

Main Idea: We learn three reasons why we must affirm solo Christo in Ephesians 1:7-12.

- I. We have redemption in Christ alone (7-8).
 - A. It required His blood.
 - B. It resulted in our forgiveness.
 - C. It was made possible by the grace of God.
 - D. It puts on display the wisdom of God.
- II. We have revelation in Christ alone (9-10).
 - A. We know that God has a plan (9).
 1. We know what the world doesn't know.
 2. We know the mystery of the gospel.
 - B. We know that God has a purpose (10).
 1. Because of Adam the universe fractured and fell apart.
 2. In Christ God is bringing everything back together where it belongs, under the headship of His Son.
- III. We have a rich inheritance in Christ alone (11-12).
 - A. God designed it (11).
 1. Nothing just happens in God's universe.
 2. Everything happens according to the purpose of God's will.
 - B. God gave it to us so that we might make much of His Son (12).
 1. Jesus Christ does not exist for me.
 2. You and I exist for the praise of His glory.

Make It Personal: Two questions to consider...

1. Am I trusting in Christ alone for my salvation?
2. Am I seeking to honor Christ alone in my life?

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

Martin Luther wanted to be right with God. More than anything. It's why he forsook a career in law, against the wishes of his father, and chose a life of self-denial as a monk in the Roman Catholic church.

"If anyone could have earned heaven by the life of a monk, it was I," said Luther. As a monk he prayed hours upon hours, fasted, and engaged in all sorts of ascetic practices, like going without sleep, enduring bone-chilling cold without a blanket, and whipping himself.²

To the onlooking world, Luther appeared to be quite a righteous man. But he knew better, and later said, "I hated that word, 'the righteousness of God,' by which I had been taught according to the custom and use of all teachers ... [that] God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner."³

Luther believed that he needed to pursue righteousness, and so he did as prescribed by the Catholic church. He practiced the sacraments of the church, chiefly the eucharist, believing it would grant him saving grace. He even took a pilgrimage to Rome and climbed a stairway on his knees because he was told he could thus remove penance. But instead of leaving with righteousness, he left Rome disillusioned by the corruption he observed.

How does a person become right with God? How can a sinner become righteous in His sight and prepared to enter His holy presence? Most people in the world today, like

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¹ Adapted from a message delivered at WBC on 12/13/09.

² <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/theologians/martin-luther.html>

³ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/theologians/martin-luther.html>

Luther in his early years, believe righteousness comes by human merit. You have to *do* something.

“If the good in my life outweighs the bad, I’ll be okay...” How many people are banking on that kind of theology to get them to heaven?

So how does a person become righteous and therefore ready to leave this world and spend eternity with God? That’s the question we’re seeking to answer in this current series, “*The Solas of the Reformation—500 Years Later.*”

It was 500 years ago in October 1517 that Martin Luther initiated what is now called the Protestant Reformation by nailing 95 theses, or objections, to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany. The initial protest was against the Catholic church’s practice of selling indulgences to get people out of purgatory. But the protest quickly spread and picked up other reformers, like Calvin and Zwingli, and went to the core matter of *how does a sinner become righteous in God’s eyes?*

The Protestant reformers said, “Here’s how. *Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Solo Christo, and Soli Deo Gloria.*” Sola is the Latin word for “alone,” and these five solas became their rallying cry. Sola Scriptura, Scripture alone is our highest authority. Sola Gratia, salvation is by grace alone; Sola Fide, through faith alone; Solo Christo, by Christ alone; Soli Deo Gloria, for God’s glory alone.

We’re looking at these solas one per week. Last week was Sola Scriptura and Psalm 119. Today, it’s *Solus Christus*, which means “only Christ”. It says that Christ is the only mediator between God and man. *Solo Christo* means that salvation is “by Christ alone”.

This is the most wonderful news. Solo Christo was worth living and dying for in the 16th century, and it still is. Do you know why?

We could turn many places in the Bible to answer that, but I’ve chosen one of the most Christ-exalting texts in the Bible. In Ephesians 1:7-12 we learn three reasons why we must joyfully affirm *solo Christo*.

Solo Christo says God has done for us what we could never achieve, nor could anyone else. And He did it *by Christ alone*.

In the original Greek text, Ephesians 1:3-14 is one long sentence, a doxology. You get the sense that once Paul started talking about what God has done for us in Christ, he couldn’t stop. And so on and on he went, with phrase after phrase, describing the amazing things that God has done for us by Christ alone, Solo Christo.

In his doxology Paul highlights the work of God the Father in verses 3-6, the work of God the Son in verses 7-12, and the work of God the Holy Spirit in verses 13-14. He begins with God the Father and says He deserves praise for three Christ-exalting actions that benefit us.

a. The Father blessed us in Christ (3). With what? With every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. Notice that phrase “in Christ,” for the Father’s blessings are found *in Christ*. So if you are *in Christ*, as the first readers of this letter were, then you have every spiritual resource you need to live the kind of life that pleases your Maker. If not, then you don’t.

b. The Father chose us in Christ (4). When? Verse 4 says He did so before He ever created the universe. And for what purpose did He choose us? He chose us in Christ so that we would be holy and blameless in His sight.

c. The Father predestined us to be adopted through Christ (5). Simply put, the Father wants a family of sons and daughters around His dining room table. And so in eternity past, He purposed to adopt unworthy rebels and transform them into holy and blameless children. And He purposed to fulfill this plan through the work of His beloved Son, as we’ll see in a moment.

Even though we were unworthy sinners, the Father blessed us, chose us, and predestined us to sonship through His Son, and for this He deserves our praise! Verse 6, “To the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves.”

The Father’s blessings come to us in and through Christ alone. Solo Christo.

But there’s more. In part two of this doxology, verses 7-12, Paul takes us even deeper into this exaltation of Christ, and in so doing gives us three reasons why we must affirm solo Christo.

I. We have redemption in Christ alone (7-8).

Verses 7-8 “In him [referring to Christ; see the end of verse 6] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.”

We may not be familiar with the word “redemption,” but the believers in Ephesus were. There were sixty million slaves in the Roman Empire in Paul’s day, and they were often bought and sold like merchandise. And if a slave had a cruel master, that slave was in real trouble. But he had one hope, if someone else would buy him and set him free from the tyranny of life under a harsh master.

That’s redemption, and that’s what God has done for us in Christ. The English word “redemption” comes from two Latin words: *re* which means “again” and *emo, emere* which means “to acquire.” So redemption means “to acquire again” or “to buy again.” So by definition, redemption is “deliverance from bondage by the payment of a price.”⁴

We learn four things about our redemption from verses 7-8.

A. It required His blood. “In Him we have redemption through His blood.” Notice we are not self-redeemed (we didn’t buy our own freedom), but redeemed *in Him*. It’s in Christ that we have redemption. And what price did Christ pay to deliver us from our cruel master? We have redemption *through His blood*.

What does that mean? What about Christ’s blood secured our freedom from sin? I don’t think Paul is talking merely about the liquid substance that flowed through Christ’s body. The shedding of blood is a reference to death. It’s the fact that Christ shed His blood *and died* that accomplished our redemption.

If the God-man had merely lived on planet earth for thirty-three years and then ascended to heaven without dying, His blood would not have rescued us. But He did die. He died as our substitute on the cross. He died as a sacrificial lamb, and His blood spilled out as a testimony to the price He paid to buy us out of the marketplace of sin.

B. It resulted in our forgiveness. “We have redemption through His blood, *the forgiveness of sins*.” The Old Testament tells us that God gave Israel a very special day called the Day of Atonement. On that day once a year two goats were taken. One was killed and its blood sprinkled on the mercy seat. The other goat was not killed. It was known as the scapegoat. Do you recall what they did with it? The sins of the people were confessed over the head of that goat, and then it was sent away, never to return. That’s the meaning of the word *forgiveness* used here—the complete removal of sin.

And sin is plural here. We have the forgiveness of *sins* (Greek *paraptomaton*, which refers to our transgressions, our false steps, our acts of trespassing in God’s world). They’re all gone. Every sin we’ve ever committed has been removed from us. We don’t bear them any longer because Christ bore them for us, and on the cross He endured the due punishment.

⁴ James M. Boice, *Our Savior God*, p. 139.

There's no double jeopardy with God. He doesn't punish sins twice. If you're in Christ, your sins are gone and so is the penalty for them. As Psalm 103:12 explains, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." And as God Himself announced in Jeremiah 31:34, "Their sin will I remember no more."

But why would a holy and just God punish His own Son rather than us? What would motivate Him to offer rebels like us a redemption that results in total and undeserved forgiveness? It's not because of anything we have done.

C. It was made possible by the grace of God. "We have redemption...in accordance with *the riches of God's grace*." There's grace again. What was the basis of the Father's choice of us from eternity past? To the praise of His glorious *grace*, says verse 6. And on what basis did the Father choose to give His Son to pay our redemption price, and did the Son agree to shed His blood to remove our sins? Again, it's grace. We have redemption in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

Don't miss the obvious here. If you are in Christ, redemption is something you have. It's not something you have to wonder about. You either have it or you don't.

Sadly, many people live their lives with the notion that if they live a good life, then God will forgive them. But that's not true. And still others who do believe in Christ refuse to agree with what God says about their sins, and they continue to punish themselves with the horrid memory of their past sins.

They're gone, beloved! If you're in Christ, your sins are gone. Your Savior has delivered you from your bondage by the payment of a price!

But there's more. The sentence continues in verse 8 where we discover something else about our redemption.

D. It puts on display the wisdom of God. "That [referring to God's grace] he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding." I don't think the NIV gets the right sense here, for it uses the word "with" instead of "in." Granted, the Greek word *en* can go either way, and the verse could be saying that God lavished His grace on us "*with* all wisdom and understanding" (as in the NIV and NLT), or "*in* all wisdom and understanding" (as in the ASV, KJV, NKJV, and ESV).

In other words, the question is this. Is verse 8 telling us that God lavished on us grace *plus* some other things, namely wisdom and understanding? Or is it telling us *how* God lavished His redeeming grace on us, that He did it *in all wisdom and understanding*, referring to *His* wisdom and understanding?

I think it's the latter. I think that Paul here is affirming that in our redemption God demonstrated not only His grace, but also His wisdom and understanding too. Or to put it another way, God showered us with His grace in order to put His wisdom on display, and all the rest of His attributes, too!

That's exactly what our redemption does. It puts the wisdom of God on center stage. How could God rescue rebel sinners and transform those sinners into His sons and daughters? Who could design a plan like that? Only a God who possesses all wisdom and understanding.

Let me show you a couple of texts to support this point. The first comes at the end of Romans 11. The first eleven chapters of Romans explain more fully than any other passage the marvelous plan of God's redemption. And how does Paul conclude that explanation? With a doxology of praise. And what divine attribute does he highlight first? He bursts into praise in Romans 11:33, "Oh, the depth of the riches *of the wisdom and knowledge of God!* How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" (see also verses 34-36, which conclude, "To him be the glory forever!")

The other text is right here in Ephesians. In chapter 3 Paul elaborates on the eternal plan of God to form a people for His glory. Why would God do this? Listen to

Ephesians 3:10-11, “His intent was that now, through the church, *the manifold wisdom of God should be made known* to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

God wanted to put His wisdom on display, so the angelic beings would praise Him (says Ephesians 3), so we the redeemed would praise Him (says Romans 11). That’s what redemption is all about. It required His blood, resulted in our forgiveness, was made possible by His grace, and puts on display His matchless wisdom.

The bottom line, our redemption is for the praise of His glory and we have it, Solo Christo, in Christ alone.

But there’s more. Not only do we have redemption, but also Solo Christo means...

II. We have revelation in Christ alone (9-10).

Verse 9 begins, “And he made known to us.” *He* is referring to God the Father. *Us* is referring to those who are in Christ (initially to Jews who are in Christ, and then by extension to Gentiles who are in Christ; we’ll see Paul switch from “we” and “us” to “you” in verse 13).

But for now, the point is this. God has made some things known to those of us who are in Christ. And what do we know? Two pieces of revelation.

A. We know that God has a plan (9). “And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ.” Did you catch that? According to this verse...

1. *We know what the world doesn’t know.* We know it because God has made something known to the people He has redeemed that previously was a mystery to us and remains a mystery to the world. Paul here calls it “the mystery of His will.”

What is this mystery? Paul used the word six times in Ephesians and four times in Colossians. By definition, the Greek word refers to something previously unknown that has been made known. Specifically, a mystery is a truth which would not be known to men if God had not revealed it.

And what is this revealed truth that we know? Paul says it’s something which God “purposed in Christ.” In 3:6 Paul tells us precisely what God purposed in Christ, “This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”

That’s the mystery. Gentiles can become God’s heirs just like Jews can.

But how? Paul explains in Colossians 1:27, “To them [referring to “the saints” in verse 26] God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory.” And Colossians 2:2 boils it down even further, saying that the mystery is *Christ*.

So there’s the mystery. It’s *Christ*. It’s *Christ in you*. It’s the truth that if Christ is in you, then you are part of God’s forever family, whether you were born in Jerusalem or Jakarta. That’s God’s plan, and that’s what we know.

To put it plainly...

2. *We know the mystery of the gospel.*

Do the following words mean anything to you? *Growl like a tiger, run like a deer.* Probably not. They do to me. They do to my dad and my brother. Why? Because when I was a child we had a clubhouse, and to get in you had to know and say the secret password. If you didn’t know you, you couldn’t get inside. To outsiders, the words were nothing but jubberish. But not to us on the inside. I knew the significance, and I knew it because it had been made known to me.

Do the following words make sense to you? *Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.* They don’t to millions of people on this planet who don’t know that God has a plan, and

that it's God's plan to rescue sinners through the ransom payment His Son provided on the cross. But we know, if we're in Christ.

And why do we know? Here's why. "According to his good pleasure." Paul is talking about God the Father and clarifying that it is the Father's good pleasure that is behind all this.

Some people have the notion that God the Father is sort of the serious one in the Godhead, and that it's the Son who really loves us. I appreciate a comment by William Hendriksen on this phrase, "We learn from this that the Father, far from being less loving than the Son, *takes special delight* in planning whatever must be planned in order to bring about the salvation, full and free, of men who had plunged themselves into misery and ruin, and takes equal pleasure in telling them about this marvelous plan!"⁵

Yet there's another piece of revelation we know. First, we know God has a plan.

B. We know that God has a purpose (10). "To be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."

Those with a secular worldview try to explain the universe without reference to God. Everything is the result of random chance events. Survival of the fittest. This makes history meaningless and the future a great big question-mark.

But we who hold to a biblical worldview know better. We know that the Sovereign God has an amazing purpose that He's intent on fulfilling. What's more, we know what that purpose is, and we know what it is because in Christ we have revelation.

Okay, so where is this universe heading? To tell us Paul selected a very interesting word in verse 10, *anakephalaioo*, here translated, "to bring all things together under one head." The only other place it appears in the Bible is in Romans 13:9 where Paul says that all the commandments of the law "are summed up" in this one rule: love your neighbor as yourself."

To *sum up*, that's our word. The verb means "to bring something to a *kephalaion* (to a head), that is, to bring together, to sum up, to bring to a conclusion."

That's what God's purpose is, but what exactly does this word indicate is going to happen? We find a clue at the end of the chapter where Paul uses a related term in Ephesians 1:22, "And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head [Greek *kephale*] over everything for the church."

So two thousand years ago God made His Son *head* over the church. That's past tense. But the same thing is going to happen in the future, and this time regarding, not just the church, but the whole universe. God is going to bring everything in heaven and on earth under the headship of His Son.

Why is that necessary in the first place? The answer takes us back to the beginning.

1. *Because of Adam the universe fractured and fell apart.* When the first man Adam sinned, he split everything apart. He alienated man from God, man from fellow man, man from the created order, even man from himself.

And what Adam initiated, we have inherited and perpetuate. We have his nature, so we do what Adam did. Because of sin, families fracture. The nation fractures. Ball teams fracture. Work places fracture. That's the norm. Bringing people together takes a ton of work and in the end, the effort results in more fracturing.

This is reality. Because of Adam, and because we are all like Adam, we are living in a world that is fractured.

But here's the good news. This is all going to change, and here's why...

⁵ William Hendriksen, p. 85.

2. *In Christ God is bringing everything back together where it belongs, under the headship of His Son.* That's what verse 10 says. When the times reach their fulfillment, God is going "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ ("to unite all things in him," says the ESV)."

I like how the *NLT* puts it, "God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure. And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth."

That's the certain purpose of God, beloved, and by His grace we know it. Yes, right now we see discord and division in the world. We see riots and refugees and walls being built and hurricanes and earthquakes, for we're living in a fracturing world.

But it's going to end one day when King Jesus the Christ returns, reverses the curse on this world, and every knee bows to Him.

And we know it. We know God has a plan and purpose, and we know it because we have revelation in Christ.

Yet there's more! As we continue to pull out the telescoping sections of this wonderful sentence, we discover a third reason to affirm Solo Christo. We have *redemption* in Christ alone. We have *revelation* in Christ alone.

III. We have a rich inheritance in Christ alone (11-12).

Verse 11 begins, "In him we were also chosen." Sounds like what Paul told us in verse 4, but he's using a different Greek word. *Chosen* here comes from the word *kleroo*. In the noun form it (*kleronomos*) it means "heir," and the related verb *kleronomeo* means "to inherit."

So Paul is talking about a particular kind of choosing. His word indicates that we have been chosen by God to receive His inheritance (in verse 18, Paul takes it a step further and tells us that we *are* God's inheritance). The *ESV* captures the point, "In him we have obtained an inheritance."

So we have an inheritance? Yes, we do, and we have it, Solo Christo, in Christ alone. What's true of our inheritance? We're told two things here.

A. God designed it (11). "In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will."

Don't shy away from that word "predestined." It's a wonderful, comfort-giving, God-exalting, evangelism-promoting, fear-removing, endurance-inspiring word. It makes it absolutely clear that...

1. *Nothing just happens in God's universe.* There is no such thing as luck or chance. How could there be if there is a Sovereign Lord on the throne who said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me (Matt. 28:18)"?

And this Sovereign God says He had us in mind in eternity past. He predestined us to be His adopted sons and daughters, says verse 5. Now verse 11 indicates He predestined us to have a share in His inheritance.

This wonderful word also makes it clear that...

2. *Everything happens according to the purpose of God's will.* If He chose you from eternity past, and He's already declared that you will receive His inheritance in eternity future, you can be sure there will be no surprise glitches along the way! If you are in Christ you have an eternally secure inheritance.

But why? Why would the Sovereign God choose us and give us His own inheritance? Here's why.

B. God gave it to us so that we might make much of His Son (12). “In order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ [the “we” is probably a reference to Paul and other Jewish Christians, for they were the *first* to hope in Christ; the apostle will switch to “you” in the next verse], might be for the praise of his glory.”

There it is again. Why did the Father bless us, choose us, and predestine us? So that we might be *to the praise of His glorious grace* (6). And why did He give us redemption, revelation, and a rich inheritance in His beloved Son? For the same reason! So that we *might be for the praise of His glory*.⁶

Now take a good look at that statement, for we tend to turn it around. Because of our sinful bent, we tend to want God to make much of us, even after He saves us. And so we treat Him like He’s a Genie in a bottle. But this verse makes something very clear.

1. *Jesus Christ does not exist for me.*
2. *You and I exist for the praise of His glory.*

This says tons about how we should live. We should be looking for ways to make much of Him, not ourselves. This is why church is important, for church is His body. This is why evangelism is important, and sending missionaries, and having ministries for kids right here at home, and serving the needy, and studying our Bibles, and praying with our families, and singing hymns of praise.

These are all ways to make much of Him.

But do you know what short-circuits this? Pride does. Proud people don’t make much of Christ because they’re thinking about themselves. So if we’re going to make much of the One who deserves our all, we need to cultivate humility in our hearts and truly get to know Him.

Like Jamel Attar did. I read his biography this week, *I Believed in 'Issa, I Met Jesus: When a fervent Muslim is confronted by grace*. Jamel, who grew up in Morocco as a devout Muslim, went off to college in Caen, France. While there he met some Christians for the first time, excited at the prospect of converting them to Islam.

But they began sharing things with him he had never heard, as well as demonstrating a love he had never seen. These Christians included Daniel and Betty Lacey and their daughters, friends of WBC. Listen to Jamel as he talks about what happened when he began learning the truth about Jesus.

The rock on which my certainties resided continued to crack, but now more radically and more decisively than before. The central cause for this crevice was the unveiling of the person of Jesus. The more I discussed with Pastor Daniel and other Christians, and the more I read the Bible, the more the person of Jesus Christ came to me with compelling force and clarity. Though I knew little of Him up to that point, I suddenly found Him depicted in vivid detail. While He had been nothing but a silhouette without form in the Koran, He became a person, a living Being; He began to gain importance! I discovered that in reality, much was known concerning His life, and that it was “charming” in the etymological sense of the word: placed before Him, the reader of the Gospel was drawn to Him irresistibly. As the woman in the Bible who had suffered from hemorrhages during twelve long years, I too, longed to touch this Jesus, all the while trembling, not from apprehension that he would reject me, but that I would find Him as I feared He was. As Zacchaeus, I wanted to climb a tree so that I might see Him better, but at the same time, I feared He would turn His illuminated face towards me, and that He would call me by name. Such was the delicious fear that the Person of Jesus awakened in me.

⁶ I think “His” is referring specifically to Christ.

One aspect of His life that particularly intrigued and captivated me, all the while producing in me a solemn fear, since it was in total contrast to the behavior of Muhammad—Jesus reflected in His person the love of God for all men, for each human, whatever his condition, and whatever his origin. From what I could understand, the Bible presented Jesus as the incarnate love of God, walking on two feet, welcoming the poor as did Muhammad. But He was also shown—and this is where He far exceeded the prophet—blessing His enemies and offering them His forgiveness exactly as He did for the vilest of sinners. This made my reading of the Bible painful, because it was dangerous and threatening to my Muslim faith. I feared what I was going to discover concerning Jesus. Deep down, I hoped I would see Him in a less favorable light. It is true; I could have simply stopped reading this Book and continued on my way, but that would have left me in doubt. I absolutely needed to know the truth in order to confirm my faith in Islam. Of course, I found nothing for which I could condemn Jesus, nothing horrible that I could cling to; on the contrary, His words were unparalleled, and His behavior was noble. Unconsciously I was comparing Jesus to Muhammad, he who should have been the most eminent one to me, and I was afraid of the results of this comparison.⁷

After months, even years of beholding Jesus in the Bible and in the lives of His people, Jamel placed his total trust in Jesus. Today he is a pastor and delights in helping others know Jesus too.

Why affirm Solo Christo? We've seen three reasons this morning, and there are certainly more. We have *redemption* in Christ alone. We have *revelation* in Christ alone. And we have a *rich inheritance* in Christ alone.

Make It Personal: Two questions to consider...

1. *Am I trusting in Christ alone for my salvation?*
2. *Am I seeking to honor Christ alone in my life?*

⁷ *I Believed in 'Issa, I Met Jesus: When a fervent Muslim is confronted by grace*, Jamel Attar and Betty Lacey