

Christ Alone

Scripture Reading — Philippians 3:4-9

I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. . . . I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ. . . . — Philippians 3:8

In Philippians 3:8 the original Greek text includes a word that is not very nice. Often translated as “garbage,” the Greek word actually means something closer to a steaming pile of manure. It is not a word for polite company, but what makes it so striking is that Paul uses this word to describe his former religious accomplishments. Earlier in his life, his status as a Pharisee and a near-perfect keeper of God’s law were his prize achievements. He was sure it all added up to a shiny gold ticket to heaven.

Then, in a vision, he met Jesus, the ascended Son of God, who had made salvation possible by giving up his own life to pay the price for all our sin. Once Paul realized how costly it -really was to take away human sin, he knew that any idea he’d ever entertained that we humans could pay for sin on our own was false. In fact, any idea like that was beyond false: it was garbage, useless, futile, hollow, a stinking pile of -manure.

We can be thankful for all that the Spirit helps us do in our lives. We need not belittle the fruit of the Spirit we produce. But, Paul urges, do not for one second think that such things reunite you with God. That required a cross and the Son of God’s sacrifice once for all. To God be all the glory!

Prayer

Shine the light of your cross so brightly in our hearts, dear Savior, that we will not for a moment mistake our good deeds for your supreme sacrifice. In your name, Amen.

Devotion topics: [Bible](#), [Life of Jesus](#), [Christianity](#), [Salvation](#), [God](#), [Jesus](#)

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