

Jesus Only

by Vance Havner

The sermon emphasizes the importance of standing at the center of Jesus Christ, the only safe and sure center of Christian experience, doctrine, and testimony.

Scripture: Matthew 11:28, John 3:16, John 14:6, Romans 10:9, 1 Corinthians 1:12-13, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:8, Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 12:2, 1 John 5:12

Topics: "Jesus Christ", "Christian Unity"

Description

Vance Havner shares his spiritual journey, emphasizing that despite exploring various theological perspectives, he ultimately concluded that the core of Christianity is Jesus Christ. He reflects on the dangers of modernism and the importance of focusing on Christ as the center of faith, rather than getting lost in denominational divisions or contemporary trends. Havner recounts a personal experience that reaffirmed his commitment to preaching 'Jesus Only,' illustrating that true Christian experience and doctrine must revolve around Christ. He warns against the false Christ of modernism and affirms the necessity of a personal relationship with the true Jesus, who is the source of balance and unity in the Christian life.

Transcript

I would like to begin with a personal testimony. My own spiritual experience has gone through three stages. I was converted at the age of ten. The next year I became a preacher and for some years thereafter preached a simple Gospel message.

Later I moved into a more liberal position. It was during these halcyon days just after the first World War. Dreams of world peace and human brotherhood were challenging youthful enthusiasm. Certain modernist preachers were becoming popular and their new approach seemed to set forth the old wine in new bottles. It was evident to me later that the old wine was thrown out with the old bottles but I had not discovered that as yet. I felt that the time had come to strike out on new trails for higher altitudes and so I began to preach about the "new position" and "outmoded categories."

But the trail of the modern mind, left to itself, runs out in the wilderness, and blessed is the man who wakes up in time to how he is being deceived by these peddlers of new light. From this muddle the Lord delivered me. My first reaction was to plunge into a very stern fundamentalism. I fear that I was rather like the Scotsman who said he was open to conviction but would like to see the man who could convict him! There was a tendency to call down fire on the Samaritans and an inclination to forget what manner of spirit

I was of.

For years now I have moved around among many grades and shades and varieties of conservative Christians, preaching in churches and conferences. Such a ministry ranges from staid old churches to popular Gospel tabernacles. In some places I have almost frozen, spiritually, and in others I have almost fried. I have listened to many voices, some well-known and many unknown, analyzing the situation and prescribing the remedy. I have tried to move among all groups belonging to as few as possible in order that I might be the servant of all. It has been and still is a rich and rewarding experience, for in this day of apostasy there are many precious souls all over the land who fear the Lord and speak often one to another. They have many faults and failings but I had rather take Bible Christians at their worst than this world at its best. I bless God for the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love.

Out of all this I have come to a fixed conclusion: the issue is simply Jesus Christ. Spurgeon said: "In the days of Paul the sum and substance of theology was Jesus Christ. I am not ashamed to vow myself a Calvinist. I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist. But if you ask what is my creed, I must answer it is Jesus Christ." One thinks of A.B. Simpson's early years of seeking this experience and that, culminating in the conclusion so well stated in his poem, beginning,

"Once it was the blessing,

Now it is the Lord."

How we like to make a Santa Claus of the Lord, seeking only His gifts! Happy are we when we seek the Giver rather than the gift and can both sing and pray:

"Now Thee alone I seek,

Give what is best."

My message therefore is simply Jesus Christ. He is enough. Of course we are familiar with the fact that Christ is the Christian's life and message, but we need to familiarize ourselves with the familiar. We assume what we ought to assert. He is the hub, but too many of us are out on our favorite spokes like owls on different limbs. When we stand at the hub all the spokes are ours. And the closer we are to the hub the closer we are to all the spokes!

Of course, I do not mean the Christ of Partyism. Some say, "I belong to Christ," just in order to dodge issues. There was a Christ-party in Corinth along with the Paul-party, the Cephas-party and the Apollos-party. And they were as bad as the others and maybe a little worse! Christ does not exclude Paul and Cephas and Apollos, He includes them. All the Gospel preachers are ours because we are Christ's. The only thing that is not ours is us, we are not our own, we are bought with a price.

Certainly I do not mean the Christ of modernism. That is a false Christ. My Christ is the virgin-born Son of God who lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary, atoning death, rose bodily from the grave and is coming again to reign.

Some years ago, while preaching in a small Southern town, I was walking around one afternoon meditating on the evening message. I became impressed that I needed to preach "Jesus Only" more than I had been doing. I remember that I asked the Lord to confirm that impression by giving me one soul that night. Evening came and I preached. I gave the invitation but no one responded. As I pronounced the

benediction, I thought, "Lord, where is the soul I asked for?" Before the "amen" was reached a downpour of rain set in, so that the people could not get home. A man came to me and asked that we might pray together. We went to a small room and there he received Christ as his Saviour. I have thought of that incident many times since and have tried to be true to the impression it confirmed.

There is only one safe and sure center of Christian experience, doctrine and testimony and that is Jesus Christ. Stand at any other point, no matter how good, and you will become lopsided. Stand with Him and you keep your balance, for by Him all things consist.

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