# Philippians - Commentaries by Hugh Henry Snell

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 4 (1856), Righteousness of God by Faith., The

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“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. 3:9.

“David describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.”—Rom. 4:6.

“A ROBE I must have,” said the beloved Berridge, “of one whole piece, broad as the Law, spotless as the light, and richer than an angel ever wore—the robe of Jesus.” The fact is, that the Lord Jesus was not only the perfect Man, and thus rendered to Jehovah the perfection of obedience due from man, but He was also God— “God manifest in the flesh”—thus there was infinite acceptability and divine worth in all that He did. It is by His obedience that “many are made righteous”—even “the righteousness of God” which is unto and upon them by faith. Spotless angels around the throne of heaven excel in strength and do the will of God, but theirs is a creature-righteousness; faultless in its kind, without doubt, but it falls short of “the righteousness of God.” How wonderful is the standing of the believer! How near is he brought! How “complete in Christ” he is! What an everlasting and unchangeable righteousness is “the righteousness which is of God by faith!” What grace, that sinners of the Gentiles should have this spotless robe! How rich in mercy is God! “Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.” (Rom. 10:4.)

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 5 (1857), Epaphroditus and Paul.

Phil. 2:25-30.

THIS is a peculiarly beautiful witness of deep and fresh affection. There is a varied and exquisite play of the heart in it, and one so longs for more of the affectionate nature, that it strikes me as being a passage of great attraction.

Look at it with me, beloved, for a moment. It tells us that Epaphroditus bad visited Paul while a prisoner at Rome, as the messenger of the saints at Philippi. He had brought the apostle supplies for his necessities. (ch. 4:18.)

During that time he had been visited with sickness, and the sickness brought him nigh unto death. The fatigue and anxiety he had undergone, perhaps, or the long journey, and then waiting on Paul in prison, had been the occasion of this. But the Lord restored him, and he was now about to return to Philippi.

The first beautiful exercise of affection here is in the heart of Epaphroditus himself. He longed after his dear Philippian brethren, because he knew they heard he had been sick, and he was fully sure how grieved they would be at the thought of his sickness in a distant place, where, perhaps, there was no one who knew him to care for him. He therefore longed after them, had many anxious exercises of heart about them, knowing that they would be grieved on his behalf. This was a very deep affectionate yearning in his heart.

Thus again see Paul’s heart. He was sending Epaphroditus back to Philippi, though his presence must have been so pleasant and profitable to him, and his joy was this, that the dear Philippian saints would rejoice in seeing Epaphroditus again.

Thus we find a beautiful and deep variety of affection stirring, because of this brother’s illness. The saints at Philippi were sorrowing because of it. Epaphroditus sorrowed because of this their sorrow, for he knew they would feel it. Paul sorrowed, but was willing to forget himself, that the Philippians might rejoice in seeing Epaphroditus again.

But still further. God Himself seems to enter this beautiful scene of affection. He has mercy, i.e. pity or compassion, and restores this loved and sick brother, just that this tide of sorrow might be stayed.

Very full and perfect this is. The heart is all alive here, and all about the sickness of a brother. But surely it tells us something of that goodly land whereto we are tending. There will be no sorrow there to cause the affections to flow; but there will be affections there, to flow at whatever bidding they may receive, and all such bidding will be in the hands, may I say, of purity, and love, and joy. At the touch of such precious things, heaven will be full of affection forever.

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 4 (1856), Service to Christ.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”— James 1:27.

“For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.”—Phil. 2:20, 21.

It is a sorrowful and humbling exercise for the conscience, to contrast the untiring activity and the large expenditure of money which we can often so readily render to the things of time and sense, with the scanty measure of our bestowments on the things of eternity. The real cause

of all this is the absence of vitality of soul, of a true and full enjoyment of heavenly things. We make many excuses, but the Lord has one answering and rebuking word for them all: “Thou hast left thy first love.” (Rev. 2:4.)

So long as the saints are content with the thought of their souls being secure, touching the matter of salvation, and retire as it were from that affecting word, “Do as I have done to you,” they of course can make no progress in the divine life, nor, as a consequence, in the service of Christ. A vast quantity of divine precept is lost sight of, and the resulting blessing not realized. It would be wholesome when we are not bringing forth fruit, to fear being taken away (John 15); when we are lukewarm, to fear being spewed out of the Lord’s mouth (Rev. 3:16); when we are not visiting and clothing the Lord’s suffering ones, to fear being cast into everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:31-46); when we are not serving in the Master’s house, to fear having a portion with hypocrites (Matt. 24:42, 61); when we are hiding our talent, to fear being cast out as an unprofitable servant. (Matt. 25:14-30.) If we have this world’s goods, and shut up the bowels of our compassion, we should each one ask ourselves, “How dwelleth the love of God in me?” (1 John 3:17.) When we allow anger or enmity to dwell within us against our brother, we should Consider whether we are in darkness. (1 John 2:9.) “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” I make no system of doctrine to evade the full force of these solemn and searching warnings. Alas! how often do we dangerously rest upon doctrines as to our safety, without seeking after, and seeing that we have the things that “accompany salvation.” That field which bringeth forth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whilst that only which bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. (Heb. 6) Israel lost the vineyard. Why? Because they brought not forth its fruit to God (see Isa. 5. Matt. 21:33, 46); rather than do so they killed the Son of God. It is a solemn and searching word, that the controversy between God and Israel was regarding fruit. Jesus came to receive the fruits of the vineyard, and rather than give them they killed Him. They failed not in their profession—in this they abounded—but there was no fruit for the taste and table of the householder.

The thought in these days, it seems to me, in the minds of many of the Lord’s children, is being served and cared for, rather than serving others. Large and jealous demands are made for personal attention and sympathy, whilst on their part they overlook doing the same to others. The consequence is, that a sickly and dissatisfied state of soul is engendered. Surely service to Christ comes within the reach of all. There are few who, with a little self-denial, might not have pence to give away, if not pounds. Few who might not so redeem their time as to have it in their power to make visits of sympathy, or to say a word to a poor perishing soul. At any rate, all can spend some time, had they the heart for it, before a throne of grace, and thus draw down by the prayer of faith showers of blessing.

The notion of a minister caring for me destroys the far more blessed idea of myself caring for others. The order of God is, “That the members should have the same care one for another.” (1 Cor. 12:25.) That the body of Christ should edify itself by the effectual working in the measure of every part. (Eph. 4) The Lord has constructed and tempered the body spiritually, as well as naturally, to this end. I am solemnly convinced that no church can prosper where this is not the case. What are saints left on earth for? Is it not to bring forth fruit to God, to be helpers of the gospel, and caretakers of His people? The language of Cain was, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” The saint should be a light before men, in the house, and in the world. (Matt. 5) He is not his own, he is bought with a price, even the precious blood of the Son of God; therefore he should glorify God in his body and spirit, which are His. He is called from darkness to light to show forth His praises. The Lord hath said, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God.” Do we care for our families, our business, and ourselves? Do not even the publicans the same? “After all these things the Gentiles seek.” Did not Jesus say, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness?” (Matt. 6) The sin of the age when Christ comes is not the neglect of temporal matters, but absorption in them; so that by reason of these things they will be unprepared to meet Him. (Matt. 24:36-41.) The failure of the virgins is, they all slumber and sleep; they have, when He comes, ceased to watch and be ready. Their loins are not girded, nor their lights burning. Zeal for God is now for the most part lost sight of. Questions and persons are discussed, whilst the power of practical self-denying life is quenched. Activity in every branch may be seen, save in the service of Christ. The Laodicean’s state is ours.

Brethren, the time is short. The night cometh when no man can work. Soon we shall have to render an account to God of all the deeds done in the body; and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. A conflict exists now between Christ and Satan. We are on the one side or the other. Mere profession settles not the question. The Lord has said, “He that gatheredeth not with Me scattereth.” If we are not for Him, we are against Him. Service to Christ conduces to our happiness, and to the glory of God. As we sow so shall we reap. “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” (2 Cor. 9:6.) “Blessed is he that soweth beside all waters.” “This man shall be blessed in his deed.” (James 1:25.) If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

It is painful to see a professor of religion spending his days with no higher thoughts, as far as can be traced in his actings, than considering his own matters. Looking only on his own things. No widow’s heart is by him made to rejoice. No orphan finds in him a father’s care. No saint’s feet by him are washed. Heaven is never made to rejoice over one sinner that he has been the means of leading to repentance. He spends his days like the beast that perisheth, the earth beneath his feet being what he lives upon. Can such a one be a christian? It was the Lord Himself who said, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” In these days where are we to find the true-hearted self-denying christian, he who is bearing the burden and heat of the day for his Master’s glory? Sonship is one thing, to be a faithful servant and soldier of the cross is another. Christ was a servant; He is one now. He has declared plainly that He loves His Master, His wife, and children. From their service He has pledged Himself never to go free. (Ex. 21:5; Psa. 40:6; Isa. 1:5.) His freedom, His delight, His meat and drink, are in the service of them He loves. To Him therefore God appoints the highest place, and crowns Him with many crowns. “He shall divide the spoil with the strong.” (Isa. 53) At the well of Samaria, the need of the poor harlot was more to Him than His own food, and this is the true spirit of service, the only service that has Christ for its impress.

There is a great reward in faithful service. (See 1 Cor. 15:58; Hebrews 6:10.) Brethren, let us remember these things; seek to be able to say that we are free from the blood of all men, our life and walk testifying of Jesus. Let us seek by well doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, by our good works to glorify our heavenly Father. Let us not be like those who, in the days of the Lord’s conflict with His enemies, abode among the sheepfolds. Gilead abode beyond Jordan. Dan remained in ships. Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his creeks (margin). Whilst Zebulon and Napthali were a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field. (Judg. 5:16, 18.) They lived not for themselves, but for God, while their brethren shut themselves up in the heart and center of their worldliness. The Lord felt this slight, this walking according to the course of this world, and not according to the current of His Spirit. In the days of David’s prosperity, whilst Israel was in conflict, at the very time that kings go forth to battle, he sends forth his servants, but remains himself at home. He tarries still at Jerusalem. Instead of being a witness and a helper in the struggle, sharing Israel’s fare, he sees the beautiful Bathsheba, and she, and not the enemies of Israel, secured his fall. It is ever so. To retire from the service of Christ, and the afflictions of the gospel, into the course

and current of our own things, is to peril our safety. Our place is conflict and service. To be off the battle field, is to be a deserter from our post, and to place ourselves at the disposal of Satan. Of those who confess themselves to be pilgrims and strangers, it is said “God is not ashamed to be called their God.” “Let no man take thy crown,” is a word for every servant. Brethren, suffer not failure in others, or unrequited services, to throw you back. If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom. 12:20, 21.) When Isaiah saw the grace and glory of Jesus, his answer to “Whom shall I send? and who will go for us?” was, “Here am I, send me.” (Isa. 6) When Elias was spending his time in speaking against Israel, and exalting himself, (for these two failings generally accompany each other,) the Lord asked him “What doest thou here, Elijah?” When again asked the same question, he repeats the same things. The Lord then puts Elisha in his room. (1 Kings 19.)

Brethren, may the Lord awake our hearts to righteousness, that we sin not! May He plant in us larger desires than the world can satisfy! May He so fill us with Himself, and cause our hearts so to overflow with His fullness, that out of our bellies may flow rivers of living water! Then, “our enemies, being judges,” shall have to say of us, that we have been with Jesus. Many shall then have to rejoice on account of us in the day of glory. Above all, how truly blessed to hear Jesus say to us at the last day, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” Amen. Amen.

Paul’s preaching at Corinth “was in demonstration of the Spirit and in power,” but he tells us that he “determined not to know anything among them, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”

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