

Transcript 157

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. This is part three of our series on the alones of salvation. We did an episode on what does it mean that salvation is by grace alone? What does it mean that salvation is by through faith alone? Today we're going to be talking about what does it mean that salvation is in Christ alone? So joining me today is Jeff, the administrator of bibleref.com, and Kevin, the managing editor of Got Questions Ministries.

Shea Houdmann

And in saying this, I'm not in any way insinuating that the grace alone and faith alone aren't clear in scripture because they are. With Christ alone, there are numerous explicitly clear passages in the Bible that say that salvation is only in Christ. And maybe the start of this episode is by covering two of those. We have John 14:6, Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me. And also Acts 4:12, salvation is found in no one else, but there's no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. These two verses and even studied in their context are explicitly clear that Jesus is the only way of salvation. It is only through His sacrificial death on the cross, his resurrection that our sins can be forgiven, that we can be promised eternal life. That truly is no one else. And I invite you to listen to our episodes on grace alone and faith alone where we discuss why salvation had to be through grace alone and why salvation had to be us trusting in faith, Christ provision alone. So today we will be discussing specifically why Christ alone, why there can be no other way. So, Jeff, why don't you start us off and just to make some of the questions we typically receive about this issue. And some of the things that God has lead you to and and your study of this issue the past week.

Jeff Laird

It's really common for people to object to this particular aspect of the gospel. It's one thing for people to say that Jesus is a way to be right with God. That Jesus is a path or one of the options. But where where some people struggle is with the idea that Jesus Christ is the only way. And the first thing that we have to do is establish that that is not really negotiable within the biblical Christian faith. There is just no way around that. In other words, if that's going to be a problem, then it's going to be a problem because Scripture is very clear about that being the case.

Jeff Laird

The passage that I like to refer people to is the classic verse of the gospel, which is John 3:16. And it talks about God loving the world and giving him an eternal life and so on and so forth. But a lot of people stop at verse 16 and they don't keep going where verse 18 says whoever believes in him is not condemned. But whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only son of God. And then later in that same chapter, in verse 36, whoever believes in the son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. So it's very clear from the Christian perspective that it's through Christ and Christ only that we're able to obtain salvation. So the grace that God extends is extended in that he offers Jesus Christ. The faith that we have to exhibit has to be faith in Jesus Christ. From a philosophical perspective, that actually makes

sense because you can't have every single religion be true. They believe very different things about where we come from and what is the difference between right and wrong. And how do we be reconciled to God? That those things all are very different from each other. At least one of those, all of those possibly have to be wrong, because they all contradict with each other.

Jeff Laird

So from a scriptural standpoint, it's very, very important and very clear that we see that it's only Jesus Christ. He is the single soul solitary means. So we can't look at things like faith. We can't look at things like, you know, our approach to the gospel and say that somehow some way a person does not need Jesus in order to be reconciled with God. And those are not always popular opinions, but that is exactly what the Bible says. And there's a lot of things to unpack with that. As far as what that means for other people, other faiths other perspectives but we have to start from that understanding that from a biblical standpoint, it is very, very clear and it's just not arguable. That the only means of salvation that we have is God's grace alone. Through faith alone. In Christ alone. And not any other person, any other idea, any other guru, and the other system. It's only through Jesus Christ.

Kevin Stone

Amen to that. And Jeff, it's it's it's kind of surprising to me sometimes that the exclusive claims of Christ as being the the only savior would be so controversial that people would put up resistance against that because it's so clear in Scripture that that God sent his only begotten son into the world. And he is the only son. He's the only savior. Jesus Christ is God facing us. Jesus Christ is God reaching out to us. In fact, Jesus is the this is Hebrews one, verse 3. He's the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature. And so when we see Jesus, we have a clear window into the triune God. Jesus makes God visible to us and John 14 and verse 9. Jesus actually says whoever has seen me has seen the father. And so I tell my congregation this all the time. If you want to see God, look at Jesus. If you want to know what God is like, then look at Jesus because he is the revelation of God the father.

Kevin Stone

And when we take a look at the the apostles preaching in the book of Acts, we see that they're the theme of their message was always the gospel. And they were always pointing to Christ. They had a very cross centered, Christ centered message as they were delivering the the gospel to the world here in the in the early church. For example in Acts Chapter 4 and Shea, you already mentioned verse 12 but here's the context of Peter saying that in verse 12 about no other name, Peter and John had just healed a lame man there in Jerusalem, and so a crowd had gathered, and Peter takes that opportunity to point people to Jesus Christ. And he says I'm going to start reading here in verse 10. Know this, you and all the people of Israel. It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead that this man stands before you healed. Jesus is the stone you builders rejected. Which has become the cornerstone. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven, given the mankind, by which we must be saved. So Peter preaches the name of Jesus and he's very specific about it. Jesus Christ of Nazareth, talking about Jesus the Messiah who is from the town of Nazareth. Don't get him confused with any other Jesus. He is the one that I'm talking about. The one from Nazareth. And all the people knew who Peter was talking about. Peter preached the Gospel of Jesus. He says you crucified him. God raised him from the dead. So there's the the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Those are the elements of the gospel. He preached the power of Jesus as he

points to the man who is formerly lame. And he says this man stands before you healed. How can this be? Well, it's the power of Jesus that made this man stand up and walk.

Kevin Stone

He preaches the shock of Jesus as he quotes from Psalm 118, the stone that you rejected become the chief of the corner. So the idea that Jesus is the Messiah and the savior was shocking to people. I mean we we passed him by. We we rejected him. He did not look like the Messiah to us. And so we rejected him. And he preaches the significance of Jesus also from Psalm 118 that he is the cornerstone. So although you rejected him, he has become the most significant piece in God's building project. God is constructing something in this world, it's called the church, and Jesus is the cornerstone. And there's only one cornerstone, Jesus is it. And then Peter preached the exclusivity of Jesus, where he says in verse 12 there's no other name that we can call on for salvation. Jesus alone saves. So don't bother waiting for anybody else. The world needed a savior, and God gave us exactly what we needed. He sent his only son into the world. God the son is the only savior and the only one that we can call on for our salvation.

Shea Houdmann

Excellent point, Kevin, like you said, studying this in context. It's one thing to point take out a verse focus on one verse, but studying scripture and context is always important as it adds depth to what even that one versus saying. So many passages in the Bible refer to why Jesus had to die to provide for our salvation, why sins were only forgivable through a perfect and complete sacrifice, and to say that there's some other way. I often wondered, could God have possibly forgive other people through who never heard about Jesus? Or is it possible God in his mercy would forgive someone who would have been raised their whole life and believe in another religion.

Shea Houdmann

And what kind of wouldn't they cured me of that, but at least made me think about it very differently was their previous pastor said, you know, Shea if there is any other way that God could have done it, would he have sacrificed his only son? Knowing what Jesus went through in his trials to torture his crucifixion, his death, if there's any other way that God could have done it, would he have done it the way that he did. And still think of it from the perspective they have a father and son. And again obviously the the incarnation, the deity of Christ, all those things plays into this. But if there's another way to do it, would God have chosen to do it this way. So saying that God could have provided salvation through someone else or in a different way is saying that God chose to allow his son to go through a brutal sacrifice when he didn't have to. And just think about the implications of that. So even the brutality of the crucifixion of of what it meant for Jesus to sacrifice himself for our sins, that speaks to the exclusive, exclusivity of Jesus claims that the provider of salvation. There's any other way, I think God would have done it some other way. The power of Jesus death and resurrection, providing for the forgiveness of our sins, and his resurrection providing our way to eternal life in heaven. That was the only way. And Jesus is the only person who could have provided it.

Jeff Laird

You can see we're sort of touching on different issues that we mentioned before that the idea of grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, there's a lot of overlap between those. And an important one when it

comes to Christ alone is the idea that God is who and what he is. So one of the things that we we can't get away from is the idea of saying what God are we talking about? What is God like? What is his nature? And if the Bible is describing the actual God who actually exists, then you're talking about the one and only creator. The one who's the source of everything that we see and think and feel and believe. And that's not just a New Testament idea. Isaiah 42:8, he says, I am the Lord. That is my name, my glory I give to no other. That's very reasonable when you're the one single necessary being. So the idea that there might be restrictions that we as human beings don't fully understand or don't like, doesn't really change anything. It's it's often said we should be very thankful that God's provided us with any means of salvation at all, let alone that he's only provided us with one.

Jeff Laird

And the issue that you're you guys have they've they've hit on is a sticky one. That idea of what about people who, from a human perspective, haven't had any opportunity the way we would think of it, to learn about Jesus Christ and know who Jesus Christ is. There, again, understanding who God is, who we are, that's helpful. Romans chapter one talks about the idea that God has made enough of his nature plain in human experience, that nobody has an excuse for sin. That all by itself takes care of a lot of the issue, because the concern is not that all human beings would just naturally go to heaven as long as we heard about Jesus, that's not the case. What the what the Bible teaches is that we all see enough of God and daily experience, but we choose to turn away. We choose to do different things. We choose to reject God. We are not lost because we didn't hear about the gospel. We are lost because of our sin. So even if we want to take the approach of saying maybe God is simply choosing not to extend salvation to certain persons, that's not what we're saying. It's not what I believe, for example. But even if we are to say that that that is in no sense and in no way unfair. It is that God's grace, as we talked about before something that's not merited. Something we don't deserve that he extends. So the idea that Jesus Christ alone, all by himself, and that being the only thing that a person needs to believe is not unreasonable, as long as we're understanding correctly which God we're talking about, and how we're talking about. That doesn't make it easy. And that doesn't mean that all those questions are simple and quick to answer. But it does mean that we can understand how there is nothing unfair or unreasonable about God providing us with one and only one way to be reconciled to him.

Kevin Stone

And as our one and only savior, he is worthy of our faith, and he is worthy of our worship and our glory. Scripture presents a lot of people that are, I guess you know, on some level worthy of our admiration and and our respect. And you guys probably have your favorite Bible character in all that. We probably all do. But but Jesus is supreme. And scripture over and over again makes the point that Jesus is unique among humanity and he is greater than any other personage that has ever lived or ever will live. He is greater than John the Baptist in John Chapter 5. He's greater than Jacob in John four. He is greater than Abraham, John chapter 8. He is greater than Solomon in Luke Chapter 11. He's greater than Jonah in Matthew 12. He's greater than the temple and how much respect to the temple in Jerusalem command. Well, Jesus is greater than the temple in Matthew chapter 12. He's greater than Moses the lawgiver in Hebrews chapter 3. He's greater than the Levitical priesthood. Every high priest that had ever lived, Jesus, is greater than that, because he offers a better covenant. That gives us a better hope and is founded on better promises. Hebrews chapters 7 and 8. He is greater even than the Angels, Hebrews

chapter one. And in fact he is greater than all things. There is nothing that is equal to him or above him, Colossians chapter one, he is worthy of our worship and highest adoration.

Jeff Laird

Something that you're you're hitting on there that I think is really important for us to remember is that Jesus Christ is God and God has attributes. He has truth, he has reality. And we we hinted at this a little bit before. But it's the idea that, one of the questions that's a little complicated about this is the idea of whether or not a person is believing in the actual Christ. So there's sort of this second wrinkle or second layer to this of saying that it is God's grace alone, faith alone, in Christ alone. Then the question becomes, are people placing faith in the Christ, the real Jesus Christ. And we've said in in other circumstances that the sincerity of your faith is not what matters. It's the object of your faith, is the thing that makes a difference. If you're in an airplane and you grab a backpack that's stuffed with a sleeping bag and jump out, your sincerity is not going to assist you. Just because your brain told you that was a parachute doesn't mean it's going to do anything.

Jeff Laird

And there is the reason why when we as a ministry discuss things like the Trinity and whether or not Jesus was sinless and virgin born and all these other things, those things all matter. They all make a difference because if I define Shea as a female with dark skin and a fake beard. I suppose I could think that and I could talk about that, but people would know. I don't think you're talking about the actual person. Do you really know who this person is? So when we talk about faith being in Christ alone, it's not just about the name or the caricature or the the idea of Jesus Christ that we're supposed to have our faith in. It's important that we're having faith in the real Christ. And that's why, as much as we accept that some things that we think and believe about Jesus could be considered secondary, they are important because a person has to have faith in the Jesus Christ. The way he presented himself, what he said about himself, who he said he was in order for that salvation to be in Jesus, who is really God.

Kevin Stone

And going along with that, we don't put our faith in Jesus plus something else. You know, it's not Jesus plus whatever good works I can, I can gin up in my own life. It's it's Christ alone. To quote from Charles Spurgeon, he said both feet must be on the Rock of Ages. We don't try to straddle. While you put 1 foot on the rock and put another foot somewhere else, you know we're we're we're all in as we trust in Christ. I think this is part of what it means to believe in Christ alone as well. We don't have any admixture of other things that we are putting our faith in. Both feet are firmly planted on that Rock of Ages.

Shea Houdmann

Amen. As we've gone through this series on the three alones. If you take a biblical stance on any of the three issues, very, very quickly get into trouble. Once you start saying it's maybe not entirely by grace alone that you can somehow contribute to it, or somehow earn it, or somehow make yourself at least somewhat worthy of it, or by faith alone. It's not just receiving it by faith. It's I've got to do something or it's not just in Christ alone. It's Christ plus good works. Or Christ plus something, or Jesus isn't the only way of salvation. There are other ways out there. All of these very, very quickly get into danger to the level of you are not actually trusting what the Bible says you have to trust in for salvation.

Shea Houdmann

But along that lines and I so so our listeners know I didn't give Jeff or Kevin this question ahead of time. I really wanted to get their off the cuff response without any prep time. We had a question come in this morning that I had very quickly look down. It's like this would be a good thing for us to maybe close the conversation with it. Think the way we discussed it will really hone in on what we're focusing on. So someone asked, I am trusting Christ alone for salvation, for myself. I'm trusting Jesus alone. His sacrifice, all that. But I believe that people can be saved by following other religions. Is that OK was essentially the question? How would you respond to that question? Or maybe to tighten it up even more, can a person believe that and be saved? Can you say I'm me personally, I'm trusting Christ alone, but I believe there are other ways that people can follow other religions and be saved. How do you respond to such a person?

Kevin Stone

Well, I would say that the person needs to think biblically. As far as whether that individual asking the question is a a believer, that's, I don't know, can't see the heart. God knows if there is faith there. The testimony is that he or she has faith in Christ, and so I would take that person at his word, I suppose. But that's just a matter between that person and the Lord, as far as the reality of the faith there. But as far as you know, being open to the idea that maybe some other people that live far away and are under another religion, maybe they can be saved too. That's just an unbiblical thought process and they I would just point them back to the word and say you know, it's very clear in Scripture. Some of those passages that we've looked at here in our podcast that Christ is exclusive. And he's the only savior, and that's it. That's a universal truth. It's not just something for one individual who happens to live in a in a Christian country.

Jeff Laird

Right. And Shea, I have to say, I admire your faith in in asking me to respond to something with absolutely zero idea of what I'm going to say or how I'm going to respond to it. You are a man of bravery, Sir. So I I agree with what Kevin is saying. I think that it's it's important that we stress that there is a difference between the mistakes that we can make as people and truth, but that God understands that we are not necessarily all knowing and perfect in our knowledge. So I think that if if somebody were to insist on the idea that Jesus Christ is not the only way, that he couldn't possibly be the only way, that would lead me to think that that person might have a misunderstanding of the gospel. Now, First Samuel 16:7 is the verse that says, people look on the outside appearance, God looks at the heart. Always important to remember that I can never pretend to judge somebody else's salvation perfectly just by something like that. But I would sort of respond the same way and telling the person I don't think that what you're discussing is biblically accurate, but I don't think it necessarily reflects such a deviation from truth that it's not compatible with salvation.

Jeff Laird

That being said, I do think that the more a person is exposed to truth, the more we start to learn the difference between somebody who is uninformed or misunderstanding versus somebody who is hard headed or resistant. We've had communications with people sometimes about aspects of faith and who Jesus Christ is that it gets to the point where this is not just about a person who doesn't grasp what the

Bible is saying, they are just doggedly stuck on something that is different. So my focus for that person would be on do you honestly believe in what Paul described in the gospel? You know that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. And that by placing faith in him and belief in him, we're forgiven for our sins. That's what you need to understand for salvation. How the rest of that shakes down and shakes out is some thing that we can pretty much let God figure out. We can warn people against making theological mistakes, and then let that go where it's going to go.

Shea Houdmann

I agree with both of you in that direction I'm planning on heading should I decide to ultimately answer this question. It really got me interested, especially since this topic would have been our schedule for a few weeks now. For that question to come in this morning was very intriguing to me. Whether I'm questioning this particular person salvation, not my, not my place, but questioning their beliefs that how can you say that there be some other way when what the Bible says about salvation is so clear. Both the very clear statements like John 14:6 like Acts 4:12 that says there's no other way, Absolutely not. To it's understanding why Jesus had to die to provide for our salvation. To say there could be some other ways, some misunderstanding of sin, and some misunderstanding of forgiveness. Misunderstanding of God, his nature. I in no sense want to limit where God can show mercy, show grace, but God gives us no reason to believe. He shows Salvific mercy and grace and any other way other than through Christ. So to assume that, that is very dangerous, to say the least. And for this person I'm questioning, do you truly understand salvation how God provided it? Because you holding out hope or even thinking that there are other ways that questions whether you really understand what Jesus sacrificed truly meant.

Jeff Laird

And that's where we we really have to stress that idea of we don't fully understand what's going on in there, but there is a difference ultimately, between the person who says, I believe, help my unbelief versus the the person like Jesus talked to the Pharisees where he says you say you search the scriptures but you refuse to come to me there. There is ultimately a difference between somebody who says I'm sincerely trying to follow what God wants me to follow and this is my understanding and now I have a better understanding. Even if that takes a while for the person to get to there. There is a sincere difference between that and the person who says, Oh well, I I couldn't possibly accept the Jesus who was the only way to heaven. Well, then, that's a very different thing than somebody saying, I certainly believe that Christ is what saves me. I just don't see why other means couldn't work. It's theologically incorrect. It's not what the Bible teaches, but you can understand that a person could sincerely be there until somebody starts to show them the truth. Then they start to become like the rich man that Jesus talked to who said I do all these good things when Jesus says oh, well, give up your wealth. And they said oh. Well, I'm not, I'm not going to go that far. That's where you can kind of see the difference between a person who just doesn't understand versus the person who's resistance. I don't ever think that ignorance like that is something that automatically indicates a person lacks salvation until they're clinging to that ignorance. Because there's something they want more than truth.

Shea Houdmann

Well said, Jeff. I've really enjoyed this grace alone, faith alone, in Christ alone series. So how about this? Well, it's not it's closely directed to salvation. It's so very. How about next time? Let's do scripture alone. All right, this has been the Got Questions podcast on what does it mean that salvation is in Christ alone?

And and I can't say it anymore clearly than Acts 4:12 salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind. By which we must be saved. The Bible has answers. We'll help you find them.