

Tobias Crisp, 1600-1643, Gospel Minister, {exalter of Christ Alone, in the faithful proclamation of God's Sovereign Grace, setting forth, in no ambiguous terms the glorious Gospel in all its assimilating truth and indispensable doctrine as a pure declaration of Free & Sovereign Grace – the proclamation of an Accomplished Redemption through the sole Merit, Righteousness and Death of the Lord Jesus Christ, a Declarative Sentence of Absolution unto all the elect, to whom alone it does belong, the glad tidings that God has saved His people from their sins,} was born in Bread Street, London. He was the third son of Ellis Crisp, a wealthy Merchant and Alderman of the City, who was Sheriff of London when he died in 1625. His eldest brother, Nicholas; that is, Sir Nicholas Baronet Crisp, {also spelled Crispe,} who was born only a year before, {in 1599,} was to become one of the wealthiest and most industrious merchants in all of London; and because of his devoted loyalty to King Charles the First, {by whom he was knighted,} suffered much {among other things, was exiled to France} during the unrest which preceded and followed the execution of the King. The magnificent house built by Crisp at Hammersmith was bought in 1683 by Prince Rupert for his mistress, Margaret Hughes, and eventually became the residence of Queen Caroline. Upon the Restoration, he was one of the Committee sent by the City of London to King Charles the Second, at Breda, to invite him back; and, upon the King's restoration, was reinstated into his post as one of the Farmers of the Customs, and was made a Baronet.

But to return to the Doctor, who received his initial education at Eton College, near Windsor, and then at Cambridge. In reference to Crisp's initial ministry, it would appear that he first set out in a legal way of preaching, and though his understanding was darkened, whilst under this black cloud of spiritual bewilderment; that is, prior to the Lord granting him true repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth of the Gospel; he afterwards, {with a clearer knowledge of Christ, and working from principles of Grace,} became a firm and staunch advocate for Gospel Truth & Grace, being exceedingly zealous, and being graced with a sincere and earnest desire to glorify God in his life and ministry. About this time {1626} he married Mary Wilson, daughter of Rowland Wilson, a prosperous London Merchant who sat in Parliament during the Civil War, by whom he had thirteen children. In 1627, he was incorporated at Balliol College, Oxford; and soon thereafter, {about the 27th year of his age,} became Rector of Brinkworth in Wiltshire, where, being settled, he continued until the time of the Civil War, and was much followed for his edifying way of preaching the Gospel of Christ, and known for his gracious generosity to the poor and needy, {having received a large income of his own,} and his kind hospitality to all persons that resorted to his house. It is to be noted that Crisp never sought for any worldly advancement, to which his way was open through his parentage and friends, but gave himself up entirely to the preaching of the Gospel.

Upon the breaking out of the Civil War, {by which time he had become a Doctor of Divinity,} fearing the disrespect of Cromwell's Cavalier Soldiers, to all aligning themselves with the Royalists, he left his Residence in August of 1642, to return to London, where his sentiments in regards to the freeness of the Gospel of Christ, were soon discovered; for in his proclamation of Christ, Crisp articulated the message in a manner that strongly emphasized God's Unconditional Decree of Election; Christ's Redemptive and Substitutionary Sacrifice as grounded in that Eternal Decree; and a

Dispensation of God's Grace that was unadulterated by Legal Conditions designed to solicit man's part or contribution. Its distinctive tendency was to overthrow the religion of man, whilst maintaining clear Law/Gospel Distinctions and setting forth Christ's Pre-eminent Glory. This message left no room for Human Agency, Qualifications or Conditions, which would in any manner impede the always Efficacious Work of the Holy Spirit in Salvation applied; or on the other hand compel or somehow oblige the LORD to grant mercy based upon any pre-qualifications, {as faith, prayers, repentance, &c.,} that men might conjure up in attempts to make themselves acceptable in the eyes of the LORD, or somehow to interest, unite, and incorporate themselves into Christ. In other words, according to Crisp, all the conditions of salvation were already met by Christ, and if the elect were complete before God in their Representative Head, then Faith, Repentance, &c., being brought in as conditions was clearly a forsaking and a denial of Christ; as if to imply that the Father was not fully satisfied in the accomplishments of His Son. According to Crisp, "either we are the ministers and messengers of Christ, or the ministers of Moses; we are either the ministers of the Covenant of Works, or the messengers of the Covenant of Grace," for if a sinner can contribute to any aspect of Salvation, he thereby overturns Grace, destroys the message of the Gospel, and in essence denies the Person and Work of Christ.

Crisp was burdened on account that the declaration of the pure Gospel was being adulterated, which was evident from the messages he preached, in one place exclaiming, "it is to be lamented, I confess, and I would to God there were no occasion to speak of it, whilst we profess ourselves to be the ambassadors of Christ, to dispatch this great business, to beseech men in Christ's stead to be reconciled unto God; we are too much the ministers of Moses, pressing and thundering the wrath of God from heaven; publishing unto men the working out their own salvation by their own works, according to the law; putting on them the performance of duties in every particular, that they may have peace and joy of spirit from it; telling them, that they must make their peace with God, by fasting, and prayer, and mourning. Is this to beseech men in Christ's stead to be reconciled unto God by Christ alone? This is the message of the ministers of the Gospel; and whoever he be that forsakes this message, he goes, and is not sent; he takes upon him to manage a business out of his own commission; for the commission is, that we in Christ's stead should beseech men to be reconciled unto God, and that by the blood of Christ alone." Is it any wonder therefore that Crisp's clear preaching, and his uncompromisingly faithfulness to the Gospel, engendered the opposition and animosity of those who had departed from the simplicity that was in Christ; especially at this time when men whose limp {mere creedal} grasp of the Everlasting Gospel began such a down-grade spiral towards Arminianism. In his message entitled, "Christ's Free Welcome to all Comers," Crisp states that, "we have had Arminianism exceedingly exploded among us hitherto, and there hath been much complaint against it; but if we conceive that God, in pardoning sin, hath an eye to confession of it, here is the doing of works for pardon of sin; and how far short this comes of Arminianism, let all the world judge." It would appear that many at this time who professed the truths known as the Doctrines of Grace were drifting away from their Foundational Pillars; but even as men were trampling underfoot the essential truths of Crisp's message, there were those whose broken spirits were being

revived, and whose spiritual eyes were beginning to see afresh the beauties and perfections of Christ, and the true message of the Gospel, thus simply set forth; which simplicity seemed to characterize Crisp's preaching throughout, being particularly suited to the case of souls made truly sensible of sin, and made easy to be understood by those of the meanest capacity, as is evident in the manner by which he often illustrated the deepest Mysteries of Grace by things common among men, and known to all.

Once established in London, his faithful and constant preaching began to 'stir the pot' of any and all who were in the ways of religion inclined towards a "yea and nay" works Gospel, co-mingled Law with Gospel, emphasized so-called Sacraments more than Christ, and wore their religion more on their sleeves, rather than within their hearts. Those who reproached and persecuted him, did so in a harsh manner, hurling falsely fabricated accusations against him, and deceitfully charging the Gospel that he preached with Antinomianism; though the innocency and harmlessness of his life, and his fervency in good works was an obvious argument to confute these slanders, against the most holy faith which he preached and lived. In London, he was lured into controversy by fifty-two antagonists, {a sort of anti-Crisp Society,} doing all in their power to discredit him, in a grand dispute concerning the Doctrines of Grace. This slander continued well unto his death, and was intensified once his sermons came to Press, their usual course being that of plucking {completely out of context} what they considered as Antinomian phrases from his sermons in order to support their shallow arguments. Dr. William Twisse, the appointed Chairman of the Westminster Assembly expressed that he "had read Dr. Crisp's sermons, and could give no reason why they were opposed, but because so many were converted by his preaching, and {said he} so few by ours." Likewise, the Independent Minister Thomas Cole, the author of a valuable treatise on Regeneration, 1689, declared, that if he had but one hundred pounds in the world, and Dr. Crisp's book could not be had without giving fifty pounds for it, he would give it, rather than be without it, saying, "I have found more satisfaction in it, than in all the books in the world, except the Bible."

Crisp's prime concern in preaching was the glory and preeminence of Christ, whilst seeking to administer comfort to those whose hearts had been made sad by law mongering clergy dressed in Puritanical robes, as well as the laborious and conditional doctrine of works as maintained by the Arminianism of Archbishop Laud, and all his deluded followers. All this fierce opposition, which was zealously and faithfully managed on his part, along with his intense labours in preaching the Gospel, left him vulnerable to sickness, as he contracted the smallpox disease, which would rapidly bring him to his grave, at such an early age of 43. In regards to his last days, Robert Lancaster had this to say in his introduction to the First Volume of Crisp's Sermons, "and withal, he forgot not {considering the cunning of Satan, and the lying power of darkness} to profess before some present the steadfastness of his faith to this effect; that as he had lived in the Free Grace of God through Christ, so he died with confidence and great joy, even as much as his present condition was capable of, resign his life and soul into the hands of his most dear Father. And so without the least thought of recanting or renouncing the doctrine he had preached, {as some have falsely and wickedly spread abroad,} after some time, with continual flowing expressions of joy, he departed this life, into the assured everlasting embraces of his dear Redeemer. And now gracious Lord, who only art the Author and

Finisher of our faith, be pleased more and more to enlighten the eyes and open the mouths of all thy ministers, that they may not shun or be afraid to declare unto thy people the whole council of God, even the utter disability and nothingness of man; and withal the freeness of thy Grace, the plenteousness of thy Redemption, and thy Salvation, to the uttermost; that the hearts of thy people may rejoice, and their joy no man may take away from them."

Crisp was buried in the family vault at St. Mildred's Bread Street, {which church was torched in the Great Fire of London in 1666, rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren, only to be completely destroyed by German bombs in 1941,} only a short distance from where he was born. Shortly after his death {in that same year} were published, by his dear friend and follower, Robert Lancaster, a small collection {14 messages} of his Sermons, published under the title "Christ Alone Exalted," {as this was their central theme,} and over the next 3 years {1643-46} where published two additional volumes, with commendatory prefaces by Mr. Robert Lancaster, Mr. George Cockayn, and Mr. Henry Pinnell, forty-two of these Sermons being delivered, in or near London, in the early 1640's. These messages were all taken down in short-hand writing, during their delivery, and compared with Crisp's own sermon notes, or taken from them; and as they were not designed, nor prepared for the press by the Author, they, no doubt, thus appearing in this unadorned dress, would have most likely been, if Crisp had been given the opportunity, edited and enhanced in a way, as to clarify some of their phraseology, and to further develop and expound their theme. In 1690, a new edition of these Sermons was printed, with an addition of ten more taken from the Author's notes, by his son Samuel Crisp; and again in 1755 by John Gill.

Thus lived and died one who faithfully served his generation, in setting forth the Glories of Christ's Redemption-Grace; not only to those who were privileged to sit under his Christ Exalting Ministry, but to many subsequent generations of Christ minded believers; even to this dark day, wherein the Essential Truths of the Gospel are, for the most part thrown aside, or trampled underfoot by men whose minds have been corrupted from the simplicity or singleness that is in Christ.