

Only One Way--Christ!

by J.C. Ryle

The only way of salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ, as stated in the Bible.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:5, John 3:36, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Romans 10:9, 1 Corinthians 3:11, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 7:25, 1 John 5:11-12

Topics: "Salvation", "Exclusivity of Christ"

Description

J.C. Ryle emphasizes the exclusive nature of salvation through Jesus Christ, as articulated by the Apostle Peter in Acts 4:12. He highlights that no one can be saved from sin or attain peace with God except through Christ, who is the only mediator between God and humanity. Ryle argues that the doctrine of salvation through Christ is supported by the nature of humanity, the character of God, and the teachings of the Bible. He warns against the futility of any religion that does not center on Christ and urges believers to actively share this truth with others. Ultimately, Ryle calls for a deep personal commitment to Christ as the sole source of salvation.

Transcript

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."--Acts 4:12

These words are striking in themselves. But they are much more striking if you consider when and by whom they were spoken.

They were spoken by a poor and unpopular Christian, in the midst of a persecuting Jewish Council and it was a wonderful confession about Christ. These words were spoken by the lips of the Apostle Peter. This is the man who, a few weeks before, abandoned Jesus and fled: this is the very man who three times denied his Lord. There is another spirit in him now. He now stands up boldly before priests and Sadducees, and tells them the truth to their face, saying: "[Jesus] is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name in heaven given to men by which we must be saved" [Acts 4:11-12].

In considering this serious subject there are three things I wish to do:

I. First, to show you the doctrine being declared here by the Apostle.

II. Secondly, to show you some reasons why this doctrine must be true.

III. Thirdly, to show you some consequences that naturally flow from the doctrine.

I. First let me show you the doctrine of the text.

Let us make sure that we correctly understand what the Apostle Peter means. He says of Christ, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name in heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Now what is this? This is a very critical statement that we need to clearly understand.

He means that no one can be saved from sin--from its guilt, power, and consequences--except by Jesus Christ.

He means that no one can have peace with God the Father--obtain forgiveness of sin in this world, and escape the wrath of God that is coming after death--except through the atoning death and mediation of Jesus Christ.

Only in Christ will we find God's rich provision of salvation for sinners. Only in Christ will we find God's abundant mercies coming down from Heaven to earth.

Only the blood of Christ can cleanse us; only the righteousness of Christ's can clothe us; Only the sacrifice of Christ can give us a title to heaven. Jews and Gentiles, educated and uneducated, rich and poor--everyone, no matter what their position or standing in life must either be saved by Jesus Christ or lost forever.

And the Apostle emphatically adds, "There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." There is no other person commissioned, sealed, and appointed by God the Father to be the Savior of sinners, except Christ. The keys of life and death are only found in His hand, and all who want to be saved must go to Him.

There was only one place of safety in the day when the flood came upon the earth, and that was Noah's ark. All other places and things--mountains, towers, trees, rafts, boats--all were completely useless. Likewise, there is only one hiding place for sinners who want to escape the storm of God's anger--they must hide their souls in Christ.

There was only one man to whom the Egyptians could go to in the time of famine, when they wanted food--they could only go to Joseph: it was a waste of time to go to anyone else. Likewise, there is only One to whom hungering souls must go, if they don't want to perish forever--they must go to Christ.

There was only one word that could save the lives of the men of Ephraim in the day when the men of Gilead fought with them, and took control of the fords of the Jordan [Judges 12]--they must say the word "Shibboleth," or die. Well, in the same way, there is only one name that will save us when we stand at the gate of heaven--we must name the name of Jesus as our only hope, or be thrown into the Lake of Fire forever.

Such is the doctrine of the text. "Salvation is found in no one else but Jesus Christ: in Him is complete salvation--salvation to the uttermost, salvation for the very chief of sinners;--without Jesus there is no salvation at all." This doctrine is in perfect harmony with our Lord's own words in the Book of John: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" [John 14:6]. It is the same thing that Paul told the Corinthians: "No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" [1 Corinthians 3:11]. And it is the same truth that John tells us in his first Epistle:

"God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" [1 John 5:11-12]. All these texts state the same undeniable truth, that there is no salvation except through the person of Jesus Christ.

Dear friends, make sure that you understand this before you pass from this world. Perhaps you think this is old news. Perhaps you feel, "These are ancient things: who doesn't know this simple truth? Of course we believe there is no salvation except by Christ." But listen carefully to what I say: make sure that you understand this doctrine, or else in time you will stumble, and be offended at what I am about to say.

Remember that you are to base your entire salvation on the person of Christ and on Christ only. You are to totally reject and dismiss all other hopes and trusts. You are not to rest partially on Christ--partially on doing all you can--partially on going to church--partially on receiving the Lord's Supper. In the matter of your justification Christ is to be everything. This is the doctrine of the text before us this morning.

Remember that heaven is standing before you, and Christ is the only door into it; hell is beneath you, and only Christ is able to deliver you from it; the devil is behind you and accusing you of sin, and Christ is the only place of safety from the devil's wrath and accusations; the law is against you, and only Christ is able to redeem you; sin is weighing you down, and only Christ is able to take it away. This is the doctrine of the text before us this morning.

Now do you see it? I hope you do. But I fear many who think so, may find, before this sermon is over, that they really don't.

II. Let me show you, in the second place, some reasons why the doctrine of the text, that Jesus is the only way of salvation, must be true.

I could cut short this part of the subject with one simple argument: "God says so." "One plain text," said an old preacher, "is as good as a thousand reasons."

But I will not do this. I intend to answer the many objections that are ready to rise in many hearts against this doctrine, by pointing out the strong foundations on which it stands.

(1) Let me then say, for one thing, the doctrine, that Jesus is the only way of salvation, must be true, because man is what man is.

Now, what is man? There is one broad, sweeping answer, which takes in the whole human race: man is a sinful creature. All children of Adam born into the world, whatever their name or nation is, are corrupt, wicked, and defiled in the sight of God. Their thoughts, words, ways, and actions are all, more or less, defective and imperfect.

Is there no country on the face of the earth where sin doesn't reign? Is there no happy valley, no secluded island, where innocence can be found? Is there no tribe on earth, far away from civilization, and commerce, and money, and weapons, and luxury, and books, where morality and purity flourish? No, dear friends: there is none. Look over all the voyages and travels you can lay your hand on, from Columbus down to Capt Cook, and you will see the truth of what I am asserting. The most isolated islands of the Pacific Ocean--islands cut off from all the rest of the world, islands where every person there are all ignorant of Rome and Paris, London and Jerusalem--these islands have been found to be full of impurity, cruelty, and idolatry. The footprints of the devil have been traced to every shore. The truthfulness of the third chapter of Genesis has been established everywhere. Whatever else savages have been found

ignorant of, they have never been found ignorant of sin.

But are there no men or women in the world who are free from this corruption of nature? Have there not been high and exalted souls who have every now and then lived faultless lives? Have there not been some, if it is only a few, who have done everything that God required, and thus proved that sinless perfection is a possibility? No, dear friends: there have been none. Look over all the biographies and lives of the holiest Christians; note how the brightest and best of Christ's people have always had the deepest sense of their own failures and corruption. They groan, they mourn, they sigh, they weep over their own shortcomings: it is one of the common grounds on which they meet. Patriarchs and Apostles, Early Church Fathers and Reformers, Luther and Calvin, Knox and Bradford, Rutherford and Bishop Hall, Wesley and Whitefield, Martyn and M'Cheyne--all are in total agreement in being totally aware of their own sinfulness. The more light they have, the more humble they seem to be; the more holy they are, the more they seem to feel their own unworthiness, and to glory, not in themselves, but in Christ.

Now what does all this seem to prove? In my mind it seems to prove that human nature is so tainted and corrupt that, left to himself, no man could be saved. Man's case appears to be a hopeless one without a mighty Savior. There must be a Mediator, an Atonement, an Advocate, to make such poor sinful creatures acceptable with God: and I find this nowhere, except in the person of Jesus Christ. Heaven for man without a mighty Redeemer, peace with God for man without a mighty Intercessor, eternal life for man without an eternal Savior--in one word, salvation without Christ--all appear to me to be utter impossibilities.

I lay these things before you, and ask you to consider them. I know it is one of the hardest things in the world to realize the sinfulness of sin. To say we are all sinners is one thing; to have an idea what sin must be in the sight of God is something else. Sin is too much a part of us to allow us to see it as it is: we don't feel our own moral deformity. We are like those animals in creation which are vile and loathsome to our senses, but are not so to themselves, nor yet to one another: their loathsomeness is their nature, and they don't perceive it. Our corruption is part and parcel of ourselves, and at our best we have only a feeble comprehension of its intensity.

But this you can be sure of--if you could see your own lives with the eyes of the angels who never fell, you would never doubt this point for a moment. Depend on it, no one can really know what man is, and not see that the doctrine of our text must be true. There can be no salvation except through Christ.

(2) Let me say another thing. The doctrine of our text, that Jesus is the only way of salvation, must be true, because God is what God is.

Now what is God? That is indeed a deep question. We know something of His attributes: He has not left Himself without witness in creation; He has mercifully revealed to us many things about Himself in His Word. We know that God is a Spirit--eternal, invisible, almighty--the Maker of all things, the Preserver of all things--holy, just, all-seeing, all-knowing, all-remembering-- infinite in mercy, in wisdom, and in purity.

But, what is sad, is how base and demeaning our greatest ideas are when we come to put down on paper what we believe God to be! How many words and expressions we use whose complete meaning we cannot understand! How many things our tongues say about God which our minds are utterly unable to conceive! How small a part of Him do we really see! How little of Him can we possibly know! How poor and worthless are any words of ours to convey any idea of Him who made this mighty world out of nothing, and with whom "one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day!" How weak and inadequate are our poor feeble intellects to conceive of Him who is perfect in all of His works--perfect in

the greatest as well as perfect in the smallest, perfect in appointing the days and hours in which Jupiter, with all its satellites, will travel around the sun--perfect in forming the smallest insect that creeps over a few feet of our little globe! How little can our busy helplessness comprehend a Being who is always commanding and directing all things, in heaven and earth, by universal providence: controlling and directing the rise and fall of nations and dynasties, like Nineveh and Carthage; directing the exact length to which men like Alexander and Napoleon will extend their conquests; directing the smallest step in the life of the humblest believer among His people: all at the same time, all continuously, all perfectly--all for His own glory.

The blind man is no judge of the paintings of Rubens or Titian; the deaf man is insensible to the beauty of Handel's music; the person who lives in Greenland can have but a faint notion of the climate of the tropics; the Australian savage can only form in his mind a remote conception of a locomotive engine, however well you may describe it: there is no place in their minds to take in these things; they have no set of thoughts which can comprehend them; they have no mental fingers to grab hold of them. And, in just the same way, the best and brightest ideas that man can form of God, compared to the reality which we will one day see, are indeed weak and faint.

But, my friend, the one thing that I think is very clear is this: The more any one considers calmly who God really is, the more they must feel the immeasurable distance between God and themselves: the more they meditate, the more they must see that there is a great gulf between them and God. Their conscience, I think, will tell them, if they will let it speak, that God is perfect, and they are imperfect; that God is very high, and they are very low; that God is glorious majesty and they are nothing but a poor worm: and that if they are ever to stand before Him in judgment with any comfort, then they must have a mighty helper, or they will not be saved.

And what is all this but the very doctrine of our text? What is all this but coming around to the conclusion I am urging you to make? With such a person as God to give account to, we must have a mighty Savior. We must have an Almighty Friend and Advocate on our side--who can answer every charge that can be laid against us, and plead our cause with God on equal terms. We want this, and nothing less than this. Vague notions of mercy will never give true peace. And such a Savior, such a Friend, such an Advocate is nowhere to be found except in the person of Jesus Christ.

I lay this reason before you. I well know that people may have false notions of God as well as everything else, and shut their eyes against the truth; but I say boldly and confidently, no man or woman can really have high and honorable views of who God is, and escape the conclusion that the doctrine of our text must be true. There can be no possible salvation except by Jesus Christ.

(3) Let me say, in the third place, this doctrine must be true, because the Bible is what the Bible is.

All through the Bible, from Genesis down to Revelation, there is only one simple account of the way in which a man or woman must be saved. It is always the same: only by our Lord Jesus Christ--through faith; never by our own works and righteousness.

You see it dimly revealed at first: it looms through the mist of a few promises, but there it is. You see it more clearly later: it is taught by the pictures and symbols of the law of Moses.

You have it still more clearly as time goes by: the Prophets saw in visions many particulars about the Redeemer that was to come.

Finally, you have the complete revelation, in the sunshine of New Testament history: Christ incarnate--Christ crucified --Christ rising again, Christ preached to the world.

But one golden thread runs through the whole Bible; no salvation except by Jesus Christ. The bruising of the serpent's head predicted in the day of the fall; the clothing of our first parents with animal skins, the sacrifices of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the Passover, and all the particulars of the Jewish law--the high priest, the altar, the daily offering of the lamb, the holy of holies entered only by blood, the scapegoat, the cities of refuge--all are many witnesses to the truth set forth in the text: all preach with one voice, salvation only by Jesus Christ.

In fact, this truth appears to me to be the great focus of the Bible, and all the different parts and portions of the book are meant to pour light on it. I can gather from it no ideas of pardon and peace with God except in connection with this truth. If I could read of one soul in it who was saved without faith in the Savior, I might perhaps not speak so confidently. But when I see that faith in Christ--whether in a coming Christ or a crucified Christ--was the prominent feature in the religion of all who went to heaven; when I see Abel owning Christ in his better sacrifice, at one end of the Bible, and the saints in glory in John's vision rejoicing in Christ, at the other end of the Bible; when I see a man like Cornelius, who was devout, and feared God, and gave to the poor and prayed, told, in effect that in order to be saved, he was to send for Peter, and hear of Christ; when I see all these things I say, I feel bound to believe that the doctrine of the text is the doctrine of the whole Bible. No salvation, no way to heaven, except through Jesus Christ.

I don't know what use you make of your Bible--whether you read it or whether you don't--whether you read it all, or whether you only read the parts that you like; but this I tell you plainly, if you read and believe the whole Bible, you will find it hard to escape the doctrine that there is no salvation except through the person and blood of Jesus Christ. I don't see how you can consistently reject what I have been endeavouring to prove. Christ is the way, and the only way; Christ is the truth, and the only truth; Christ is the life, and the only life.

Such are the reasons which seem to me to confirm the truth laid down in our text. What man is--what God is--what the Bible is--all appear to me to lead us on to the same great conclusion: no possible salvation without Christ. I leave them with you, and move on.

III. And now, in the third and last place, let me show you some consequences which flow naturally out of our text.

This is a critical part of our subject. The truth I have been trying to set before you is absolutely critical for mankind and I must speak of it with urgency. If Christ is the only way of salvation, what are we to feel about the many people in the world? This is the point I am now going to take up.

I believe that many persons would go with me as far as I have gone, and would go no further. They will allow my premises, but they will have nothing to do with my conclusions. They think it unloving to say anything which appears to condemn others. For my part I cannot understand such love: it seems to me the kind of love which would see a neighbor slowly drinking poison, but never intervene to stop him; a love which would allow migrants to embark in a leaky, un-seaworthy vessel, and not intervene to prevent them; a love which would see a blind man walking near a precipice, and think it wrong to cry out, and tell him there was danger.

I believe the greatest love is to tell the greatest quantity of truth. I believe it is a lack of love to hide the legitimate consequences of such a text as we are now considering, or to close our eyes to them. And I solemnly call on every one who really believes there is no salvation in anyone but Christ and no other name, given under heaven whereby we must be saved--I solemnly call on those persons to listen to me, while I set before them some of the tremendous consequences of our text.

One mighty consequence then, which seems to be learned from this text, is the utter uselessness of any religion without Christ.

There are many to be found today who have this kind of religion. They would not like to be called Deists, but they are Deists. They believe that there is a God, that there is what they are pleased to call Providence, that God is merciful, that there will be a life after death--this is about the sum and substance of their creed; and as to the distinguishing tenets of Christianity, they don't seem to recognize them at all. Now I denounce such a system as a baseless fabric--its foundation is nothing but man's ideas--its hopes an utter delusion. The god of such people is an idol of their own invention, and not the glorious God of the Scriptures--their god is a miserably imperfect creature: without holiness, without justice, without any attribute but that of vague indiscriminate mercy. Such a religion is nothing but a toy to play with: it is far too unreal to die with. It utterly fails to meet the needs of man's conscience: it offers no remedy; it affords no rest for the souls of men and women; it cannot comfort, for it cannot save. Beware of it if you love life. Beware of a religion without Christ.

Another consequence to be learned from the text is, the folly of any religion in which Christ is not given the first place.

I need not remind you how many hold to a system of this kind. The Socinian tells us that Christ was a mere man; that His blood had no more efficacy or value than that of another; that His death on the cross was not a real atonement and propitiation of man's sins; and that, after all, one must work their way to heaven, and not just have faith. I solemnly declare that I believe such a system is disastrous to the souls of men and women. It seems to me to strike at the very root of the whole plan of salvation which God has revealed in the Bible, and practically to nullify the greater part of the Scriptures. It overthrows the priesthood of the Lord Jesus, and strips Him of His office; it converts the whole system of the law of Moses touching sacrifices and ordinances, into a meaningless form; it seems to say that the sacrifice of Cain was just as good as the sacrifice of Abel; it puts a man adrift on the sea of uncertainty, by taking from him the finished work of a divine Mediator. Beware of Deism. If you love life, beware of the least attempt to depreciate and undervalue the person of Christ, and His offices and works. The only name by which you can be saved, is the name that is above every other name, and the slightest contempt poured on it is an insult to the King of Kings. The salvation of your soul has been established by God the Father on Christ, and no other; and if Christ were not God Himself, He never could accomplish it: there could be no salvation at all.

Another consequence to be learned from our text is the great error, committed by those who add anything to Christ, as being necessary to salvation.

It is an easy thing to profess belief in the Trinity, and reverence for our Lord Jesus Christ, and yet to make some addition to Christ as the ground of hope, and so to overthrow the doctrine of the text as really and completely as by denying it altogether.

The Roman Catholic Church does this systematically. She adds things over and above the requirements of the Gospel, by her own invention. She speaks as if Christ's finished work was not a sufficient foundation for a sinner's soul, and as if it were not enough to say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." She sends men and women to penances and absolution, to masses and extreme unction, to fasting and bodily mortification, to the Virgin and the saints--as if these things could add to the safety there is in Christ Jesus. And in doing this she greatly sins against our text. Let us beware of any Roman Catholic additions to the simple way of the Gospel.

But I fear the Roman Catholic Church does not stand alone in this matter: I fear there are thousands of professing Protestants who are often erring in the same direction, although, of course, in a very different degree; they begin adding, perhaps without thinking, other names to the name of Christ, or attaching importance to them which they ought never receive. The ultra Churchman in England who thinks God's covenanted mercies are tied to a system of church government in which bishops are the chief clerics--the ultra Evangelical, who traces every evil in the Church to its connection with the State and denominations, and can talk of nothing but the independent system--the ultra Baptist, who shuts out from the Lord's table every one who has not received his views of baptism--the ultra Plymouth Brethren, who believes all knowledge resides within his own church, and condemns every one outside as a poor weak babe in Christ;--all these, I say, however unwittingly, appear to me to have a most uncomfortable tendency to add to the doctrine of our text. All seem to me to be practically declaring that salvation is not to be found simply and solely in Christ; all seem to me to be practically adding another name to the name of Jesus whereby men and women must be saved--even the name of their own denomination and sect; all seem to me to be practically replying to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" not merely, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," but also "Come and join us."

Now I call upon every true Christian to beware of such extremism. In saying this I don't want to be misunderstood. I like everyone to be decided in his views of church matters, and to be fully persuaded of their correctness; all I ask is that you will not put these things in the place of Christ, or place them anywhere near Him, or speak of them as if you thought them needful to salvation. However dear to us our own particular views may be, let us beware of thrusting them in between the sinner and the Savior, let us beware, in short, of adding to the doctrine of the text. In the things of God's Word, let us remember that addition, as well as subtraction, is a great sin.

The last consequence which seems to me to be learned from our text is, the utter absurdity of supposing that we ought to be satisfied with a man's state of soul if he is simply sincere.

This is a very common heresy indeed, and one against which we all need to be on our guard. There are thousands who say today, "We have nothing to do with the opinions of others. They may perhaps be mistaken, though it is possible they are right and we are wrong: but if they are sincere, we hope they will be saved, even as we are." And all this sounds tolerant and loving, and people like to believe their own views are also considered as such.

Now I believe such notions are entirely contradictory to the Bible, whatever else they may be. I cannot find in Scripture that any one ever got to heaven merely by sincerity, or was accepted with God if he was only earnest in maintaining his own views. The priests of Baal were sincere when they cut themselves with knives till the blood gushed out; but still that did not prevent Elijah from commanding them to be treated as wicked idolaters. Manasseh, King of Judah, was doubtless sincere when he burned his children in the fire to Moloch; but who doesn't know that he brought on himself great guilt by doing so. The apostle Paul, as a

Pharisee, was sincere while he persecuted the Church, but when his eyes were opened he mourned over this as a special wickedness. Let us beware of allowing for a moment that sincerity is everything, and that we have no right to speak against a man's spiritual state because of the sincere opinions he holds. On such principles, many atrocities committed in the name of religion might each and all be defended. However, they will not stand: they will not bear the test of Scripture. Once we allow such notions to be true, then you might as well throw your Bible away. Sincerity is not Christ, and therefore sincerity cannot atone for sin.

I am sure that these consequences sound very unpleasant to the minds of some. But I tell you of them advisedly and deliberately. I say calmly that a religion without Christ, a religion that takes away from Christ, a religion that adds anything to Christ, a religion that puts sincerity in the place of Christ--all are dangerous: all are to be avoided, and all are alike contrary to the doctrine of our text.

You may not like this. You may think that I am unloving, narrow-minded, bigoted, and so forth: so be it. But you will not tell me my doctrine is not that of the Word of God. That doctrine is, salvation in Christ to the very uttermost--but without Christ there is no salvation at all.

I feel it a duty to bear my solemn testimony against the spirit of the day in which we live; to warn you against its infection. It is not Atheism I fear so much, in the present times, as Pantheism. It is not the system which says nothing is true, so much as the system which says everything is true; it is not the system which says there is no Savior, so much as the system which says there are many saviors and many ways to peace. It is the system which is so liberal that it dares not say anything is false; it is the system which is so loving that it will allow everything to be true; it is the system which seems ready to honor others as well as our Lord Jesus Christ and to class them all together. The system tells us not to condemn or to treat with disrespect the writings of Confucius and Zoroaster, Socrates and Mohammad, the Hindus of India and the African devil-worshippers, Arius and Pelagius, Ignatius Loyola and Socinus. It is the system which commands us to smile complacently on all creeds and systems of religion: the Bible and the Koran, the Hindu Veda and the old wives' tales of Rabbinical writers and the rubbish of the Early Church Fathers' traditions, and the book of Mormon by Joseph Smith--we are told to listen to them all: none are to be denounced as lies. It is the system which is so scrupulous about the feelings of others, that we are never to say that they are wrong; it is the system which is so liberal that it calls a man a bigot if he dares to say, "I know my views are right." This is the world system, this is the tone of feeling which I fear this very day. This is the world system of today which I desire emphatically to testify against and denounce.

What is it but a bowing down before a great idol specifically called liberality? What is it all but a sacrificing of truth upon the altar of a caricature of love? Beware of it, beware that the rushing stream of public opinion does not carry you away. Beware of it, if you believe the Bible. Has the Lord God spoken to us in the Bible, or has He not? Has He shown us the way of salvation plainly in that Bible, or has He not? Has He declared to us the dangerous state of all those who do not agree with the Holy Scriptures, or has He not? Focus your mind, and look these questions fairly in the face, and give them an honest answer. Tell us that there is some other inspired book beside the Bible, and then we will know what you mean; tell us that the whole Bible is not inspired, and then we will know where to meet you: but grant for a moment that the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, is God's truth, and then I don't know in what way you can escape the doctrine of the text. From the liberality which says everybody is right, from the love which forbids you to say anyone is wrong, from the peace which is bought at the expense of truth--may the good Lord deliver you!

I speak for myself: I find no resting-place between downright Evangelical Christianity and downright infidelity, whatever others may find. I see no half-way house between them. I can see consistency in an infidel, however much I may pity him; I can see consistency in the full maintenance of Evangelical truth: but as to a middle course between the two--I cannot see it; and I say so plainly. Let it be called intolerant and unloving. I can hear God's voice nowhere except in the Bible, and I can see no salvation for sinners in the Bible except through Jesus Christ. In Him I see abundance: without Him I see none. And as for those who hold to religions in which Christ is not everything, whoever they may be, I have a most uncomfortable feeling about their safety. I do not for a moment say that none of them are saved, but I say that those who are saved are saved by their disagreement with their own principles, and in spite of their own system. The man who wrote the famous line, "He can't be wrong whose life is in the right," was a great poet undoubtedly, but he was a wretched divine.

Let me conclude with a few words by way of application.

First of all, if there is no salvation except in Christ, make sure that you have an interest in that salvation yourself.

Do not be content with hearing, and approving, and assenting to the truth, and going no further. Seek to have a personal interest in this salvation: lay hold by faith for your own soul; do not rest till you know and feel that you have gotten actual possession of that peace with God which Jesus offers, and that Christ is yours, and you are Christ's. If there were two, or three, or more ways of getting to heaven, there would be no necessity for pressing this matter upon you. But if there is only one way, you will hardly wonder that I say, "Make sure that you are in it."

Secondly, if there is no salvation except in Christ, then try to do good to the souls of all who do not know Him as a Savior.

There are millions and millions in this miserable condition--millions in foreign lands, millions in your own country, millions who are not trusting in Christ. You ought to feel for them if you are a true Christian; you ought to pray for them; you ought to work for them, while there is yet time. Do you really believe that Christ is the only way to heaven? Then live as if you believed it.

Look around the circle of your own relatives and friends: count them up one by one, and think how many of them are not yet in Christ. Try to do good to them in some way or other: act as a man or woman should act who believes his friends to be in danger. Do not be content with their being kind and sociable, gentle and good-tempered, moral, and courteous; be unhappy about them till they come to Christ, and trust in Him: for you ought to be distressed over their condition. Leave no one alone who is without Christ--take every opportunity to reaching them. I know all this may sound like enthusiasm and fanaticism. I wish there was more of it in the world: anything, I am sure, is better than a quiet indifference about the souls of others, as if everybody was on their way to heaven. Nothing, to my mind, so proves our little faith, as our lack of feelings about the spiritual condition of those around us.

Thirdly, if there is no salvation except in Christ, let us love all who love the Lord Jesus with sincerity, and exalt Him as their Savior, whoever they may be.

Let us not draw back, because they do not see eye to eye with us in everything. Whether a person is an Independent, a Wesleyan or a Baptist, let us love them if they truly love Christ, and gives Christ His rightful place. We are all traveling fast towards a place where names and forms and Church government will be

nothing, and Christ will be everything: let us get ready for that place now, by loving all who are in the way that leads to it.

This is true love: to believe all things and hope all things, so long as we see Bible doctrines maintained and Christ exalted. Christ must be the single standard by which all opinions must be measured. Let us honor all who honor Him: but let us never forget that the same apostle Paul who wrote about love, also says, "If any man does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be cursed." If our love and tolerance are wider than that of the Bible, they are worth nothing at all: indiscriminate love is no love at all, and indiscriminate approval of all religious opinions, is only a new name for infidelity. Let us hold out our right hand to all who love the Lord Jesus, but let us beware how we go beyond this.

Lastly, if there is no salvation except by Christ, then you must not be surprised if ministers of the Gospel preach a lot about Him.

We cannot tell you too much about the name which is above every name: you cannot hear of Him too often. You may hear too much about controversy in our sermons--you may hear too much of men and books, of works and duties, of forms and ceremonies, of sacraments and ordinances--but there is one subject which you never hear too much of: you can never hear too much of Christ.

When we become tired of preaching Christ, then we are false ministers: when you are wearied of hearing of Him, your souls are in an unhealthy state. When we have preached Him all our lives, the half of His excellence will remain untold. When you see Him face to face in the day of His appearing, you will find there was more in Him than your heart ever conceived.

Let me leave you with the words of an old writer, to which I desire humbly to subscribe. "I know no true religion but Christianity; no true Christianity but the doctrine of Christ: the doctrine of His divine person, of His divine office, of His divine righteousness, and of His divine Spirit, which all that are His must believe. I know no true ministers of Christ but such as make it their business, in their calling, to commend Jesus Christ, in His saving fullness of grace and glory, to the faith and love of men and women; no true Christian but one united to Christ by faith and love, unto the glorifying of the name of Jesus Christ, in the beauty of Gospel holiness. Ministers and Christians of this spirit have been for many years my brothers, sisters, and friends, and I hope shall ever be, wherever the hand of God shall lead me." Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jc-ryle/only-one-way-christ/>

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