

CHRIST ALONE EXALTEDⁱ

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SERMON 15

CHRIST'S FREE WELCOME TO ALL COMERS.

PHILIPPIANS 3:8, 9

OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS LOSS AND DUNGⁱⁱⁱ.

YEA, DOUBTLESS, AND I COUNT ALL THINGS BUT LOSS, FOR THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST JESUS MY LORD, FOR WHOM I HAVE SUFFERED THE LOSS OF ALL THINGS, AND COUNT THEM BUT DUNG, THAT I MAY WIN CHRIST. AND BE FOUND IN HIM, NOT HAVING MINE OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS OF THE LAW, BUT THAT WHICH IS THROUGH THE FAITH OF CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS OF GOD BY FAITH.

THE main theme of this apostle in the whole course of his ministry, is not only to present Christ, but also to present him alone; stripping man, and all things besides, stark naked; leaving not a rag to cover, or a bandage to cover or heal any tiny bit of that universal leprosy overspreading man; that Christ alone may be all in all: which, through Christ's assistance, we will endeavor to make clear to you; (being a riddle indeed to too many, who think they see all of it at a glance) getting at the truth by the words of the apostle, I mean the text I have read to you. Now, so you can clearly see the whole purpose of what he is teaching here you must notice how interrelated the pervious section is to what he now teaches, how it leads up to this point; in verse 2, he warns us to beware of dogs, evil workers and the circumcision. In verse 3 he explains how we should beware of them: by not following their principles, which results in confidence in the flesh. In order to help us to understand and guard against them he shows the falseness and vanity of such a confidence. He compares himself to the most earnest of them. In verse 4 he explains what he means by the flesh, where we should have no confidence, expounding it under two points; 1. External church

privileges; 2. Governing our life according to the dictates for the law; In both cases he boasts of his excellence compared to his adversaries, especially those who boast in the law. There we may note his zeal and blamelessness regarding any righteousness that comes from the law or the flesh. If anyone had cause for confidence, it was Paul, much more than them as he shows in verse 4. This I say, as well that as his being a circumcised Jew, and a Pharisee. Now in verse 7, he shows that indeed he was once like them, accounting those things (which he now finds to be but flesh) gain; but now whatever they were to him once he sees and counts them as nothing but loss for Christ. In the words of my text he explains this his last assertion more fully, he puts forth his own happy discovery and invaluable success, as a pattern and encouragement for us to follow him. First, He demolishes and throws away all the glittering, but yet rotten materials, where he had, and where other's still do erect a fortress of security, and palace of delight; then he states the end of rejecting those materials, so much objected to, not only by the world, but even by many true Christians also; in order that he might lay a sure foundation and build an impregnable tower that cannot be shaken; like a wise master-builder, who finding that he has built upon the sand, with hay and stubble, pulls it all down, and throws it on the dunghill, and then finds a rock, and builds a structure with tried stones upon it. This will not fail in severe weather. In this way he not only exhibits Christ with all his righteousness, as the most secure city of refuge, but also plainly shows that all the old works must be cast down to the ground and be lost. Then a new beginning with him only. If even one old rotten post is left it will cause all the new building to sink.

Concerning the first business of pulling down the old house, observe, 1. What materials are they which he reduces to ruins. The apostle expresses this in general terms, (*all things*). These things refer to those materials mentioned before, namely his Jewishness and blameless obedience to the law. Yet he means more than just that; his meaning is, that he not only cast away all his past works as dung, but also all his works since his salvation through the assistance of the Spirit, as Beza correctly observes on this passage. 2. Notice what he does with these old materials. He does not add to them, let them stand or perfect them in any way in order to patch up a new building with the old rubbish. Nor does he choose the best, most glittering works to mingle with Christ's work. No indeed he throws away all, even every tiny bit, he sees no worth in any, no not the even the best is fit for any service or profit; in fact, he confesses all is loss to him. His means more than just losing his cost and effort from such works, he, himself is also a great loser from all these things. Not only so but he goes further, and tells us that all his works are no better materials for his spiritual building, than as if a man should build a house, and use no other materials, than the filth of an outdoor toilet or dung, even if his works are blameless. This is plain for he says, I count them but dung, and so he casts them all on a dunghill: that he means his own blameless works, which he thus looks on as loss and dung, is most plain by that other expression of his, "Not having mine own righteousness which is of the law."

As concerning the apostle's end of stripping himself naked in this way, and casting away his own, though misleadingly attractive works, in general, it is to be clothed with white robes, even the garments of salvation; but more especially he declares his ends to be,

1. The excellency of the knowledge, or the knowledge of the excellency of Christ; (for the knowledge itself has no excellency but in reference to him known) as if he should say, I could never come to know how excellent Christ Jesus the Lord is, till all I was and am, plainly appear to

be loss and dung; my own righteousness was a thick film over my eyes, that I could not see Christ's worth.

2. An even higher end, namely, a gaining or winning of Christ, implying, that as long as his obedience was a source of pride with him, and seemed anything better than dung in his eye, he could never get Christ.

3. An end yet a little higher as the pervious concerned the present, this last concerns the future; namely, that he might be found (that is, at the great day of the appearing of the Lord), in him; as if he should say, My works being but dung, will give off a bad smell at the last, and therefore, I must cast them away, that I may be found in Christ, who is all and only sweetness; if my obedience has any part, it will change the scent, and spoil the whole: that this is the meaning is plain, by his own expounding of himself in the following words, ("Not having mine own righteousness,") from all which, observe we,

I. That all things, yes even the most blameless walking according to God's law, not only before, but after conversion, or receiving Christ, are truly counted loss and dung in a Paul's eye, and such a one will be willing to suffer the loss of these things, as of dung.

II. Only then, and not until then does a person attain to the knowledge of the excellency of Christ Jesus the Lord, gains him, is "found in him, (or so minded as is expressed in the former doctrine) not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Christ."

I begin with the first point above. Because, at first glance it is very possible that, to some, it may possibly seem harsh; please notice how clearly and fully every bit of it is based on the text. First, notice how the apostle expressly says that he therefore, "counts all loss and dung," that he may attain those excellencies mentioned; He can only obtain this goal by such an estimation of his old works. Again, observe how general this expression is: "All things," which is more than the particulars mentioned; and further, note the time when he said this, it was certainly after his conversion to Christ, Philippians. 1:13, for he had been in bonds for him before this. Now he is speaking of the loss and filthiness of his works in the present tense, viewed as of that very moment. He especially mentions his own righteousness as part of that dung he would not be found in; At this point it might be objected that he was not a Christian yet, that he had not received Christ and because of this he had yet to gain him. However, it is very obvious that he was saved already, by what he said before. In fact, nothing is clearer than that he was converted immediately before he received and entered into his apostleship, as is plain, in Acts 9:2, 8. His meaning therefore, must be of a fuller degree of participation in Christ. The prophet Isaiah, like Paul a very godly man, speaks in much the same way as Paul does when speaking of his own righteousness. Other servants of God speak in the same way, Isaiah says "But we are all as an unclean thing, (he means an outdoor toilet) all our righteousness are as filthy rags, or as a menstruous cloth," Isa. 64:6. Isaiah makes himself one of this number. Our blessed Savior, who well knew what was in man, bids us, when we have done all things which are commanded us, say, "We are unprofitable servants," Luke 17:10.

For the better understanding of this truth, let us consider,

1. What it is to count all things as loss and dung.
2. What it is to suffer the loss of all things.
3. How it may appear that all things, even the most blameless works, are but loss and dung in a renewed estate, and in what respect they are so.

1. This word *count* has two different meanings; sometimes as a false opinion, as in that saying of the apostle, "We are counted the offscouring of the world;" sometimes (as here) a certain infallible determination; As Paul determines and as anyone agreeing with him likewise determines. Now this determination, or estimation of things as loss and dung, is not of some only, but all things; Many people will not go so far as to count those things that are directly against any law as loss and dung; but we must go further than this. Yes, we must count all civil, moral and even the most exact obedience to any or all the precepts of the law; Even if this obedience has had the sure assistance of the Spirit, the right desire for the right ends, been done to the very greatest extent with all other advantages and aims, done with our utmost ability and with all the advantages possible no matter what the effort or sacrifice. All these things and what ever else is possible the very best Christian on earth (being a mere man) can bring from his heart, must be counted as "loss and dung;" If this, without exception is not true then Paul could not say, I count all things in this way.

I do not want you to misunderstand me here. I am speaking of his works taken in total; not the work of the Spirit, or the genuine sanctification of his heart or of the desire of his heart to glorify God. No, rather the whole work as, and when, done by a sanctified person, though so assisted by the Spirit; when such a man looks on the works he has done, he must see nothing but mere "loss and dung." Please be patient and do not reason this out till I can more clearly present these things to you.

In the meantime, let us consider, what it is to count them "loss and dung." It is worth your observation, that the apostle does not say loss only; for, then, a man were in no worse case but to have his labor for his pains, (as the proverb is) that is, he should lose only his pains, or the work he is about; but he says loss, that is, by the best work that a mere man ever did, he himself is a great loser; I mean, that he forfeits life and bliss because of this on earth, and in heaven also; there is sin enough in it, (if God had nothing else but what he can pick out of the best work) to lay to his charge, to forfeit all and more, even to cast him into utter darkness; I am speaking with regard to the merit of such work in itself considered. We must look upon all our works in this way, accounting all to be not only loss (worse than useless) but as dung as well. According to the apostle we must also consider them as dung. This further defines the incidental value of our own works. Dung, you know, is one of the filthiest and most loathsome things in the world. It causes great offence, especially if it's thrown in your face. Everything of ours, even our very best, are of this nature, only infinitely worse, (for no created natural filth can be a sufficient symbol to the spiritual equivalent;) I say, therefore, that all our righteousness, at best, is as a menstruous cloth in God's eye, it is just as though we flung dung in his face, *even in new moons, and sabbaths, and solemn assemblies*; (Isaiah 1:13) so that his soul hates them, they are a burthen to him, he cannot stand them; they are a bad order in his nostrils, smelling strongly of the flesh. This is true even when they proceed from the purest heart. There is always something of the flesh in our works, carnal pride and self-seeking when we think we have done well. Because of this dung, this sinfulness

clinging to our best works, we lose all that was before mentioned, our works are worse then nothing.

2. Let us now consider, what it is to suffer the loss of all things. In order to understand this note, that there is a double suffering in the loss of a thing. 1. Passive. 2. Active. Or, 1. Violent. 2. Voluntary. A passive suffering of the loss of anything, is, when one violently loses it through an attack by someone strong; as when a man suffers the loss of his goods by thieves breaking in upon him, and overcoming him: this is how all unbelievers will suffer the loss of all things, even their good deeds as they call them, prayers, alms, &c. They shall indeed come to Christ, and say, "Lord have we not done this, and this, in thy name," Matthew 7:22,23. But their lamb-skins in which they walked shall be pulled over their ears, and Christ shall say, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not." But this is not what the apostle means by suffering loss. He means an active or voluntary suffering, this may seem contradictory but I will explain. An example is the way in which our Savior speaks to John the Baptist. He speaks over modestly refusing to baptize him; "Suffer it to be so now;" that is, give way to it. In the same way the apostle's suffering loss was a contented giving way to the loss of all he was and did. Loss, here, has not so much reference to his person, as the things he did; though in some respect it may be understood of his person; so that he was contented to take shame, and even confusion of face, to himself, for his best actions, and account himself worthy to be destroyed, and be his own judge, to pass not only the sentence of confiscation of all that he had, but also of condemnation on his person, crying out, "Oh wretched man that I am!" And, besides this voluntary suffering such personal loss, he is willing to be stripped naked of all things, and all the good they can afford him; so as not to have a word to speak for himself, except it be in imploding all that ever he had done, as making far more against, than for him. Such, I take it, is suffering the loss of all things.

3. I come to the next thing proposed: How it may appear that all things, even the most blameless works, and that after salvation, are but loss and dung. In what respect are they considered in this way? For an innocent or unsuspecting person, you would think that the text, and other, scriptures mentioned, might be sufficiently satisfactory; but, to better understand this you must first distinguish (as I touched before) between that which is the Spirit's in works after renovation, and the whole work after we have done it; and know that though the motions and assistance of the Spirit be pure, holy, and without sin, in and of itself; yet, by that time these motions and assistance have passed through the channels of our hearts, and been mixed with our manifold corruptions in doing, everything we do becomes polluted and filthy.^{iv, v}

Our filthiness alters the substance of the pure motions of Christ's spirit. Do not let this sound harsh, for it is no paradox that a man should defile holy things. It is a known fact that one circumstance or part that is wrong mars a good action and makes it all for nothing. The apostle James tells us "that whosoever fulfils (or whosoever shall keep) the whole law of God, and yet offends in one point, is guilty of all;" I believe his meaning is that the least drop of our poison, in the least failing, has such a strong venom, that it poisons all the good, and overspreads its filth through the whole, so that if even one drop of poison is added to the rarest beverage it makes the whole, and every drop of it, fatal. Unless the very best of our works has the ability to pass through us without leaving any added defect or pollution, (and this is not possible), it cannot be but dung. Pour the cleanest water possible into a dunghill, and just let it run through it, when it come back out, what is it but dung itself? When the Lord required sacrifices of the Jews, he required a male without blemish;

even though it was a male, yet if it had one blemish, the whole sacrifice was abominable, and not that one blemish only. It may seem harsh that even the Spirit's work when it is mixed with a man's work must be viewed as dung but you have to realize that once its mixed with our filth it ceases to be his alone but becomes ours. It was his when injected, but our flesh, being like the snake's stomach, which turns the most wholesome food into poison; or like an ulcerous sore, that turns the soundest flesh drawn into it turns it into rottenness. Some of this ulcerous flesh still remains in the best saints on earth, and mingles itself in the best service, and so turns the whole into its own nature; for (*omne generans sibi simile generat*) that being dung, all that it diffuses itself into must of necessity be like it; even as the gourds gathered from the wild vine, being deadly themselves, and put into the pot, set on for the sons of the prophets, made the whole pottage deadly, 2 Kings 4:39, 40. The apostle Paul complains, that even when he would do good, evil was present with him, through the law in his members, rebelling against the law of his mind, which makes him cry out of himself bitterly against all he did, "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Romans 7:21, 23, 24. By this he means everything about himself, because he does not look to good works as a refuge against the evil, but to Christ alone as a refuge against all: "I thank God (he says) through Jesus Christ our Lord," verse 25. So then with respect to the mixing of our poisonous sinfulness with the best righteousness of the best men, both are altogether nothing but loss and dung and filthy rags, and must be accounted as such.

At this point someone may object and say that if this is the case should we not refrain from doing righteousness, as we would from dung? I answer that this is not the case at all. What we must do is to refrain from glorying in, or taking pride in righteous doings. We should rather be ashamed of ourselves, even when we have done our best, so that we glory only in the Lord. Though good works done by us are but dung in themselves, and in God's eyes; yet we must be careful to do them, since they are profitable to men, Titus 3:8. David (Psalm 16:2, 3) confesses, that his goodness does not extend to God; yet even so he maintains his good works because they could profit the Saints upon earth, and to the all the saved ones, in whom was his delight; it is no good plea, that because a man cannot be wholly clean, therefore, he will be filthier than he needs to be. You would not like it, that because your children cannot come from school without becoming somewhat dirty no matter how hard they try, that they would instead wallow like pigs in the middle of a pigpen.

Others will say, That God often shows his approbation (approval) of good works, which he would not do if they were all dung.

I answer, That whatsoever is not of faith is sin; but as to the believer, all things are clean, through this faith in Christ, all our filthy works are changed by him; he presents them as being purged by himself alone and so they become acceptable to God, Revelation 8:3,4. The works themselves as we have done them, no matter how well we do them are abhorred of God; and Christ never takes them to purge them, till we ourselves wholly renounce them by counting them loss and dung. Their acceptance though the work of Christ makes them acceptable to God but they are worthless in and of themselves. I hope that I have made the doctrine sufficiently clear to you.

Now we have all heard and understand, based on Paul's words to Timothy, that we are "Not to rebuke an elder, but to entreat him as a father." Therefore, let me have the right, who also am an elder, though unworthy, to beseech the elders with all possible meekness, that they will not

magnify man's righteousness, no not even when he is in Christ, above what is accurate. Let me have the right to declare my judgment as to what the outcome is when man's righteousness and the results of it, including any references to Christ's assistance, and a man's being in him are overly exalted.

First point: When praise is given to our own works in order to persuade and impress others by giving virtue and efficacy to them for their own sake:

Please be patient, I implore you, while I explain what I mean in this particular; man's works are thus cried up and magnified, when (for instance) his prayer, repentance, self-denial, and exact blameless walking, are given grand titles and great power to effect wonders. When they are commended as most precious and incomparably excellent, not only in the eye of men, but that God also is said to take infinite pleasure in them because they proceed from a sanctified heart. No names need to be mentioned, but these so-called righteous actions are given high praises, as if they carried such a luster, beauty, and powerful virtue in their own nature; you know what the poet complained about, I have made these verses, another gets the honors; so, you have done, but not for yourselves. (*Hos eeo versiculos feci, tulit alter honores; sic yes non vobis*) May not Christ justly take up such a complaint? All the beauty of man's righteousness, is no more but what he puts upon it, and yet the righteousness must go, it should not even be mentioned or hinted in such praise; there truly is a fault among us in this respect. You might say, that Christ is always in the picture, the main actor as it were even if this is not immediately apparent. I say that this supposition is insufficient; he must not be in the background at all but appear as only one deserving; for all that is praise-worthy is his alone; but why only supposed? Does he not deserved to be named, as well as the righteousness? Certainly, it is indecent (to say no worse) to forget him, while his poorest instruments are so highly remembered; besides, how can people suppose that which they do not know about? They must go away with things as they are delivered to them; when servants bring presents from their masters to any, they do not say, I give such or such a thing to you, but, my master sends it to you; if he should take it on himself, he would be considered as an arrogant fellow. It would not help matters at all if when he is questioned as to why Christ was so neglected, to say but he was there by supposition, in the background. Extolling man's righteousness in this way is far from counting it loss and dung, as Paul expresses in my text; **I think therefore, it is always best when speaking of our works to explicitly ascribe all the praise to the glory of the grace of Christ.**

Second point: There is another way that man's righteousness is exalted above what is proper. That is when too much is made of our being in Christ and of his Spirit assisting us.

May I be bold once more so that I can make it clear to you what I mean by this also. It is true indeed that when a believer's heart is cast down, deeply depressed, very dull in hearing, low and slow in praying and not desirous to fast or strive harder than absolutely necessary; when in a state like this a believer sees their works and righteousness for what they really are, as loss and dung. However, when the opposite is true, when a soul gets under full sail, filled with a gale of the Spirit of Christ, when floods of emotions flow from it; if he can cry mightily, be swift to hear, greedy in sucking in divine truths, and somewhat exact in observing practical righteous means, to mourn and pray earnestly by the help of the Holy Spirit; then such prayers, mourning, and other divine exercises will do wonders.

In this way men think that they can get pardon, settle spiritual, civil, and natural healings, with national: such means some think will turn away God's wrath, and reconcile him to men. However, when they attribute such efficacy to this righteousness, though it is assisted by Christ's Spirit, this is more than what is appropriate, even though Christ is explicitly given the credit as the author of such assistance; the righteousness so assisted, has no efficacy at all to obtain anything of the Lord, but rather to hasten and multiply wrath, in that it multiplies sin *

* That is, when it is overvalued, and not renounced, as it should; but such efficacy ascribed to it, as is not in it, as to turn away the wrath of God, and obtain favor of him, to the great neglect of the righteousness of Christ; otherwise the Doctor owns it instrumentally obtains good things from and through Christ the fountain, and as it has relation to him.

How can sin have efficacy towards expiation of sin, and making peace with a justly incensed God? Certainly, in no respect: suppose a traitor brought in to the prince by a favorite, and taught by him what to say, and how to deport himself; but the traitor mars his tale, and as he delivers it, it proves new treason; can the favorite's assistance be any ground to hope that this, his new traitorous conduct, shall pacify the king, and obtain his pardon? The case is like ours in hand: when we come to God, the Spirit perhaps puts a good tale into our mouth, but through our ill-managing of it, we make but new treason of it; the righteousness with which we come to God, though we bring with it the clean water of the Spirit of Christ, to wash away our old dung; yet there is such filth in the vessel of our present righteous actions, that they do but add dung to dung, instead of washing it away.

Someone might say that originally, or in and of itself the best righteousness accomplishes nothing but adds more blame to man **but at the same time**, as a means of pursuing an end it actually obtains the desired effect. (brings in righteousness) as it is qualified to do this as was mentioned before in our text.

In answer to this I say: I earnestly desire that we should always express ourselves correctly so that everyone may clearly understand, remember and be guided directly to the fountain itself: Christ alone! It is certain that when Christ is suppressed or negated in anyway so that creature righteousness is exalted without reference to Christ we fall into falsehood. It is only by Christ's merits that any good comes from them, in themselves they are empty pits, and dry channels, even though they are raised and exalted in such glowing terms.

The result of all this over-exalting of sanctified righteousness, is, 1. That by so concentrating on the efficacy of it, Christ himself is shamefully neglected, and becomes less and less in our eyes: here I may alter the saying, which historians tell us was heard in heaven, after the church grew into credit; *Religio peperit divitias, et filia devoravit matrem*; I may as truly say, *Christus peperit justitiam, et filia devoravit matrem*; Christ begets righteousness in men, and when this is exalted as those who over exalt it do it in turn destroys Christ himself. It is just as if a king should promote a favorite, and then he should be so applauded for his usefulness to the subjects, that the king must be dethroned, and he crowned in his place. I implore you please notice how our righteousness, when so exalted, creeps up, by degrees, into Christ's throne, even to the dethroning of him.

In all exigencies and extremities, how naked and alone is the throne of grace (when we understand what grace is properly), it left without any that love and desire it! How few followers does Christ

Himself have! How rarely do men go to shelter themselves under the shadow of his wings, yet at the same time the seat of self-righteousness is thronged with people! What earnest pleas for prayer, mourning, fasting and similar works to help men that are dead in their sins. Acting in great earnestness as if they were kings and rulers in themselves. Christ is seldom mentioned, certainly not exalted and given his rightful place as the source of all. After all this human righteousness in merely Christ's ministering servant. What the apostle said of himself, (1 Corinthians 3:5) I may as truly say of the best righteousness best assisted; what is prayer, mourning, fasting, hearing, or the like, but ministers by whom you believed and received mercy? and if but ministers at best, shall they be greater than the Lord? Let me not be mistaken, I intend no derogation, (causing it to seem inferior), to righteousness, but to bring it into its own place; namely, to be used as that, where, according to Christ's direction, we may meet with him; from whose hands alone, we are there to expect whatever we long for according to his will; reserving a submission to be used in any way at all, if he see fit.

2. There is another problem with exalting man's sanctified righteousness above what is appropriate. When this sanctified righteousness is made a refuge beyond what is fitting this takes away from the assistance and support that could be derived from Christ; which is where it should come from.

I remember what the Lord said to his people, the Israelites, when they were bowed down under the hands of the Philistines; "Go, and cry unto the Gods which you have chosen, let them deliver you in the time of your trouble," Judges 10:24. What is it but to make God of our righteousness, when we choose it to be our refuge in time of need, and then exclude, or take no notice of Christ "We ask and receive not, because we ask amiss." This results in a constant frenzy of prayer to get from God by our righteousness what we should receive by resting on Christ alone. Without doubt all this fasting, mourning, and praying that we engage in at this time, which I believe no former age could parallel, does not help us as well as we expected. This is because the principal verb is missing, which can only make good sense of all we say or do, I mean that Christ is missing. Were all seasoned with that salt (i.e. with Christ), doubtless it would be more savory, that is, cordially and in dependence as scripture says: "Except you believe, (said the prophet) you shall not be established." Why are we called Christians? Is not that a true axiom, *Denominatio est a principaliore*? The name imports that all in us should mainly savor of Christ; and that no praise should be made or given, but Christ must be predominant in it: I am sure that Paul was of this mind, when he said, "I desire to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." How can that medicine work as it is supposed to, which by the pharmacy's carelessness is destitute of that ingredient which was prescribed to do cure the problem? It is as if hellebore should be left out of a purge, and nothing should be administered but what was prescribed for the taking of it down: Christ only is the hellebore that purges; prayers are but the liquor to let him down; leave Christ out, and what will all the rest do? No, the truth is, as in every strong purge there are some degrees of poison, which are rendered safe by other ingredients that are added for that purpose; so our mourning's, fasting's, and self-denials, have poison in them, sufficient to suffocate a soul that takes them, and Christ alone is the cordial that quells such poison; let him then be left out, and judge I pray you what will be the issue. (Isaiah 1:2) O, then, whatever else we forget in prescribing and applying medicine for our spiritual recoveries, let us be sure not to forget to put Christ into them, lest we kill instead of healing, or poison men instead of recovering them.

As for most of God's people, my advice to them is briefly this: when Christ is prescribed in the greatest amount and as the only one to effectively help them, let them beware, in case they neglect to put him into their medicine. When Christ is not the main ingredient the medicine becomes deadly. If at any time a spiritual physician prescribes any medication, and forgets Christ in that remedy, let them be sure to add him themselves before they take it, even if all the other ingredients prescribed appear to be so rich and supreme. Let them be certain that these other ingredients of themselves have too much poison in them to be trusted in alone, and therefore will produce but loss, being dung.

Having gone over all these things in detail, I beseech you all, suffer a word of exhortation. Be careful to understand what Paul taught and to see clearly the loss and dung that is in your best righteousness, even when your sails are fullest, and your flight swiftest. What course must we take (will you say) to get such a view to see all things in this correct way? 1. Be careful that you do not use false eyeglasses while you look on your righteousness; look not through men's estimation or applause of it, who use to be something over-rhetorical in their praises. 2. Look not through your own deceitful hearts, which are likely to judge their own works as very fair. 3. Nor through other men's righteousness, comparing your own with theirs, whose copies, at the best, are imperfect, and, therefore, cannot fully represent righteousness in its complete form; but weigh it impartially in the balance of the sanctuary; try it by the authentic standard; in brief, lay it to the pattern given in the mount. Paul says of himself, "I was alive without the law once, (that is, I thought all was right and well, till I came to the law), but when commandment came, sin revived, and I died," Romans 7:9; that is, this commandment showed me a world of filth I dreamed not of, by which I saw I was a dead man.

But, beloved, I confess in all this I have but placed a clear crystal glass before a blind eye; the law is but materially the discoverer of loss and dung in our best righteousness, containing in it the rules of it, and the aberrations from it, which is a book sealed up and illegible in respect of the spiritualness of it; and, therefore, the sole efficient of discerning loss and dung in our righteousness, is only "Lamb who only was found worthy to open the book and unseal it," Revelation 5:5-9. Christ alone can make a person see it; and therefore, the Lord says, (in Isaiah 62:6,) "I will give time for a covenant to the people, to open their blind eyes." Christ represents our best righteousness as loss and dung, two ways:

1. Directly, in this way; not only showing us plainly the particulars wherein the filth consists which he does by the law; but also by giving a right hint of it therein, whereby sin appears clearly to be completely sinful; this he does by the hand of his omnipotence; this sight of failings in our righteousness, not only as failings, but also under the notion of dung, indeed is the sole work of Christ; not all the means in the world can do it; he, indeed, in the ministry of the gospel, does it here and there therefore, the apostle Paul, (speaking of turning men from darkness to light by the preaching of the gospel) adds, that Christ had sent him to do it. And, therefore, as Peter and John after they had healed the lame man, seeing the people begin to gaze on them, tell them that they were mistaken, "It was Christ's name, through faith in him, that made him whole," Acts 3:12-16. So, should all ministers and people, when they attain to a clear sight and sense of dung in the best actions, confess that it is only his name that did it, by a sole absolute power he has over the hearts of men.

2. Christ gives such clear sight in retrospect; I mean comparatively, thus, by showing that the sole all-fullness is in himself; from whence he makes a man argue thus, if all purity be in Christ, then is there can be not anywhere in the creature.

ⁱ Why Tobias Crisp and “Christ Alone Exalted”. If the reader does not already know it, it may surprise him or her to learn the Crisp was a member of the Established Church of England. In other words, he was an Anglican. Even a very casual reading of James Wells sermons reveals that he had great disdain for the Established Church. Equally obvious, if not more obvious is the fact that he also believed that there were good and true Christians within that community. Crisp died in 1643. It was not until 1644 that the Particular Baptists, which then consisted of seven churches, published their first confession of faith. It is impossible to say if Crisp would have ever become a Baptist. I personally think that very unlikely. God is Sovereign, He is free to use any and all means and people to give glory to Himself. One has only to think of that great child of God, William Huntington, who Wells thought very highly of. Huntington was a paedo-Baptist independent preacher. I believed that he allowed baptism in the form of immersion, but the point here is that he is another, among a huge number, who were mightily used of God, yet were not strict Baptists. Wells, and myself as well, was very careful to distance himself from John Calvin. As I stated in the about page of the Surrey Tabernacle Webpage no man, including James Wells is 100% perfect and correct in everything. The church as a whole and myself in particular have benefited immeasurably by John Calvin and a host of non-Baptists. We must however view them as humble servants whom God chose to use for his own glory. Coming back to Tobias Crisp. I would place him, like King David’s mighty warriors, at the very top of the list for adherence to the truth as it is in Jesus. One sermon, among many, that shows the close allegiance in that James Wells preached to what Crisp also taught is titled “The Family Sacrifice”. It was first preached in 1838 and republished in 1860 as sermon number 84 in volume 2 of James Wells sermons. It can be found at this location: [The Family Sacrifice](#)

ⁱⁱ Tobias Crisp lived from 1600 to 1643. In their unedited form his sermons are difficult for anyone not versed in old English to understand, thus limiting their usefulness. I have attempted to keep as much of his original words as possible but at the same time to make this sermon come alive for the modern reader. My edition is entirely my own work and is presented without apology or any form of copyright. The sermons are available on the internet in their original unedited form for no cost. My edition is based on that of John Gill. An ‘as originally published’ version can be found at: <http://crispchristaloneexalted.com>.

ⁱⁱⁱ C. The NT. The only NT instance is in Phil. 3:8, where Paul evaluates as “refuse” or “dung” all that he has previously regarded as important. The perfect tense in v. 7 relates to his conversion, and the present tenses in v. 8 show that this is his present view. The vulgar term stresses the force of the renunciation he has made for Christ’s sake. He does not disown the divine privileges of Israel but unmasks the striving for self-righteousness as a carnal enterprise that stands in antithesis to faith, serves the flesh, and is just as worthless as the *sárx*. [F. LANG, VII, 445–47]

Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (pp. 1052–1053). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

^{iv} This is a passage excerpted to by D. W. in his *Gospel-Truth Stated*, &c. p. 196; it is sadly perverted by him, on which he charges the Doctor with saying, "That the greatest holiness in believers, though wrought in them by the Holy Ghost, is mere dung, rottenness, and filthiness, as in them:" whereas the Doctor is not speaking of internal sanctification of the Spirit on the heart, which is a pure work, and is all glorious within; nor can it be mixed with, or be defiled by, our corruptions; but of works done after regeneration, even at the motion, and by the assistance, of the Spirit of God; which motions passing through the channel of our corrupt hearts, cease to be the Spirit's, and become ours, and mingled with our corruptions are polluted; and so the works performed are as dung, and so to be accounted, and not to be gloried or trusted in; and yet, notwithstanding all this, the Doctor observes, they ought to be carefully maintained, being profitable to men: yea, that through faith in Christ the dung is extracted, and being purged by him become acceptable unto God, though not till they are renounced by us, and counted loss and dung;—nay, he affirms, that the motions of the Spirit themselves, the enlargement of the heart, and right aims in working, are not to be so accounted, but the works themselves.

^v Crisp's unedited words for this section are: "I come to the next thing proposed, How it may appear that all things, even the most blameless works, and that after renovation, are but loss and dung, and in what respect they are so. Unto ingenuous spirits, a man would think that the text, and other, scriptures mentioned, might be sufficiently satisfactory; but, for better illustration sake, you must first distinguish (as I touched before) between that which is the Spirit's in works after renovation, and the whole work after we have done it; and know that though the motions and assistance of the Spirit be pure, holy, and without scum in the spring, to wit, itself; yet, by that time these motions and assistance have passed through the channels of our hearts, and been mixed with our manifold corruptions in doing, even the whole work thereby becomes polluted and filthy*."