

SERMON XV

OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS LOSS AND DUNG

Tobias Crisp

"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 do 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." {Phil.3:8,9}

The main drift of this Apostle in the whole course of his ministry, is not only to set out Christ, but also to set him alone; stripping man, and all things else, stark naked; leaving not a rag to cover, or a plaster to case or heal any jot of that universal leprosy overspreading man; that Christ alone may be all in all; which, through Christ's assistance, we will endeavour to unriddle unto you; {being a riddle indeed unto too many, who think they see all in it with a glance;} ploughing with this heifer of the Apostle, I mean the text I have read unto you. Now, that you may the more clearly see the whole scope he aims at here, you must well mark the coherence, how the foregoing discourse leads him unto what he here asserts. In verse 2, he gives warning to take heed of dogs, evil workers and the concision. In verse 3, he intimates in what regard we should beware of them, namely, in not entertaining their principles, which lead to a confidence in the flesh; and for the better establishing or settling them and us in this his useful advice, he shows the vanity and simplicity of such confidence, by comparing himself with the exactest of them; verse 4, where he clears what he means by the flesh, in which we ought not to have confidence, reducing it unto two heads; external church privileges, and an answerable conformity of life according to the law; in both which, he dares challenge any of them to come near him, especially in the latter branch of the flesh; where note, that he as well calls his zeal and blamelessness touching the righteousness which is in the law, the flesh, as the other, wherein if there were any cause of confiding, he had more than any of them, verse 4. I say, as well that as his being a circumcised Jew, and a Pharisee. Now in verse 7, he intimates indeed that he was once of their mind; to account those things {which he now finds to be but flesh} gain; but for his part, whatever they were in his eye before, he sees and so counts them but loss for Christ. In the words of my text he handles this his last assertion more fully, wherein he proposes 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, wherewith he had, and others still do erect a fortress of security, and palace of delight; then he declares the end of rejecting those materials, so much hissed at, not only by the world, but even by many devout ones also; namely, 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 hath built upon the sand, with hay and stubble, pulls down all, and casts it on the dunghill, and then finds a rock, and rears a structure with tried stones from it, which will not moulder with weather-beating; so that he doth not only exhibit Christ with his righteousness, as the securest city of refuge, but also shows plainly, that all must down to the ground and be lost, and then begin anew with him only; one old rotten post left, 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 ruins; the Apostle expresses this in these general terms, {all things} now these things have a reference to those materials mentioned before, namely, his church privileges and legal blamelessness; but yet he speaks more largely here, than only of those; his meaning is, that he did not only cast away as dung, what he was or could do before he received Christ, but even all things

whatever also he hath been able to do since he received him, though assisted thereunto by his Spirit, as Beza well observes on this place. 2. Note, what he doth with these materials; he doth not glaze them, and let them stand, nor pull them down and polish them, and then patch up a new building with old materials; no, nor yet cull out the choicest of those his glittering works, to mingle them with Christ's, but throws all, even every jot away; he sees no worth in any, no not the best; nay, more; he sees the very best so far from service, or profit, that indeed he confesses all is loss to him; he means more than that he must lose all his cost and labour thereabout; but must also be a great loser himself thereby; nay, 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 a jakes or dung, though his works be blameless; for thus he saith, 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 thus stripping himself naked, and casting away his own, though specious works, in general, it is to be clothed with white robes, even the garments of salvation; but more especially he declares his end to be the excellency of the knowledge, or the knowledge of the excellency of Christ; {for the knowledge itself hath 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. Another end was something more, namely, a gaining or winning of Christ, importing, that as long as his obedience was in request with him, and seemed any thing better than dung in his eye, he could never get Christ; and an end yet a little higher; the latter aimed at the present, this last at the future; namely, that he might be found {that is, at the great day of appearance} in him; as if he should say, my works being but dung, will give an ill savour 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 come near, it will change the scent, and mar all; 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, yea 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 thereof, as of dung.

II. Then, and not till then, a person attains 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; and, because, at first sight, peradventure, to some, it may possibly seem harsh, pray mark how clearly and fully every tittle of it is founded on the text. First, observe how the Apostle saith expressly, that he therefore "counts all loss and dung," that he may attain those excellencies mentioned; what need that, if he might attain these without such an estimation? Again, observe the generality of this expression, "all things," which is more than the particulars mentioned; and further, note the time when he spake this, it was certainly after his conversion to Christ, {Phil.1:13,} for he had been in bonds for him before this; now, that which he here speaks of their loss and filthiness, is in the present tense; he delivers his mind of them as viewed at that instant; and, in special, mentions his own righteousness as part of that dung he would not be found in; and, whereas it might be objected, that he had not now received Christ as yet, because this he did to gain him; it is most plain he was in him already, by what he said before; besides, nothing is clearer than that he was converted immediately before he received and entered into his apostleship, as is plain, in Acts 9:2,3; his meaning here must needs be of fuller degrees of participation of Christ. The prophet Isaiah, such another evangelic man as Paul, comes nothing short of him in speaking of his own righteousness, and other servants of God, saying, "but we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away;" he means as a menstruous cloth, {Isa.64:6,} and makes himself one of this number. Our blessed Saviour, who well knew what was in man, bids us, when we have done all things which are

commanded us, to say, "we are unprofitable servants." {Lk.17:10} For the better clearing 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 hath two different significations; sometimes an opinion falsely grounded, as in that saying of the Apostle, "we are counted the offscouring of the world;" sometimes {as here} a certain determination infallibly grounded; thus doth a Paul's eye determine, I mean a person like-minded with him, and right-sighted as he. Now this determination, or estimation of things as loss and dung, is not of some only, but of all. Many will not stick to count those things, that are directly against any precept, to be loss and dung; but this sentence must pass further, even to all civility, morality, yea, and the most exact obedience to any or all the precepts of the law; if it be possible when such obedience hath had the most assistance of the Spirit, the best aim at the right end, done after the most enlarged manner, with all other good circumstances, to the utmost height a creature can mount unto; all these things, or whatever else, the purest sanctified searcher upon earth {being mere man} can bolt forth from his heart, must be counted but as "loss and dung;" otherwise a Paul cannot say, I count all things so, if any one thing may be excepted.

But let me not be mistaken here, I do not say, that the motions themselves of the Spirit, or the enlargement of the heart as his, or the ends aimed at as prescribed, must be thus counted; but 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 so done by him, he must see nothing but mere "loss and dung." I hope your patience will stay your thoughts and reasonings, till I can come to show for what respects it must be so.

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 labour for his pains, {as the proverb is;} that is, he should lose only his pains, or the work he is about; but he saith loss, that is, by the best work that ever a mere man did, he himself is a great loser; I mean, that he forfeits life and bliss thereby 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 speak in regard of the desert of such a work in itself considered; under the notion of such loss must we look on, and account all things; and not only as loss, but as dung also, which comprehends the casualty of this loss in such works. Dung, you know, is one of the filthiest and loathsomest things in the world, causing offence to those especially in whose face it is cast. All things of ours, even the best, are of this nature, nay infinitely worse, {for no created natural filth can sufficiently symbolize with spiritual;} I say, therefore, that all our righteousness, at best, is such a menstruous cloth in God's eye, and so certainly in itself; there is dung cast in his face, even in new moons, and sabbaths and solemn assemblies; {Isa.1:13;} so that his soul hates them, they are a burden to him, he cannot away with them; they send up an ill savour in his nostrils, smelling rankly of the flesh when they proceed from the purest heart; there being some flesh lusting against the spirit still; as, namely, some spiritual, or rather carnal pride and self-stroking, when a man hath done very well as he thinks; which dung is the promoter cause of the loss before-mentioned, accompanying all things of ours, even the best, which is the infallible ground-work for counting them such.

2. Let us now consider what it is to suffer the loss of all things. For clearing hereof note, that there is a double suffering loss of a thing. Passive or active; or violent and voluntary. A passive suffering of the loss of anything is when one is violently bereft of it through an overmatch; as when a man suffers the loss of his goods by thieves breaking in upon him, and overcoming him; thus shall all unbelievers 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." {Matt.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 the Apostle's

suffering loss, it is an active or voluntary suffering; bear with the terms, though they seem contradictory; our Saviour speaks to this effect to John the Baptist, over modestly refusing to baptize him; "suffer it to be so now;" that is, give way to it; so here the Apostle's suffering loss was a contented giving way to the loss of all he was and did. Loss, here, hath not so much reference to his person, as the things he did; though in some respect it may be understood of his person; thus, 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 hath, 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 pleas they can afford him; so as not to have a word to speak for himself, except it be in imploring 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 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; our filthiness alters the property of the pure motions of Christ's Spirit; let not this sound harsh, for it is no paradox that a man should defile holy things; you may know that received principle, that one circumstance amiss, mars good action, and makes it all naught.¹ St. James tells us "that whosoever fulfills {or whosoever shall keep} the whole law of God, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all;" his meaning, I take it, is this, that the least drop of our poison, in the least failing, hath such a diffusive venom, that it poisons all the good, and overspreads its filth through the whole, even as one drop of poison injected, into the rarest cordial, makes the whole, and every drop of it, mortal; so, that except the best of all our works can pass through us without the least mixture of any defect or pollution of ours, it cannot but be dung. Pour the cleanest water that is into a dunghill, and let it but run through it, and when passed through, what is it but dung itself? The Lord requiring sacrifices of the Jews, enjoins a male without blemish; though a male, yet with one blemish, the whole sacrifice was abominable, and not that one blemish only. And whereas, it may seem harsh, that even what is the Spirit's must be involved in a man's own, under the general notion of dung; know, that it once being mixed with our filth, ceaseth to be his, and becomes ours; it was his when injected, but our flesh, being like the viper's stomach, that turns the wholesomest food into poison; or like an ulcerous turnout, that turns the soundest flesh drawn thereto into rottenness; and 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 {for the generator begets that which is like himself} that being dung, all that it diffuseth itself into must needs be like it; even as the gourds gathered from the wild vine, being mortal themselves, and put into the pot, set on for the sons of the prophets, made the whole pottage deadly. {II Kings 4:39,40} The Apostle Paul complains, that

¹ {Note: This is a passage excepted to by D. W. in his Gospel Truth Stated, &c. pg.,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. Gill.}

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, "O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" {Rom.7:21-24} By which he must needs mean all together, because he doth not fly to good works as a refuge against the evil, but to Christ alone as a refuge against all. "I thank God {saith he} through Jesus Christ our Lord." {vs.25} So then, in respect of the inseparable communicative poison of the ingredients of our corruptions, mingling themselves with the best righteousness of the best men, both they and that are but loss and dung, and filthy rags, and must be so accounted.

Some then may object, if it be so, we ought to refrain from doing righteousness, as from dung. I answer, it follows not; but that we must refrain from glorying in, or streaking ourselves for our righteous doings, and rather take shame to ourselves when we have done, and so glory only in the Lord. Though good works done by us are but dung in themselves, and in God's eye; yet must we be careful to maintain them, since they are profitable to men. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." {Tit.3:8} David {Ps.16:2,3} confesseth that his goodness extendeth not to God; yet for all this he refrains not, because it could extend to the Saints upon earth, and to the excellent in whom was his delight; it is no good plea, that because a man cannot be wholly clean, therefore, he will be more filthy than needs; you will not like it, that because your children cannot come from school without some dirt, in the cleanest way, that therefore they shall wallow like swine over head and ears in it.

Others will say, that God often shows his approbation 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, so through this faith in Christ, the whole filth of our works is extracted by him; and he presenting the same purged by himself alone, they become accepted with God, {Rev.8:3,4,} but simply the works themselves as done, though never so well, are abhorred of God; and Christ never takes them to purge them, till we ourselves wholly renounce them by counting them loss and dung; and that acceptance procured by him, imports only a liking God takes to them, no efficacy at all they have with him. So you have the doctrine sufficiently cleared to you, I hope.

Now, if it be as you have heard, then {keeping within the bounds of Paul to Timothy, "not to rebuke an elder, but to entreat him as a father;"} let me have leave, 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 when he is in Christ, above what is meet; let me obtain the favour to declare my judgment, when such righteousness of man is so exalted, and the issue of it, it is exalted above what is meet, when high things are spoken of it in its own name, and even in reference to Christ's assistance, and a man's being in him.

1. When it is cried up with rhetorical commendation, ascribing virtue and efficacy to it in its own name; give me leave, I beseech you, whilst I open myself in this particular; man's works are thus cried up and magnified, when {for instance} his prayer, repentance, self-denial and exact blameless walking have the high titles of a kind of omnipotency to effect wonders, and are commended as most precious and incomparably excellent, not only in the eye of men, but God; as the things wherein he takes infinite pleasure, proceeding from a sanctified heart; and this whilst there is no name mentioned, but only of these righteous actions in such high praises, as if they carried such a lustre, beauty and energetical virtue in their own astute; for you know the poet's complaint, "I have made these verses, another gets the honors;" may not Christ justly take up such a complaint? All the comeliness of man's righteousness is no more but what he puts upon it, and yet the righteousness must go, he not so much as mentioned or hinted in such praise; there is verily a fault among us in this respect; if any say, that Christ is always to be supposed as principal; I answer, he should be supposed not only as the principal in these praises, but as solely deserving; for all that is praise-worthy is his alone; but why only supposed? Why deserves not he to be named as well as the righteousness? Certainly it is no good manners {to say no worse} to forget him, whilst his poorest instruments are so highly remembered; besides, how can people suppose that which they hear not of? They must go

away with things as they are delivered to them; as when servants bring presents from their masters to any, they do not say, I bestow such or such a thing on you, but, my master sends it you; if he should take it on himself, he would go for an arrogant fellow; it will not salve the matter, when he is taxed for such arrogancy, to say, my master should have been supposed, when he gave no hint of him. Such kind of extolling man's righteousness is far from counting it loss and dung, as Paul doth in my text; methinks, therefore, it were comely in all extolling of it, explicitly to ascribe all the praise to the glory of the grace of Christ.

2. Man's righteousness is exalted above what is meet, when too high things are spoken of it, being accompanied with Christ's assistance by his Spirit, and in reference to a man's being in him, when he doth such righteousness.

May I be bold once more to clear my mind in this also; it is true indeed, whilst a believer's heart is overcast with gross vapors, and is more than ordinarily dull in hearing, is low and slow in praying, and is somewhat stiff in fasting above measure; such righteousness goes usually for loss and dung, and such it is; but if a soul gets under full sail, filled with a gale of the Spirit of Christ, when floods of meltings 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 lustily, being helped by the Spirit herein; then such prayers, mournings and other divine exercises will do wonders; hereby men shall get pardon, settle spiritual, civil and natural matters with sanctified insight; such courses some think will turn away God's wrath, and reconcile him to men; but, under favour, the attributing such efficacy to righteousness, though thus assisted by Christ's Spirit is more than is meet, though Christ be explicitly owned as the author of such assistance; the righteousness so assisted, hath no efficacy at all to obtain anything of the Lord, but rather to hasten and multiply wrath, in that it multiplies sin.² How can sin have efficacy towards expiation of sin, and pacifying a just incensed God for it? Certainly in no respect! Suppose a traitor brought in to the prince by a favourite, 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 favourite's assistance have any ground to hope that this, his new traitorous carriage, 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.

If any shall grant, that originally, or per se, the best righteousness obtains nothing, but rather charges man with a new account; but yet instrumentally, it obtains what is desired, being well qualified as before is mentioned.

I answer, if it be no more, then I heartily desire that we should always express it, that the people may clearly understand and remember, and be guided explicitly to the fountain itself, Christ alone; for certainly whilst he is suppressed, and these instruments are reached out without relation to him, who only fills them with all that runs through them, they are but mere empty pits, and dry channels, though never so curiously cut out.

The issue of such over-exalting sanctified righteousness, is that by such doting on the efficacy of it, Christ himself is shamefully neglected, and grows too much out of request. Here may I a little alter the saying, which historians tell us was heard in heaven, after the church grew into credit; *Religio peperit divitias, et filia devoravit matrem*, {Religion brought forth riches and the daughter devoured the mother;} I may as truly say, *Christus peperit justitiam, et filia devoravit matrem*, {Christ begets righteousness in men, and the daughter destroys the mother.} Christ begets righteousness in men, and this exalted as much as in such lies that over exalt it, is made to devour

² {Note: 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 favour 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. Gill.}

Christ himself; just as if a king should promote a favourite, 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 beseech you, do but mark how our righteousness, so exalted, creeps up, by degrees, into Christ's throne, even to the dethroning of him.

In all exigencies and extremities, how naked is the throne of grace {understanding grace properly} left without suitors! How few followers hath Christ himself! How rarely are men sent to shelter themselves under the shadow of his wings, whilst the seat of righteousness is thronged! What earnest outcries for prayers, mournings, fastings, and such like, to help men at a dead lift! What posting to them in extremities, as if they kept a court by themselves; for Christ is seldom heard of, at least not set up on high as to do all; and yet this righteousness is but merely his ministering servant; what the Apostle said of himself, {1 Cor.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 ye 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 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 pant after according to his will; reserving a submission to be disposed of otherwise, if he see fit.

Another issue of such exalting of man's sanctified righteousness above what is meet, is Christ's leaving persons to that little or no succor, which this can yield, being made the refuge of men.

I remember what the Lord said to his people, the Israelites, bowed down under the hands of the Philistines; "go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation." {Jg.10:14} What is it but to make a 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;" building on fervency in prayer to obtain of God, when we should rest only on Christ, without regard to that. Doubtless all this fasting, mourning and praying in these times, which I believe no former age could parallel, prosper not so well as is expected, because the principal verb is wanting, which can only make good sense of all we say or do, Christ I mean. Were all seasoned with that salt, doubtless it would be more savoury, that is, cordially and dependingly seasoned with it; "if ye will not believe, {saith the prophet} surely ye shall not be established." {Is.7:9} Wherefore are we called Christians? The name imports that all in us should mainly savour of Christ; and that no receipt should be made or given, but Christ must be predominant in it. Sure I am, Paul was of this mind, when he said, "I desire to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." How can that physic work according to expectation, which by the apothecary's heedlessness is destitute of that ingredient which was prescribed to do all in all? It is as if hellebore {a healing herb} 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 purgeth; prayers are but the liquor to let him down; leave Christ out, and what will all the rest do? Nay, the truth is, as in every strong purge there are some degrees of poison, which are quelled by a predominant cordial injected for that purpose; so our mournings, fastings 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. O, then, whatever else we forget in prescribing and applying receipts 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.

And for the generality of God's people, my advice to them is briefly this; when Christ is prescribed in greatest quantity, and for sole efficacy, let them beware, lest they forget or neglect to put him into their receipts; the portion is desperate when he is not predominant; and if at any time a spiritual physician prescribe any receipt, and forgets Christ therein, let them be sure to supply him themselves before they take it, though the ingredient prescribed seem never so rich and sovereign; and resolve that these of themselves have too much poison in them to be ventured on alone, and therefore will produce but loss, being dung.

The premises considered, I beseech you all to suffer a word of exhortation, take some good course to get a Paul's eye, clearly to see loss and dung 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 an eye to see all things thus? 1. Take heed you use not false spectacles whilst 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 apt to judge their own brood 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 saith 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 the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." {Rom.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 set 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 the Lamb who only was found worthy to open the book and unseal it. {Rev.5:9} Christ alone can make a person see it; and therefore the Lord saith, {in Is.42:6,7} "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, &c."

Christ represents our best righteousness as loss and dung, two ways: 1. Directly, thus; not only showing us plainly the particulars wherein the filth consists which he doth by the law; but also by giving a right hint of it therein, whereby sin appears clearly to be out of measure sinful; this he doth by the touch of his omnipotency; 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 doth 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 hath over the hearts of all men. 2. Christ gives such clear sight reflexly; 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 none elsewhere in the creature.