catholic official dogma has not substantially changed in half a millenium

In contrast to the Roman Catholic Church’s teaching, the Reformers read the Scriptures – passages like our text this morning and could see plainly that:

Salvation **does not come** through our own works, fully or in part.

Salvation **does not come** through the mediation of another fallen human being be that person a priest, or Mary the mother of Jesus, or a very well respected member of the church – called by the RC a ‘saint’.

Salvation does not come through your parents, or if you are married through your husband or wife. Salvation **only** comes through Jesus Christ. The truth is as simple as that, as exclusive as that. “*There is salvation in no one else (that is no one apart from Jesus Christ), for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." {Acts 4.12}*

This is truly wonderfully good news. You don’t need to **do** anything. Christ has done it all for those who put their trust in Him by turning to Him in repentance and faith. You don’t need to find anybody to act on your behalf with God. Christ is the unique, the only, meditator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5). There is great comfort in this truth of ‘Christ Alone’. If you have Him you have all you need! If you have Him you are being and will be fully restored body&soul. If you have Him you know that there is no other way that you, or anyone else can be saved.

If you have Him, then you surely know the weight of responsibility which rests on you. To use a well-worn analogy. If you see a person walking towards the edge of a high cliff, oblivious to the death which awaits them if they go over the edge, if you had even the smallest care for them, you’d go and warn them and point them to a safe path away from danger So, if you know today that “*There is salvation in no one else (that is no one apart from Jesus Christ), for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." {Acts 4.12}*

You need to tell/warn other people. Which people? A suggestion is to start with yhose you already know, those you work with, those you see regularly in your day-to-day life.

If our forefathers the Protestant Reformers had not been courageous in facing great opposition in order to reveal the truth of Christ Alone, humanly speaking…where would we be today? The Lord used men and women 500 years ago to proclaim ‘salvation by Christ’ alone. It was their calling as much as it is ours.

What are you going to do as a result of this sermon?

Let me make a suggestion: make a list of say 10 people you know outside the Christian churches.

Start to pray through that list; asking the Lord for opportunities to explain what salvation by faith alone in Christ alone by grace alone means. Ask to meet each one of these people for coffee, invite them to your home for a meal, invite them to your Bible study group, encourage them to come to worship with you. When the power of Christ acts in the lives of those around you, you just might find yourself like the crippled man in the temple. Leaping and praising God! Or like those who watched him ‘filled with wonder and amazement’.

We are all lame beggars – utterly unable to heal ourselves body and soul, completely dependent upon the work of Christ alone to save.

**Heb 4:14** “*Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession*”. The central part of our Christian confession is **Solus Christus.** The truth thatsalvation –complete restoration of body and soul- is only possible in Christ Alone.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, friends, **Christ alone** has power and authority to completely heal you: body and soul. Amen.