

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 175

October 1987

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CHRIST SANCTIFIED IN THE HEART

A.C.Craig

1 Peter 3: 14,15, 1-4; 1 Samuel 16: 14-19; 25: 23-31

Ever since the beginning of the recovery in which we have part, dear brethren, the issue has been Christ. Whatever form or phase the attack takes the issue is always Christ - heartlessness as to Christ, no heart for Him, and that more or less has been repeated in every other attack that has arisen from that time. The question is always, what room is there, what place is there, for Christ. It is because He is the testimony, the Lord is the testimony, Christ is the testimony. Whatever else or whatever form it may take, it is always Himself that is attacked.

I want to illustrate these two scriptures in Peter from the two in Samuel. In the first section we read, Peter exhorts his hearers to sanctify the Lord the Christ in their hearts. How this young man who spoke up in connection with David obviously had sanctified David in his heart. What I want every one of us here this evening, including myself, to do is to have the Lord, as sanctified, in our hearts. That will be great gain for us, not only selfsatisfaction, but too that we might be able to give an answer to every one that asks as to the hope that is within us. It would be quite impossible to give a proper answer if the Person of Christ is not set apart in our hearts. It is a priestly idea; you are giving, so to speak, the holiest of your heart to him. Having sanctified - set apart - Him in your heart, you have a holy thing like the ark in your heart, and this blessed Person is entitled to that place. That was the place of the ark in the Jewish economy. As we know, the ark was the very centre of the whole tabernacle system; it was set apart there, it was sanctified there. It is the privilege of every one of us, the youngest too, to set Him apart in our hearts. Therein will be salvation, safety, as well, as I said, as being able to give an answer.

It is instructive how it begins. It says, "But if also ye should suffer for righteousness sake, blessed are ye". "If also ye should

suffer for righteousness sake" - that is a fine thing; you might be reproached, you might suffer something at school or in the office, or anywhere; you are suffering for righteousness sake, for *His* sake, you suffer for that. It says, "but be not afraid of their fear", their threats, their menaces; you do not need to be afraid of that. If you have Him sanctified in your heart you can be afraid of nothing. He was afraid of nothing here: when the enemy came up He was not afraid of him. You say, He was a divine Person: so He was, and He was a blessed Man. You see Him in the first of Mark with the wild beasts; a lion there and a tiger, and they would look up at Him, the Creator. That was Jesus. He was afraid of nothing here, not afraid of the devil; He was not afraid of him, He was not afraid of anything.

You see Him going forward to Calvary, He is not afraid. Like David, running towards the giant he was not afraid; we do not need to be afraid; have Him in your heart, It says, "neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord the Christ in your hearts, and be always prepared to give an answer to every one that asks you to give an account of the hope that is in you". What a fine thing that is. You may be asked questions. Why do you not cut your hair? That might be said to the sisters, things like that: can you give an answer? You can give the right answer if that blessed One has the holiest of your heart; that innermost recess. Do not just give Him some little place and shut the rest against Him; the holiest is the very centre, as I said, of the whole tabernacle system, and everything revolved round that.

Sanctify Him there and you will have the power and the wherewithal; with Him dwelling there, you will be able to give an answer. Now I think of this young man that we read about. The question came up about some one being found to play, to play well. Saul is troubled by an evil spirit, and some wise man in this company suggested, Why do you not get somebody who can play a harp well: it would be a good idea. Then "Saul said to his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. And one of the young men answered and said" (is that not fine, one of the young men? Suppose this question had arisen in Sydney, or some question had arisen in Sydney, any of you young men or young sisters could have spoken up. Yes, I know where to find such a man.) "And one of the

young men answered and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skilled in playing". That is what was wanted, that was what Saul needed; he had a bad spirit and some one was needed to play well on the harp. But the young man does not stop there; that is what is so beautiful about it, he does not stop there. David was sanctified in his heart, he had set David apart in his heart, and David did not have only one room in the young man's heart. He went on, it says, "and he is a valiant man and a man of war and skilled in speech, and of good presence, and Jehovah is with him". Think of that! How wonderful! What a rich description of David. How did he get it? Not on a surfboard, by no means; not in a cinema, he did not. How did he get this? Was it at a glance? By no means. He did not get this just at one look. See how he describes David, one thing after another. Skilled in playing; that was an acquirement; "valiant man and a man of war", two things in one there. He is a valiant man, he is not afraid of anything; he is a man of war; he can fight alone, he can fight along with his brethren. That is a valiant man: he can fight alone and as a man of war he can stand shoulder to shoulder with others, he is a man. It is fine how this young man describes David, just because David had been sanctified in his heart. We should learn to do that, dear young brethren; give Jesus that place, the whole of it, the whole of your heart; let Him fill up every room. This young man had, obviously.

He says, "and skilled in speech"; he must have heard him, he must have watched him in battle, he must have heard him speak. As I said, that is not just got in a passing view: this is obtained by studious committal. He had given time to the study of David; he must have followed him about. Well, he would say, I wish I could have more of him. That is the idea, that should speak to every one.

"Skilled in speech, and of good presence", think of that! That is personality. Not only power, power in all the directions, playing, militarily, and in speech, but he has personality, he has good presence. That is one of the things most to be coveted, and I am quite sure that with the young man, as being in the presence of David, there would be developed personality, He had good presence. Sometimes you can tell that, you do not need to be told

about certain people, they come in and sit down and there is that about them that speaks for itself; that is personality. I am not speaking about mere nature, but about something that has been derived from association with Christ. Personality springs from new birth, but has to be developed, it has to grow, to expand, a great thing. And this young man knew that about David, he had been in his presence, heard him speak, maybe at the prayer meeting. He would not miss any meetings, Well, he says, I will be there tonight: David may be going to give a word at the ministry meeting: I will be there to hear him - skilled in speech you see, he would just hang on what David said. He would not miss anything because he had him sanctified in his heart, set apart, and he said, "Jehovah is with him".

Is that not fine? How wonderful that he could say that! That is not exactly any acquisition or power in any particular direction; "Jehovah is with him". Then Saul sent word to Jesse, "Send me David thy son, who is with the sheep". The young man had said nothing about that, about what he was doing, whether he was with the sheep or not. The young man did not say a word about that, but even so the young man had given an answer of the hope that was in him so expertly that Saul knew in all his morbid state that that kind of man can only be with the sheep, he cannot be found anywhere else but with the sheep. That is where David was found, with the sheep. Do you not think the young man gave a good description of David? Now suppose somebody asked you to describe Christ. Come now, suppose you were asked at school to write an essay about your Saviour, about Jesus. What could you say? Could you go over these five points? Could you give the teacher an answer in five different points? What would you say about Him? Why should that not be so? I am challenged by it. What is Christ? What is Christ to me? A wonderful, skilled musician, He can remove all the bad spirits; He can play well, He is a Man of war, He is a valiant Man, He has good speech, good presence, Jehovah is with Him. What a range of things! I think, maybe that my essay would not contain very much, but let us develop, beloved brethren, and in affection for Christ and preparedness to spend time, to give study to Him. Read the gospels; read of Him in the gospels, and increase your ability to give

an answer, to describe Him to bring out something even if it is not in the gospels. Why should you not be able to do that? For He is greater than the gospels; the gospels are only a record of what He did here. The Spirit of God can give you something that is not in the gospels. It is true, of course, that it would be in every way in keeping with the gospels; it would not be exaggerated, it would be spiritual if the Spirit of God give it to you, but He can give it to you. Write down something about Christ; write a hymn about Him. Have Him in your heart; have Him sanctified there. It is a priestly thought, set apart, to rule your affections, rule your life.

Now Abigail had the man hidden in her heart and we all want to be like that - written for the sisters in Peter, but should be true of every one of us, that He is hidden there. Now that is going to save us from a lot; I want to bring that out. You look on all the outward adornment that people go in for nowadays, but God never looks at it. There are certain things of great price in His sight. But the outward adornment of women nowadays - sometimes the sisters - God never looks at it, He has no eye for that at all, He has an eye only for Christ. That is all He looks for, He looks for Christ, what is formed there. So, how delightful to have Him hidden in our hearts, the hidden Man of the heart, a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price. Is that the way you value? Is that your sober evaluation? That would be something for us all to decide. Whether I am concerned about my own appearance or whether I am concerned about what God sees. As I said, Abigail clearly had David hidden in her heart. It is a fine thing that these two people are both concentrating their attention on David, on Christ, that is whom David represents. David represents Christ as a standard of manhood in the Old Testament that goes right through into the New, and you could not do better than sanctify Him in your heart, have Him in your heart, because God has Him in His. God has Christ in His heart. The same David is in God's heart; He said that, the psalmist said that was so; one of the times when Saul did not rise to the divine requirement Samuel said, God has found a man after His own heart. What a place He had in God's heart! Christ; oh, beloved

brethren, may He have a greater place with us! As I said, the test all the time is Christ.

Now here is Abigail, and David was on a mission, but it is not according to his character. He is moving on a line that is not in keeping with David; in this instance he is not a type of Christ, and Abigail moves towards this David, this believer we will say, this Christian, Abigail moves towards him with a man hidden in her heart. That is how we measure everything here that would be a rival to Christ - and you can be sure there are many things that are a rival to Him - but that is how you would measure anything that would come up to displace Him; you would have Him hidden in your heart and you would measure everything according to that. So she comes to David and he is on this uncharacteristic line. She very skilfully brings something in the way of food, which was initially asked by David and his young men, and it would have been legitimate to have given them that. Nabal refused it, but Abigail provided it, not for David; she did not bring all that she had provided for David. David needed something more than that. David's soul requirement was more than that. She said to him when she came, Give that to the young men, but she brought something else for David. David was on this mission, and she says "And now, my lord, as Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing Jehovah has restrained thee from coming with bloodshed" - notice that - "and from avenging thyself with thine own hand" - notice that, two things. And that is how she finished, when she says, I want David when the time comes to assume the throne when you will look back on it and you will have no regrets, you will never need to reproach yourself for what took place - "for my lord, either that thou hast shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself - these two things. Shed blood without cause or avenge himself; that is the line he was on, and that is not David, and she knows that. That is not Samuel's David; and not Abigail's David; these characteristics are not according to Abigail, she does not carry that kind of man in her heart, she has another kind of man in her heart, she has the true David in her heart, and she is working on that pattern with David.

So she says to him, Give the food to the young men, and she starts to set out her case. She says, "I pray thee, forgive the transgression of thy handmaid; for Jehovah will certainly make my lord a lasting house; because my lord fights the battles of Jehovah" - think of that! That is the true David, he fights the battles of Jehovah, but he has come to avenge himself; that is the immediate line he is on. The true line is that he fights the battles of Jehovah, and that she held as a great matter, and she says, "and evil has not been found in thee all thy days". Oh! The young man previously had studied David, he had studied him well; here is Abigail, and she has known David from his birth. Luke's gospel would give you that.

Study Christ in Luke's gospel; he gives you the very beginning - "evil has not been found in thee all thy days" - what a knowledge she had of David, "all thy days". There was not a thing that she did not know about David. How did she get it? By committal, in affection, and finding out everything about him. What a help there is; how available the Spirit of God is, beloved brethren, to make Christ known to us; to fill our hearts, fill our minds, fill our affections with Christ. I wish I knew it more. Then she says, "Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, Nabal; for as his name is, so is he: Nabal is his name, and folly is with him". Now that is one man; and then she says, "And if a man is risen up to pursue thee and to seek thy life", and that is Saul. She has a judgment about Nabal, he is a fool, she has a judgment about that. Beloved brethren, all around us in comparison with Christ, they are foolish. Then coming to Saul, he is a violent man; a foolish man and a violent man, and these are the kind of men that are all around us. How different Christ is! How different Jesus is! She had a judgment about these two men; they do not measure up to the hidden man of her heart. Oh, she is treasuring all the time what David is, and what David is before God.

Then she says, "the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with Jehovah thy God". Is that not fine? Then, "and the souls of thine enemies, them shall be slung out from the hollow of the sling". She would say, David, What is that in your hand? What is that in your hand, David? Where is your harp? That sword you have in your hand; that is not my David; my David does not have a sword

in his hand; not according to the man of my heart. Where is your sling? Where is your harp? What is that sword in your hand for? She had a wonderful picture of the true David in her heart. She remembers the sling, when he went down to the brook he took the whole measure of Goliath and his house. When that blessed Man in Luke 22 knelt down and prayed, what was He doing? He was taking the whole measure; not sin's distance - that is not Luke, He measured sin's distance, so He did - but He took the whole measure of death, that blessed Man in perfection, measured the whole extent of death. David slung one stone but he had chosen five stones; he used only one, but he chose five, why was that? She knows that.

These other four stones were kept for Goliath's four brothers. (You will read at the end of chapter 21 about these four giants being killed. It says, "and they fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants" (2 Sam 21: 22)). The four other giants all went, but David took the measure. That is one great thing of Luke 22, that blessed Man, at the mount of Olives in His agony, took the whole measure of death. These are the things that we can cherish in our hearts. What are you doing with that sword in your hand? That is not according to your true character. Beloved brethren, we can measure everything, if Christ is the true hidden Man of the heart, we can measure everything according to that. You have then proper measurement in having that; Christ filling your heart, He is hidden there. A wonderful suggestion, hidden; He is hidden, you are not exposing Him, David is here himself. "And it shall come to pass, when Jehovah shall do to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning thee" - we are going on to that, and there will be Christ in His proper place, that will be cherished when He will take up His own rights - "and shall appoint thee ruler over Israel, that this shall be no stumbling-block to thee, nor offence of heart for my lord, either that thou hast shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself". That is fine; he was there, cherished in her heart, hidden there, and nothing at all in any other sense appealed to her. How often we are tested by things that appeal to us; maybe personalities. We have been through all that kind of thing; in many crises personalities were preferred to Christ. It is always Christ, the issue

is Christ, and personalities were preferred to Christ. It is always Christ, the issue is Christ, and personalities were preferred, but not with Abigail. Whether it be the foolish man or the violent man, any kind of man apart from Him, we are able to measure him and discard him and dispose of him, refuse him, and to cherish the thought that Christ and His perfection, the true David, is the One to rule us.

Well, I commend these two things to us, beloved brethren, that we sanctify Him in our hearts, and be able to give an answer, and too, that we have Him hidden there, that no rival at all may in any sense displace Him, either in much or little. May it be so for His Name's sake.

SYDNEY AUSTRALIA

14 March 1987

PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

A.C.Craig

Mark 11: 1-11

"The Lord has need of it" - I want to say to you, dear friends, the Lord Jesus has a place for you. He needs you; He will find you a place in His system. That is about the burden of my message to you. He will find you a place in His system; He needs you. He has a claim on you, I shall show that. It is a great matter that He wants you in His system, He needs you, and He will fit you into His system.

There is nothing like it; there is not an offer or an opportunity in the whole wide world like this. Presently He is coming in and there will be these Hosannas to the son of David, "blessed be he that comes in the Lord's name" - Hosanna to the Son of David; He is coming into that. Perhaps you would like to have a part in that. But now, dear friends, the opportunity is that you might support Him in the testimony while He is still in rejection. The end of this section where we have read about these Hosannas is not the time of His rejection: it points on to the time when He will be universally acclaimed. Of course, He is acclaimed in heaven now; that is a great thing about Jesus. He is up there, He is not rejected up there. He has been

received up in glory. He is at the right hand of God, the right hand of the Father, the place of administration, and from that place He poured out the Spirit, and the Spirit is carrying on the great message of the glad tidings. And this is part of it, that the Son of God, the One who is going to come into His rights - it will not be long now, the hour is late it says, the hour being already late, the hour is late - He is coming into His rights, but at the moment He needs you, he needs me, He needs you, in view of supporting Him in the testimony during the time of His rejection. He has a place for you. I want to impress your mind with that, He has a place for you, and you dare not turn away from Him. It is not optional, there are no alternatives, the glad tidings presents no alternatives; at the trial of Jesus Pilate gave an alternative, Jesus or Barabbas, that was an alternative, but that is not the gospel. God presents no alternative, there is a consequence but no alternative; there is no alternative to Christ. He presents Christ only; God does not present two things for people's choice. He presents Jesus, and there is no option of yours except that you accept. If a King announces an edict, he does not go round the subjects and say, Will you accept it? Do you think it is right, will you accept it? An edict is an edict, and woe betide the person who would renounce it, or refuse it. God comes out in the present day in the glad tidings with one Person, Jesus, and the consequence, if you refuse Him, is that you will come into judgment - and you do not want that. The great day of the glad tidings is proceeding. The hour is late maybe, but still the opportunity is there for you to come into blessing.

Now there is the colt here; just like you, just like me. I want you to put yourself into that place. The Lord comes to these villages and sends His two disciples, and He says, "ye will find a colt tied", and it says, "And they departed, and found a colt bound to the door without at the crossway". That is it, this colt is bound at the crossway.

There comes a time, dear young friend, in your history when you find yourself at the crossway and a decision has to be made. This colt is bound at the crossway, and you have to make a decision. You see, the colt was there and had to wait until the claim was made and

some one had to loose it, some one has to loose you from what holds you. I am not saying what is holding you is wrong, but you are bound there in view of a claim being asserted, and bound in view of the Master putting in His claim; but the person to loose you this afternoon is yourself. There is no one else, you have to make the decision. You have to acknowledge the right, the claim that is made.

Now there is a colt. Think of the owner who could not have kept that colt at home without first having slain a lamb. That was laid down in Exodus 13, that to retain the firstling of an ass the man had first of all to slay a lamb. Think of that! Like the Lord Jesus, He is the Lamb of God; He is the One who has died. The foundation of every gospel preaching is the death of Christ; His blood-shedding, His resurrection, and in these things He has demonstrated and established His right. So before this man could have this colt he must slay a lamb. He said, Well, the lamb is a clean animal, the ass is not a clean animal. Is that not wonderful? The blessed sinless Lamb of God, the sinless One, has died in view of the sinful ones being saved, being delivered, being fitted for His service. He died in view of that. Oh, dear friend, do you believe in Him? He has a claim on you. He has a claim in coming into manhood; He has a claim in going into death. He gave Himself a ransom for all. You cannot escape it; there is no option. You cannot decide to refuse Him, you cannot, there is no option; He gave Himself a ransom for all. So His claim is double; coming into manhood He has a claim on everybody being Son of man; too, He has given Himself a ransom for all. God comes out on the broad basis of that great sacrifice and desires that all men should be saved. God cannot come out in any less attitude because the ransom is for all. God comes out offering pardon, liberty for all; salvation through faith in Christ. His death, as I said, is the foundation of everything, the Lamb of God. He comes before us in John's gospel as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world - that is a mighty scope, the sin of the world. You will notice that it is not the sins of the world, it is the sin of the world. That is a subject by itself. He is able for that, to clear the whole scene, and that will take His death and the great judgment of the book of

Revelation to clear the whole scene for God. There will be no sin left, He will do that. But it is significant in that gospel that so presents Him as the Lamb of God that He comes before two priests, not one; in the other gospels He comes before one high priest, but in John He comes before two high priests. What did they find? He was without spot and without blemish; they could find no fault in Him; there was no fault in Him, and two priests examined Him. Wonderful Jesus! Sinless Jesus! Spotless Jesus! He is the Lamb, in every way suitable to be that sacrifice. What did Pilate say? Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye might know that I find no fault in Him (see John 19: 4), and he would be a very shrewd lawyer sent to Palestine where was so much lawlessness and insurrection and trouble, they would not send a novice, they would send one of the best lawyers, and he could say, "Lo, I bring him out to you, that ye may know that I find in him no fault whatever" John 19: 4. Thank God! He is the spotless Jesus; He is the faultless Jesus. Ah, the supreme testimony comes from the glory - This is My beloved Son in whom I have found My delight. What a Person the Lamb of God is! God drove out the man at the beginning, He placed at the east end of the garden a cherubim and the flame of the flashing sword. Bring Abraham up to the cherubim, bring Moses up to the cherubim or David or anybody, bring them up to the cherubim - they could not present a sinless, spotless life, the life that the cherubim demanded, a holy, spotless, sinless life. Bring Jesus up to that cherubim, the cherubim would be infinitely satisfied with Jesus there before him.

Then there is the flame of the flashing sword, that involves His death, the death of Christ. Before that tree of life could be opened up, there must be the sheathing of that sword. He sheathed the sword; He met the claim of the cherubim, and too in His death He silenced and stopped the flame of the flashing sword. Wonderful Jesus!

I come now to the other gospels because John's day is like ours. He suffered that, in the daylight hours He suffered that and then darkness came, and Oh, what mind could penetrate that darkness; what tongue could tell the agonies of Christ! As there for

three hours He endured the judgment of God and He exhausted it.

In the Old Testament, as we often hear, the fire came down and consumed the sacrifice and that was the end. The fire came down at the cross of Calvary, and when the fire came and went, He was still there the sacrifice was more than the sins. Thank God! That is Jesus, the sacrifice made for the sins was more than the sins.

Wonderful Jesus! He shed His precious blood that there might be forgiveness for every one of us. What a Saviour! He has a right over you. He has a claim over you; He shed His precious blood and nobody gets forgiveness except through the blood of Christ. Every time we drink the cup we should think about that; the forgiveness of my sins through the shedding of the blood of Christ. What a Saviour He is! Then God raises Him. In this gospel He raises Himself, He is great enough for that, but does not give you exactly the atoning side; when you come to the side of testimony, you have to go to the other gospels for the atoning side, but He is there under the judgment of God, the sinless Jesus. In a day like ours, He suffered the scoffs and the ridicule, the taunts of men; it was said, He saved others, Himself He cannot save - what a taunt! In a God rendering testimony as to His acceptance of the cross of Christ, you get Christ raised by the glory of the Father: God raises Him. Why does He raise Him? Why in the gospel is the other side presented? The gospel brings out His own Person, He is able to do it Himself. But to demonstrate God's satisfaction with the work of Christ at the cross, you get the testimony that God raises Him. The resurrection, the great testimony of God's infinite satisfaction with the work of Christ, and He receives Him in glory. That is where He is tonight. So He is a glorified Saviour, a finished work, and a glorified Saviour. He has established His right, and He needs you. You are at the crossway.

Somebody has tied you, your parents tied you, you were baptised, they tied you in view of the time coming when the Saviour would assert His right and He has a place for you, He wants to fit you into His system. It is no mean place. You would not get another like this in any of the systems of the world; nothing in the whole world. There may be opportunities for you in the world but there is not anything like this. You have to loose yourself, you have to let yourself go.

You are the one to decide, you are at the crossway, that means the road leading round the house. Wonderful! Not the main street, the footnote says, not the main street. That is where the cinema is, where the football pitch is, all the opportunities that the world can give, that is the main street. This colt is tied up at the crossway not the main street. You have been tied up in view of the moment coming, and this word comes, comes from heaven, comes from Christ, comes from Jesus - "the Lord has need of it". What is that? "The Lord has need of it"; He has rights.

But all those Hosannas from Israel, and wider still those Hosannas in the highest, that time is coming. But "the hour being already late" a warning; you ought to come in and fit into the position that He has for you. What is that? A place in the testimony. How are you going to do that? When you are converted and have the Spirit, and you then ask to break bread. There is nobody, I am firmly convinced, linked with the testimony unless they begin at the Lord's supper. The Lord's supper is the start of being here in testimony for Christ. There is such a thing as the testimony, or the testimony of our Lord, and it begins with the celebration of the Lord's supper. If you want a vital link with the testimony that is how you start - "the Lord has need of it". We quoted today, 'I gave My life for thee; What hast thou done for Me?'. What does He say? This do for a calling of Me to mind. And He will fit you into place, your place, into His system. What an opening this is!

So they came and they found it, One had died for it, and claimed it, and they found as Jesus said, and here it is. They bring it along, and they put their clothes on it. Think of all this happening! Think of the interested people. What is going on? How delighted they were; they put their clothes on it, and they put Jesus on it.

Wonderful! You think of the sympathetic atmosphere there is, even in a meeting like this; everybody is sympathetic, there is not any criticism, there is not a voice raised here, not a voice that would in any way becloud the wonderful testimony to Christ. And think of the privileged place of this colt. Think of it! A young man perhaps - what a privilege he has, carrying Jesus into Jerusalem, What a favour!

There was never anything like it before. What a testimony! How would you feel if this had been you? He wants you; the colt represents you. What an occasion. Then you will have joy in your heart with what you do; loose yourself, come to Jesus, and fit into the testimony here in support of Him, that is the great idea, in support of Him moving forward in the testimony. Is that not wonderful? You want to make the bells of heaven ring! Just be a repentant sinner. It is just as simple as that, being a repentant sinner here. Heaven will rejoice; the angels will rejoice, - and divine Persons will rejoice too, dear young friend, there is not anything like it. I will tell you this, I would not give this up for ten thousand worlds; I would not, I have an opportunity now of being here in testimony for Christ during the time of His absence and rejection. Think of the time of His rejection. If I were you, I would take sides with Him tonight, and decide while at the crossway, that tonight, once and for all, I will be in support of Christ.

You cannot say unless you demonstrate it that you are in full support of Christ. This is the way of it. I would appeal to you on His behalf. He puts in His claim, He wants you, He needs you, He will find you a place, a prominent place in His system, as He will do in the glory. He will find a place for you in the glory, that goes without saying. What He wants is to fit you into a place in the testimony now. Loose yourself and come to Christ, for His Name's sake.

SYDNEY AUSTRALIA

15 March 1987

A POINT OF REFERENCE

A.C.Craig

Isaiah 7: 1-9; 36: 1,2

Some one spoke today of the vital necessity of having a point of reference, and that certainly would be of great importance in a day like ours. I shall endeavour to say something about these scriptures with that in mind. You can depend upon it that the Lord will provide something steady in a day of changing circumstances in the testimony and pressure, there would be something that we could stand by.

These two scriptures bear upon the aqueduct of the upper pool, on the highway of the fuller's field. It comes in in very trying circumstances. Ahaz was one of the cruellest kings of Judah, one of the cruellest, causing his son to pass through the fire. He did not do well at all. He had a remarkable son, Hezekiah; the second scripture refers to him. Indeed, the construction of this aqueduct and upper pool and these things might be attributed to Hezekiah; he must have created this when Ahaz his father was still on the throne, because in the closing of the record about Hezekiah in the book of Kings, it was said about him that he had that distinction of making the upper pool and aqueduct to bring the water into the city. So that in the history - he must have done it when his father was king. But Ahaz himself was a very poor king. It is like ourselves really, how we have shaped up, our part in the testimony, it has not been too much credit to us, there has been a good deal of failure, it is best to own it. It is little good trying to shield ourselves, we may as well Just acknowledge it. We have done very poorly.

Yet in spite of Ahaz and his poor showing Jehovah says I am going to look after things for my own sake. That is the idea. After all the testimony belongs to the Lord, belongs to God and He is bound to care for it; it could not be that He would let it go no matter how weak we might prove ourselves to be. The testimony will be cared for the Lord will find somebody, and He is behind it all. He promised that there would always be a lamp to David, He promised that, down

through the changing circumstances the failure of king after king, the Lord maintained that there would always be a lamp to David. Christ is too precious, and the testimony of Christ is too precious, for God to let it slip and disappear; that will not be.

So news comes to Ahaz of a conspiracy; there has been a joining up of the king of Syria and Ephraim. Think of that! An alliance, and they have come up in this alliance to overthrow Jerusalem, and the result is, "And it was told to the house of David saying, Syria is allied with Ephraim. Then his heart and the heart of his people shook". Think of that! Think of the things that might reach us, think of the confederacies and alliances; think of the tidings that might come to us, might make our hearts shake, the things that take place, things that you hear. It says, "And it was told the house of David". These are precious thoughts, Jerusalem and the house of David. In spite of the public weak conditions that Ahaz represents, there are these divine thoughts maintained at their proper level, and so his heart was shaking, as the trees of the forest are shaken with the wind; Then "Jehovah said to Isaiah, Go out to meet Ahaz, thou and thy son Shear-jashub, at the end of the aqueduct of the upper pool, on the highway of the fuller's field". That is beautiful I think, and very encouraging. It is a word to Ahaz, this weak man, but God is watching and He tells the prophet Isaiah to take his son, and his name means 'a remnant shall return'. I think that is fine. You can think of the encouragement that would come into the heart of the king and those whose hearts were shaking as the trees of the forest are shaken with the wind. Here appears in the scene Isaiah and his son alongside of him, with a name meaning 'a remnant shall return'.

That is the point, things are going through; God will see to that; the prophetic word has a result, the life-line is in that, and the son represents it. Well now, could I as a father, bring forward my son to represent something? What do I represent as a father? Or as a son, could I be alongside my father representing this great thought of a remnant shall return? How wonderful that the sons can stand alongside their father, and be a testimony to the fact that things are going through. I think that is very precious. Every one of us, young

and old, should fit into this, and be a testimony to the fact that God is maintaining the testimony and I can be a representative of what He is doing in carrying things through.

Now here are these things, the very spot to which he is directed to go and stand, the aqueduct of the upper pool. That would refer to the great matter of resource that is available in the upper pool; the pool has to be upper, it is an upper pool. That was a great heavenly reservoir of resource in the Spirit, that is what it would mean. He is here, beloved brethren, the Spirit of God is here, and it is our privilege to know that and to make way for it; the aqueduct would refer to that. The aqueduct is the means by which the water in the upper pool would be conveyed into the city. We all come into that, we all should form part of the aqueduct, the means by which the water reaches the city. These are real things, and they belong to this point of reference. It is quite clear to me that if the Lord is anywhere there are bound to be certain marks that would distinguish His presence. People say, Well, where is the Lord? That is a common question, and in a sense a fair question, Where is the Lord? There are bound to be certain marks that would distinguish where He is. I believe what we are in ourselves, a clear way for the Spirit at the aqueduct, a clear way for Him in selfjudgment, that we might form part of the aqueduct, conveying water into the city. No city can exist without water. You notice that all the great cities of the world are built on rivers; that is just logic, and no city can exist without water, no position can exist without it. These two things would refer to the Spirit Himself, the upper pool, and then our spiritual capacity, the aqueduct.

Then too, there is the highway of the fuller's field, a suggestive thing, a highway. We know what the highway is, it is not any byway, it is the highway where things are clear and distinct; where the will of God is pursued; where His mind is pursued. Moses said that to Edom, we will keep to the king's highway; we will not transgress into your territory, we will keep to the king's highway. That is a great matter, beloved brethren. We know the highways; we have not made the highways, we cannot be accused of that, brethren's ideas,

brethren's rules, it is not that at all, the highway has been marked out for us by principles; that is the highway. It is not a question of our own thoughts, of making our own rules and regulations. As Moses might have said, we will keep to the principles. That is most important. Then there is the fuller's field, the highway of the fuller's field. That is the great side of cleansing that goes on. We want these things, dear brethren. There is purging in the highway, that is the word used in 2 Timothy, purge himself. But then there is the cleansing that is going on too, that is not so drastic as the purging, that is more the water side. We need the water for cleansing: blood and water came out of the side of Jesus. We need the water to keep ourselves in a proper state. That is the point of reference, dear brethren, and that is where Isaiah and his son are standing, and that is what is going to meet this challenge on the part of this alliance.

The thing then is to make way for these thoughts, encouraged by the fact that the prophetic word has a result. Well, thank God for it in the days in which we are, that the prophetic ministry has a result.

Now the second scripture is the same position challenged again in Hezekiah's day. It was in his father's day, now it is in Hezekiah's day. We must not think that the matter being met one time will be the end of it. No, he will try again, and that is what comes up in the second scripture. I need not say much about it, except to draw attention to the fact that it is the act of Sennacherib king of Assyria to come up against all the fortified cities of Judah.

"And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem, to king Hezekiah, with a strong force. And he stood by the aqueduct of the upper pool, on the highway of the fuller's field".

You can depend upon it, beloved brethren, that you have to make a stand, and if a stand is well established - and that is what happens in the first scripture, the ground was clearly established and divinely supported, divinely accredited. I would not be on any ground today that is not divinely accredited, it is founded on divine principles - you may depend upon it, that it will be challenged. It will be. He stood by the aqueduct, that is, the very challenge brought the saints into suffering. We need not think that we can go through unscathed,

there will be the attack. We have to accept that in the word of Christ Himself; when the assembly will be assaulted and assailed, but then the enemy will not prevail, that remains. God Himself is committed to that.

I would encourage our hearts by having this point of reference. Something that divine Persons are in themselves, and we want to be assured of, that divine Persons are in it, and we want to find ourselves in it, and be encouraged by these thoughts, even though there may be alliance as in the first scripture, and the challenge in the second scripture, the position remains. I do not use the word position in any technical sense, or any sectarian sense, but the position that the Spirit of God is linked with, and He has been linked with that since He came in at Pentecost; He has never deviated; He has never been diverted; He has been held up maybe, but He is going on in His own force and that would be what is represented here. The great point of reference, and we all can have that that we might remain steady, and in the meantime to come out in testimony to what the thing is, humility, lowliness of mind a certain vitality of life, that Shear-jashub might represent. May God bless the word.

SYDNEY AUSTRALIA

16 March 1987

THE CHILDREN'S FORGIVENESS

It has been found that in every European language the words which express forgiveness and pardon all imply an absolute gift. One wonderful feature of God's pardon is therefore that it is *free*: our faith needs to bring nothing in payment. It is not any goodness or good

works in us that make God willing to forgive us, neither does the evil make Him unwilling to do so where there is repentance. How majestic it is for Him to say, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake". Love is the motive and the atoning work of Jesus is the abiding basis.

Another wonder is that forgiveness is *full*. Wherever God pardons He pardons all - every single sin however dark or deep, though He does work upon our consciences so that we should have the same judgment of them as He has. The scripture reads that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin". The fact that some of our responsible sins remain in our minds and even become more and more hateful to us does not imply that they are still on the conscience and unforgiven. God will "abundantly pardon" and the simpler faith is, the more fully will this be understood and enjoyed.

Forgiveness is also *final*, a free gift that cannot be recalled. For it to be maintained does not depend upon the believer and there cannot be the blotting out of sins today and their being written down again tomorrow. The witness to it in our souls and its enjoyment may vary but God gives to the obedient believer the free gift of the Holy Spirit who keeps our own spirits bright in the appreciation of all His blessings. We may say with king Hezekiah, "thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back". Another passage of scripture rejoices that God casts sins "into the depths of the sea". This is a most comforting word picture for our souls. Many amazing deep-sea salvage works have been successfully carried out in our time but no one, not even the devil himself, can ever raise the sins of a pardoned sinner! Sadly, however, at the end of time, the sea will give up for judgment the unrepentant dead which are in it. But "blessed they whose lawlessnesses have been forgiven". Have yours?

J.C.Evershed