



the
Golden
Candlestick

**THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS, THE
MAN-CHILD, AND ANTICHRIST**

Part 1

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THE FUNCTION OF THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS

I have been very strongly exercised in regard to the message which lies spiritually at the heart of the first book of Samuel. When we come to an Old Testament book such as this one, we must remind ourselves that it is not just a matter of history or a record of things which happened long ago, but rather in our coming to principles wrapped up in that history, principles which abide for all time and are as important and essential in this age as in any age. We see that the Word of God is always up-to-date, living, and filled with a challenge. I am quite sure we shall see how true that is as we go on. But let me repeat, it is important to remind ourselves of that, and that we are not just reading or studying Old Testament history. We are being confronted by living and abiding principles which God Himself has established in relation to His purpose which runs from eternity to eternity.

The inclusive thing is the testimony of Jesus, and again it is not bound to the New Testament, to say nothing of being bound to the last book of the New Testament. It is true that the phrase occurs more often in the book of the Revelation than anywhere in the Scriptures, but the significance of this is, that at the end the consummate issue is the testimony of Jesus. There you have reached the consummation of everything that has been going on through the ages, and it becomes the one clear, definite, positive issue. The testimony of Jesus runs from the beginning of the Word of God to the end. It is everywhere in the Old Testament as it is in the New, and in a very emphatic way here in this first book of Samuel.

In Revelation 19:10 we read, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." In Acts 3:24 we read: "All the prophets from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days." The point is that the passage in Acts would begin the prophetic office with Samuel, and make Samuel the first of the prophets. Since the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, then the testimony of Jesus is with Samuel,

and that is the inclusive matter in this divine revelation.

In the book of Samuel the testimony is represented by the ark called the Ark of the Testimony. The deepest truth of the ark being the testimony is God manifest in the flesh. It is God who has come in the flesh, and the ultimate meaning in God having come is God against the gods, all of which are gathered up into one god, the god of this world. Now that comes out in a very definite way in this book, as it does in other parts of the Scripture. But I want you to recognize the innermost thing in the testimony of Jesus: God manifest in the flesh for redemption and much more, but supremely the establishment of God over all gods, over everything that opposes and calls itself God. Presently we shall see the testimony as represented in the ark in the presence of David, and we know the issue here, but for the moment I mention the fact that the deepest and innermost truth of the testimony of Jesus is God revealed, God present and God active in relation to His eternal purpose. Emmanuel, God with us.

This first book of Samuel gathers around the testimony in three phases first, Samuel; second, Saul; third, David. A fourth is an ever-present element, the Philistines. They seem to me to form the background of the rest. *In Samuel and David we have that which is bound up with the preserving and the advancing of the testimony to its final establishment in the heavenly kingdom and temple of God.* The issue of this book finds the ark in the temple in Jerusalem. That is the end of David's life, and it is that which gives the life of David its significance: the ark at rest, the kingdom come, the temple with the testimony established in it and Solomon bringing in the reign of peace. It is with that end in view that both Samuel and David are brought in. On the other hand, in Saul and the Philistines we have that which is inimical to the testimony, which is the principle of Antichrist.

We need to make a basic statement, that in Samuel and David we have that which in principle is meant by the man-child. I wonder how many of you have as yet been really gripped and impressed by the meaning of that title, the Man-child. You have heard it often, but perhaps it has not conveyed very much to you. Let me say at once that in that name we have something which is right at the heart of God's purpose through the ages. It is around that that the warfare has gone on, and will intensify to the end. Perhaps to get the significance of the man-child, we ought to read one or two passages. We will look first at familiar words in Psalm 2:7-9: "I will tell of the decree: The Lord said unto Me, Thou art My son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the nations for

Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." And then Rev. 2:26-27: "And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of My Father", the last clause of which takes us back to Psalm 2, "As I have received of My Father". Psalm 2 refers to the Lord Jesus, as the book of Acts makes perfectly clear when it says, "God ... raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee" (Acts 13:33).

He received of the Father this authority over the nations, to rule them with a rod of iron and break them in shivers as a potter's vessel. Now, this is passed on by Him to others who are brought in, called overcomers — "He that overcomes". The same words are used in connection with the Son. Then you pass to Rev. 12:5: "She was delivered of a son, a man-child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron ... And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down ... And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb ..." (Rev. 12:5-11). Now you notice the same words, "a man-child", (plural); "they overcame because of the blood of the Lamb." Ephesians 6 says that the warfare is still with principalities and powers in the heavenlies, therefore Revelation 12:8-9 must be subsequent to Ephesians. That is, it must be prophecy and not history. History is that which has taken place; prophecy is that which is to come. The book of the Revelation is a book of *prophecy, not history*. This man-child is by a great many — I do not want to call into question their accuracy, or their Bible knowledge — said to relate to the Lord Jesus, as Israel being the mother, and Jesus being the man-child. The warfare, if we are still in Ephesians, is in the heavens. Satan is not yet cast down. This has yet to be. The point for the moment is that the man-child is bound up with that, the man-child is connected with the dethronement, the overthrowing, of another spiritual order which has arisen to destroy the testimony of Jesus. So the man-child is very closely bound up with the testimony of Jesus in its final issue, in its consummation.

God's eternal purpose concerning His Son, as we have often heard, is peculiarly related to man and to man according to God's mind, man being a very great factor in God's purpose. Man is not only something which

God has created, some order of creation called man, but in God's thought man is a very special order of creation, intended to be in a vital union with God Himself, sharing God's own life and doing God's own work, or being instrumental in God's hands for the doing of His work. Man as a whole has broken down, missed the way, and failed to be what God intended him to be. He has ceased to be in the line of God's purpose in his present natural state. But then God has called out of the nations a people in His Son to be His own people. In the old dispensation they are typified by Israel, taken out from among the nations and constituting the Lord's own people, brought into a living relationship with Himself to be the instrument for the fulfillment of His purposes. But that people as a whole has not gone on in the way of the purpose of God. They have fallen far short of His purpose.

The Lord's people today — and I am speaking quite generally now — are missing the mark, they are not in that living union and fellowship with Him, moving on in progressive spiritual development, and being His means of accomplishing His everlasting purposes. They are not. If that were so, then why over the last century or more has there been such a tremendous uprising of a movement which is for the deepening of the spiritual life of God's people? Is not that the result of a discerned weakness and failure which is fatal, a worldwide convention movement, endless meetings for the improvement of the spiritual life of the Lord's people, not the normal course of things, but something extra, something special, an effort which has become demanded? One feature of that great movement is not always because there is a direct perception of spiritual weakness, failure and declension, but a deduced failure because of certain symptoms which are lack of conversions, lack of workers, shortage of funds, and a general lack of zeal and wholeheartedness. These are the serious symptoms and because in the undertaking of great enterprises and the perception of work needing to be done there are all these deficiencies, the deduction is that the spiritual life is wrong and so we must move to rectify that spiritual condition in order to deal with them. And so today the movement goes on and grows. The tragedy is that it makes little difference. It has to grow, to be increased, to be built up more and more. Instead of lessening the need, the thing itself as a means is being developed to tremendous dimensions. As a rule, when you give medicine for a complaint, you expect to have to give less and less medicine because the complaint is yielding. If you have to give more and more and ever more medicine, it is rather a bad sign. Now, you see the point. My own conviction is that the wrong thing is being done. Symptoms, rather than the basic trouble, are being dealt

with. We will see all this illustrated when we come to Israel and the Philistines.

At the moment God has called out a people for Himself and that people has failed to go right on in full growth to the accomplishment of His purposes. God, viewing the whole as unsatisfactory and as disappointing and failing in so large a degree, does not abandon nor surrender His original intention, but again and again comes back to it, and concentrates His main and supreme attention upon the full thing. While He may not be casting off His people or abandoning them in their state, (He will not do that; they are His people) from the inside of His people He will move to have that in the midst of them which is according to His own mind, and that is the man-child. It is because His testimony is at stake, and His people on the whole (see the first book of Samuel) are not in a place of spiritual power. The testimony is not functioning among them; not because of the Lord, but because of themselves. In light of their relationship to the Lord and because of their low spiritual condition, God moves to have that which will bring His testimony on to its final rest and fulness and establishment, and that is the man-child represented by Samuel and David. There is a step before we reach them, and that step is seen in Hannah.

At the beginning of the first chapter of the first book of Samuel we see Hannah's natural condition. Always remember that is a condition which is not accidental, but determined by God when God is going to do a special thing. Sarah was in the same condition with Isaac in view, a condition which is one of impossibility, speaking naturally. In the earlier verses of this chapter, you see what I mean. Apparently it went on year after year; that is the statement. There was something unyielding which brought Hannah to despair, to an end of everything outside of God, so that God alone was her hope. This position was not accepted as final with God in view. So you find her in bitterness and anguish of soul.

Then we observe a strange thing, (and to me the most beautiful thing in the whole story), something so contrary to nature. Here is a woman having suffered all these years by reason of her privation, by reason of the persecution from the other wife of her husband who had plenty of children, at last having her life-long desire satisfied, and then by a vow and an act of her own to hasten the thing, yielding up that gift to the Lord. It was her own voluntary act. She is not clinging; she is not holding him as long as she can. To me that suggests not only the faithful fulfillment of a vow, but a deep concern for the Lord's interests. In principle it is recognizing

that the Lord needed a man-child for His testimony's sake, and that man-child was in her spirit, in her heart, for the Lord, before ever the man-child was an actuality. A man-child! We may truly say that with Hannah there was a real exercise of soul in relation to the Lord's interests because the dearest thing in her life was dedicated to those very interests. This is not natural. No, having desired so long and suffered so much, you would expect that when the man-child was born, she would hold onto him and laugh at her rival and rejoice in her vindication, and never see the child out of her sight, lest again she should be childless. That is human nature, and who would blame her? But no, just the opposite occurred. Before he is born she vows him to God and when he is born, she weans him as soon as she can that God may have him. She takes him to the temple and leaves him there and goes to see him every year.

But there is more than that. Read Hannah's prayer and song in Chapter 2. There is no sorrow, grief or pity for herself, but a great burst of praise. It is an exulting in the Lord, but it contains much more than that. Verse 10 says, "They that strive with the Lord shall be broken to pieces ... And He will give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed." Where does that lead you? It takes you away from a little, sentimental, domestic affair. It gets you right into the ultimate purpose of God. It brings you into Psalm 2; it brings you over into Revelation 19. The king exalted! The enemies broken to shivers like a potter's vessel! The full vision of the Anointed in power is before us when Samuel is born. That is Hannah. So Samuel comes in.

A child of soul travail — that is the man-child always. He is a truly spiritual child, not a child of nature; a work of God, an act of God, the result of an intervention of God; he comes from the hand of God. Samuel was a child who knows the Lord and is seen in such striking contrast to Eli and what Eli represents; Eli, with his dim sight, dull hearing and feeble movement. That is the spiritual state of the Lord's people as gathered up in the representative priest. There was no open vision in those days; no hearing of what God was saying, dullness of ear; and no steady strong movement in the direction of God's revealed will, but rather feebleness. So it was with all the Lord's people, but Samuel stands out in such striking contrast; he was quick to hear, although for the moment he did not grasp the significance or know who he heard. The point is the first time God spoke, Samuel heard, and he heard again, and he heard again. He had an ear to hear. He heard the Lord, he was quick to respond, quick of action, movement, in relation to the speaking of God. That is the

man-child, always like that. These are essential features of the man-child, that which is going to be bound up with God's full purpose concerning His Son. That which is going to be instrumental in relation to the testimony of Jesus in its consummation must be quick to hear what the Spirit says, quick to move in relation to what the Spirit says, must from childhood know the Lord, and must stand in living contrast to the state of spiritual declension which is all around.

So Samuel becomes a link between that declension and the ultimate fullness. This first book of Samuel is the book of transition, the passing from one state to another, and Samuel is the link in the transition between the two, the spiritually bad one and the one that God is going to have ultimately in David and Samuel. Samuel is the link. What is that link? What is the chief element in that link? What is it that bridges the gap, that effects the transition? One word — you know it so well in connection with Samuel — it is prayer. That is the functioning principle of the man-child.

Look again at Psalm 99:6: "... Samuel among them that call upon His name". Or a still more striking passage in Jeremiah 15:1: "Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind would not be towards this people." "Though Moses and Samuel" — and Moses had, more than once, effected a change in the attitude and procedure of God. Having stood in the breach, speaking humanly, he had caused God to repent of his decisions and determined course, and Samuel is classed with Moses as one of the two great representative intercessors. It means this, that if any man could make God change His mind, it would be Moses or Samuel. If any man's prayers could prevail with God, it would be Moses or Samuel. That is the point. So Samuel is brought up into this place of tremendous power with God by prayer. How true it is as you read through this first book which goes by his name. How the people on one occasion cried to him, and said, Cease not to pray to the Lord for us! That is the deepest factor and element in the man-child ministry, the power of intercession, of prayer. It is out of that that all the rest comes.

In a sense the testimony of Jesus rests upon the prevailing prayer of those who stand in this spiritual position represented by Samuel. Is that not a challenge? There is no mere historic narrative about that. That comes home to us. For those of us who are really burdened concerning the testimony of Jesus, who have seen something — little it may be, but something — of the significance of the man-child, the necessity of the man-child to God, our hearts ache that there is so little real prayer after this kind, that prayer can be so ordinary, that there is so little of this soul

travail of Hannah to produce and to bring in the man-child, that there is so little of this ministry of intercession, as in Samuel, concerning the testimony. Will you take this to heart?

Samuel has his reward. He had much heartbreak, many disappointments and sorrows, but one thing was his reward, and it was a full reward and it is a very beautiful thing to see. David came through Samuel. The relationship between Samuel and David is a very beautiful thing. How David, the young man, in the difficulties and trials of the way, fled to Samuel at Ramah, how the Lord spoke to Samuel about David, that secret fellowship — and Samuel himself was going a lonely way with no spiritual satisfaction or fellowship — and David was going a lonely way of persecution as one cast out. These two had a secret fellowship, a secret understanding, and David was Samuel's reward. Samuel saw the meaning of his life as being bound up with David and the fulfillment of his divinely appointed destiny. This life of intercession may be a lonely way, a hard way, a way of trial. It may not appear to be accomplishing much, but as surely as David came in with Samuel, and as surely as a remnant returned resultant from Daniel's prayer ministry in Babylon, so surely will the man-child come from such prayer born in the heart of the Lord's people. They are one, the man-child and the prayer ministry, not two things. Prayer is the principle which produces the man-child, prayer which costs. It is wrung from the soul in distress concerning the things of God as they are.

Ask the Lord to put that distress into your soul, to lay upon your heart that burden. We recognize that we are right in the presence of these things today. They are not all thousands of years gone by; they are now. This is that time, for spiritual principles are timeless; they are the same now as ever they were.

THE CIRCUMCISED AND UNCIRCUMCISED LINE OF THINGS

We go on from our last meditation and we come to David. Little can be said at this point about David. There must be much left over until other things have been considered, but we will just say a word or two about him on the way.

First of all, as we remarked earlier, David was raised up of God, prepared of God, anointed of God, for the specific object of bringing the testimony at last to its resting-place as established in the Kingdom and in the House of God. David came in through Samuel as the fruit of Samuel's prayer or the fruit of Samuel's life with God, and we must not regard these as two things; they are only two aspects of one thing. Samuel is not one instrument and David another; they are one instrument, on one side of which there is this tremendous prayer fellowship with God, and on the other side the working out of God's purpose, the fighting through of God's interests, so that, in principle, both Samuel and David are the man-child in representation. It was a day when God's full thought was not to be found in expression. David came in in relation to the true and full thought of God, in a day of the false and imperfect expression of God's mind.

There is one thing that is basic to the value and significance of David's instrumentality, and that is a history with God in secret. What comes out in a later time shows that away with the sheep, away from the public eye, away in the secret place with God alone, David was learning by going through experiences which brought him into a very valuable knowledge of the Lord. This was behind the scenes, and any instrument that is going to relate in any particular way to the interests of God will require to have a life which is away from the public eye in the secret place with God, where deep lasting lessons are being learned. Too much of our Christian life is public to be vital. The most vital elements in our Christian life are those which come out of the hidden, secret history with God in

testing and trial. David was hidden, David was circumcised in heart, and those are very important factors in such a ministry as he was raised up to fulfill. He is the only man in the Bible who is said to have been a man after God's own heart. Perhaps we should be wrong in saying that he was the only man who was after God's own heart. But I want to underline that because of that very important matter to which we have referred in our previous meditation, he was a man after God's own heart. You notice that that is said twice in the Scripture about him. You have it in 1 Samuel 13:14 and in Acts 13:22.

God's reactions are ever by way of bringing in a man, and in saying that, I do not mean bringing in an individual, the bringing in of a member of the masculine order. That is not the point, but man according to God's heart. God has a mind about man, He has His own idea and conception and thought concerning man. There is in the mind of God a special kind of man who expresses divine thoughts. God has ever reacted in bringing in such a man, a man according to God's mind. That man is God's instrument of reaction to a wrong state of things.

Saul was a man. God did not bring in Saul. He was not God's mind. David was a man after God's heart, and if you take the principle, you can trace it right the way through. That is true of the Lord Jesus Himself, the Man Christ Jesus, of whom it may be said more than of any other creature who has ever been, "after God's own heart"; "in whom is My delight"; "in whom I am well-pleased". That is true of God's 'type' instruments in the old dispensation, whether it be an individual or whether it be a people, for Israel at the beginning of its history was brought in as God's Son. God spoke of Israel as "My son" — "let My son go." It was the collective in the singular, a nation son, a collective man, God's instrument among the nations by which He was going to react to the conditions in the world. And when you come to the antitype of that, you find it in Ephesians 2:15, in the familiar words, "that He might create in Himself of the two one new man". That is the church, God's reaction again, or reactionary instrument.

Passing on to Ephesians 4:24, we have these words, "Put on the new man". That phrase and the word there are very interesting, because there we have the peculiar word for something which never was before. Sometimes you have the word "new" connected with man as in Colossians, which just signifies something fresh, refreshed, something that has been but has been renewed. But here you have the ultimate word which means something that never was before, the new man. In the church you have something that never was before, something brought in by God as alto-

gether different from anything else, and therein is the secret of its power and its usefulness, and there you get to the heart of things in the first book of Samuel. It is what we have often called the altogether 'otherness' of that which is instrumental in God's hands in the fulfilling of His purpose and reaching His end and bringing His testimony to consummation. There is a sense in which both Samuel and David were altogether other than the rest, apart from them, a sense in which they were unique. It is quite patent with Samuel by an act of God. When you look into the matter of the choice of David, you have someone who was not counted among men. He was left out, brought in from the outside, not reckoned among those who counted; he was something apart.

Well now, before we can do very much more with David, we have to go over to Saul and the Philistines. I have a feeling that this will get us nearer to the Lord's object in this present time than perhaps anything else.

Saul and the Philistines

I confess to have had considerable difficulty with Saul. Samuel had some difficulty and David also, and I think the Lord did as well, but I do not mean that. Saul represents a problem, does he not? You see, he came in on the ground of the definite rejection of God being their King. He was never God's directive will. The people chose him in rebellion against God, and they were told, very frankly, that it was sin; they were doing wrong, and they were warned. All that and much more on that side, and yet God takes account of him, directs Samuel to him in a remarkable way and tells Samuel to anoint him. Samuel anoints him and kisses him; the Spirit of the Lord comes upon Saul; he prophesies; the blessing of the Lord rests upon him at times for victory in battle. What a problem! What a contradiction! Two things which it is exceedingly difficult to reconcile. However, there is an explanation. Let us quietly work our way to that explanation and analyze Saul.

First of all, Saul represents that which comes into power when there is a weak spiritual condition among the Lord's people. We do not need a very profound or comprehensive grasp of history to recognize that such a thing has often happened. When the spiritual level has been low, life has been weak and shallow, when there has been declension and departure, things have been brought in which have taken the place of control and government, but were never intended by God. We can put our finger upon many such things. We shall touch some presently. Saul was man's idea,

not God's; man's choice, not God's. Saul answered to every natural desire and inclination of man's mind. In stature he was head and shoulders above everyone else in Israel. That is a natural ideal; something big, imposing, presentable in itself; something to glory in, to take account of, to be seen, that has status. Evidently Saul came from a family where things were affluent; his father had servants and asses; he had status. That is a natural and fleshly ideal. Saul answered to the natural man in every way.

Then Saul was *ostensibly* concerned for the testimony. Outwardly it would appear that he was devoted to the interests of the Lord. Perhaps in his way, being what he was, he was devoted to the Lord's testimony, wanting to fight the Lord's battles, to serve the Lord's interests, and so we say *ostensibly*, and perhaps, as far as he knew his own heart, being what it was, sincerely. He was concerned about the testimony.

Then God, in sovereignty, recognized him. Remember there is always a great difference between what God sovereignly does and what He would do if He had His own way. God can do a lot of things in sovereignty, because He is God. That is, He can overrule things sovereignly. He can use the devil himself sovereignly. He can take up anything and sovereignly make it serve His ends. But what God can do because He is sovereign Lord over all, is altogether different from what He would choose to do if He had His full way. So Saul was recognized by God and given every facility, given the anointing, blessed and used, all under the sovereignty of God.

God is working very deeply. If it were not a wrong word to use of God, I would say very subtly. There is another side to this altogether. Both by reason of that divine sovereign recognition, blessing, facilitating and using, and apart from it, Saul was being tested. There are few things more testing than the blessing of God. There are few things more calculated to find us out than divine blessing. More men have broken down and eventually been set aside and rejected by the blessing of God than by anything else. Oh, how dangerous is blessing when it is public blessing! It finds us out. God was letting Saul have much, but with this object always in mind — to prove him, and eventually to drag out the truth, to bring it to the light for the people to see their mistake, and in order to show what He, the Lord, must have in contrast to this. That is why we cannot go on with David yet. We have got to get Saul dealt with and out of the way before we can see God's full thought, His own full will as over against His sovereign will. He was tested on the two points that are always the crucial points in God's dealings with anyone, faith and obedience. The way in

which God executes the faith test is always along the line of the patience test and Saul could not be patient; he could not trust enough to wait. It was on that point that his collapse and crash came; his faith would not allow him to wait; he acted in disobedience and self-will. He was tested there.

Now you see what stands in contrast to the man-child, the divinely conceived instrument. To understand David you must go over to Saul; to understand Saul you must pass over to the Philistines.

The Philistines

The Philistines represent power, glory and the vaunting of the uncircumcised flesh in association with what is of God. They are in the land, and they have given their name to the land, for Palestine is only Philistia, the land of the Philistines. They have given their name to that which belongs to God, the inheritance of God's people. They are associating their name with what is God's, and you find them all the time impinging upon that which is of God, the testimony, the ark. The uncircumcised flesh is associated with what is of God, seeking power and glory and vaunting itself in the presence of and over the things of the Lord, to bring the things of the Lord to serve its own glory. That is the uncircumcised flesh.

The Philistines were always seeking to probe and to possess the secret of spiritual power without the secret of spiritual power — death to self. Remember Samson. What is the secret of his power? What is the secret of his strength? They said, Let us get hold of it. What is the secret of Israel's ascendancy? It is the ark; let us get hold of it. The opposite is to be possessed of the secret of power without coming by God's way of power — death to self, death to the flesh, the circumcision of Christ, the putting away of the whole body of the flesh. That death, that circumcision, is the secret of spiritual power in the testimony. The Philistines sought to have the power, the secret, without the circumcision. They are always called the uncircumcised Philistines.

But there is something more than that! The ultimate object of the Philistines was to bring glory to their own god, and so to exult over the Lord. You know how that was so on at least two outstanding occasions. In the case of Samson, we read in Judges 16:23, "And the lords of the Philistines gathered them together to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice; for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand." Then in the instance in the book which is before us, 1 Samuel 5:2, "The Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it into the

house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.” The issue of all Philistine principles and elements is glory to the god of this world; it is taking glory from God and bringing it to self.

Exactly the opposite is the issue and effect of the man-child. Its purpose is to shame the other god and bring him down in utter abasement to the exaltation of God’s Man, God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see the end in view, which is the principle of Antichrist, sitting in the temple of God, being worshipped as God, exalting and opposing himself against all that is called God. And so we are not surprised to find that this Philistine idea is headed up into one representative, a monstrosity named Goliath. This one, inclusive representation of all the Philistine ideas and principles, comes out and challenges the Lord in His people, to take the power, the glory, the majesty and the honor from the Lord. Now let us return to Saul in order to understand him a little better.

The deepest secret in Saul’s life, and in his failure and rejection, is a link-in principle with the Philistines. I know Saul outwardly fought against the Philistines. I know that outwardly Saul and the Philistines were enemies. But that is just the cleverness of Satan — that he so often has gained the advantage and won in the fight because he has subtly introduced his own principle somewhere into and among the Lord’s own people, yet they do not recognize it, they are not alive to it. Well, we have plenty of data for that in the Word of God and in this very connection.

Let us think back to Samson. What was Samson’s undoing? Well, we say the Philistines. Yes, but the Philistines had absolutely no power over Samson until a Philistine element got inside Samson — Delilah. A political emissary of the Philistines offered a great reward to discover Samson’s secret and betray it, and Samson, because of an infatuation, opened himself to the Philistines, and when he was inwardly opened to the Philistines, he was helpless *outwardly* against them. Oh, what Paul calls the wiles of the devil! Unconscious of it no doubt, the same thing holds true in the case of Saul.

You find in Saul Philistine elements, elements of uncircumcised flesh. Again and again they show themselves. When he and David came back from a victorious battle with the Philistines, the women came out and began to sing: “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.” And Saul said, Do you hear what they sing? They credit me with thousands, but they credit David with ten thousands, and from that day Saul had his eye on David to kill him. What is the crucified attitude in such a situation? What is an uncircumcised heart attitude in such a

situation? Well, praise the Lord for victory — it does not matter by whom. It is not a matter of who gets the glory among us; the glory is for the Lord. Oh, but Saul was jealous for himself, his own glory, his own reputation; there is a Philistine element, uncircumcised flesh, and so we could go on analyzing this. It is an unpleasant business, but it is very important. It is right up-to-date. Saul's final undoing was because the Philistines had their advantage by reason of their own elements being in Saul's own heart.

On one occasion Mr. Spurgeon represented a young man taking up Ephesians 6 and putting on the whole armour of God: the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, shoes, shield and sword, and then coming out with all his enthusiasm and saying, Now, where is the devil? Let me find the devil; I will account for the devil! And Mr. Spurgeon said, Look out, young man, he is inside the armour! Somewhere in Saul there was an uncircumcised heart, and therefore he could not be a man of faith, for the flesh knows nothing of faith. He could not be a man of patience, for the flesh knows nothing of patience. He was not a man of utterness for God; personal elements and interests loomed too large — envy, pride, reputation. Oh, right up to the end, that last terrible appeal to Samuel, and Samuel had pronounced his final rejection — “Yet honor me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people”! (1 Sam. 15:30).

Now you are saying, What does all this mean? What has this to do with us? Oh, if we could but see it, we would see it has a lot to do with us! It has a great deal to do with the recovering and preserving and the carrying forward of the testimony of Jesus in fulness. This cannot take place where there are Philistine elements. All such elements have to be stripped off of the Lord's people if they are going to come to the place of the Lord's thought for them. And this will certainly be true, carried out to a finesse, in the case of the man-child, the overcomer, that representative company approximating wholly to God's thought in relation to His purpose concerning His Son. It is very clear in the case of the Lord Jesus, that this was utterly true. You can find no Philistine elements in Him. “The prince of this world cometh, and he hath nothing in Me” (John 14:30). Nothing, no foothold; no element of his own upon which he can encamp; nothing in Me that corresponds to his mind to give him an advantage. To be an instrument in fellowship with God's Son for the consummating of His testimony, there has to be a very deep correspondence with Him in that way — no Philistine element, an utterly circumcised heart.

But, we ask, what is it that corresponds to Saul today? I am only going to speak briefly of two things. I am very reluctant to do so. It is

going to make trouble I know, but it is perfectly clear, and we had better face it, and the sooner all the people of God face it, the better. During our previous meditation, speaking about the great movement of the past hundred years in relation to the deepening of the spiritual life, we said that, rather than growing less because the spiritual life was being improved by it, the movement was growing and increasing, which seems to indicate that the remedy is not curing the trouble. More and more meetings are being held and movements organized for the deepening of the spiritual life, and my remark was that it seems to me very clear that it is not just a better state, a higher level of spiritual life that is needed; it is coming into line with God's ultimate purpose and His full purpose. Therefore the key to the situation is a knowledge of what God is really after in fulness and how He will reach His end.

So what is it that corresponds to Saul today? Firstly, the governing system of man-made and man-constituted organized Christianity. That corresponds to Saul. It came in when the spiritual level dropped, when spiritual declension set in, after the first high tide of apostolic ministry, Holy Spirit days. There came a point in time at which things dropped out of that heavenly, spiritual, utterly-of-God realm of things, and came down onto the lower earth-level. The door was opened wide for all kinds of things to come in or to be brought in as alternative to what had been, as made necessary because the other was no longer there. So Christianity became an organized thing with men occupying positions of importance. The system of Christianity today is not the heavenly, Holy Spirit system of the New Testament. It is man-constituted, man-run, man-governed; it is all *man*. I am speaking of the whole, that is in general terms. It is an imitation of the world. When the people got down to that low spiritual level, they said, Make us a king like unto the nations! And this is the world's way and means of doing business. If you have brains, status, business acumen and money, and an interest in the Kingdom of God, you are the people we want to run this thing. This is exactly the level on which the world does its business. Natural resources, natural ability and that kind of thing, is in the place of government today. Oh, the tragedy of it, that it works out in exactly the same way as things worked out between Saul and David. That which God is after, that which represents God's thought, is persecuted, driven out and given no place, regarded with jealousy and suspicion as a thing to be got rid of and destroyed. That is Saul and David, and it is like this today. Yes, like Saul, outwardly interested in the things of God, sincerely so in its own realm, and yet lacking a circumcised heart

which cuts off the whole body of flesh and sets the world entirely aside in all its elements. It is something not wholly of the Spirit of God, and therefore it will give no place to God's full thought. It is an obstruction to what God is after. These are strong words. Before God can ever get His full thought among His people, He has got to set aside a great deal that holds the governing place, the place of official control among His people — the Saul line of things.

Test it. What did we say about Saul? Well, bigness. How does the situation today in organized Christianity stand up to that test? Is not bigness the dominating idea? Something that you can see, something that you can present, something that you can glory in and boast about, something that is handsome and fine from the world's standpoint, something great. Organized Christianity has no place for anything that is small and mean and without honor among men. (Oh, what a revelation of David, when you come to consider David!) You see, the ruling idea is bigness, 'imposingness'. That is a Philistine idea. After all, that is a Goliath principle, and as such is set over against the testimony of the Lord. Well, that is a terrible thing to say, but not only is a higher spiritual level needed or what we may call the deepening of the spiritual life, but a change of principle. That is what is needed. Well, that corresponds to Saul.

There is another thing which corresponds to Saul today. It is those who take up the testimony with natural acumen and energy of the soul, which is very easy to do. You may have a brain that is very quick to grasp, to see through. Almost before the thing is said, you have got it, you could finish the sentence yourself. Or, as it is presented, you find tremendous response to it, perhaps because of the presentation of it, the ideas that it raises in the mind, the visions it conjures up, and you respond to the testimony. In that enthusiasm, acumen, and energy of the soul, you take up the testimony of the Lord, the testimony in truth and the testimony in service, and you go away with it. You have got it! You talk about it, you work upon it and with it, you reproduce, you retail it, perhaps from a notebook. You mean it. Perhaps you are honest and sincere according to who you are in the realm in which you live, but this thing is *for* the Lord and not *by* the Lord. The result is that you produce something, and you have some people who have come into the testimony in mind, in emotion, in action, but never through death, burial and resurrection and the deep circumcision of the heart, and there are a lot like that. What is going to happen? Oh, they are going to be tested right in the realm of those very things. God is going to test and find out and manifest. The tragedy of that

situation is the tragedy of Saul. It will not stand up to the test; it cannot go through to the end; it will be found out. Oh, the testing of faith! If the thing is not part of us through and through, we will not stand. We find we shall come to the place where we say, it is something we have taken on, it is not ourselves in very deed! Faith will be tested. The result will be that the work, the edifice that we have built, will crash and we shall die in battle, with shame. Remember that if Satan cannot get us to fight deliberately and definitely on his side against the testimony, he will seek to get us to betray the testimony by having something of himself inside of us. You understand that. That is what Saul did.

Well, how necessary it is then for us to recognize that this is all in contrast to that which God is seeking to have. This stands in such strong contrast with David. We are not going on further with David now, but you can see that the instrument, the man-child instrument and vessel, has to be circumcised in heart, that is, all the body of the flesh has to be dealt with and put aside in the death of Christ. It must be. We must not use truth, revelation, or the knowledge that has been brought to us in ministry for our own gratification, to give us influence with and power over others, or to make our ministry something. There must be nothing like that. We must not be out to build up some *thing* that can be taken account of by man. We must be absolutely willing to go on with God in secret, in hiddenness, in rejection, for His testimony's sake. That is the man-child.

Now, my closing word is this. David was not allowed to put his hand on Saul. On one occasion, David cut off the skirt of Saul's garment when he was asleep. He had Saul at his mercy, but spared his life, and just took that bit of his garment to show what he could have done. It says, "And David's heart smote him" because he lifted up his hand against Saul. And David said, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto ... the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth my hand against him". David was not allowed to turn his hand against Saul, and as with David, so with us. If we are going to be related to God for His full purpose concerning the testimony of Jesus, we are not allowed to put our hand upon these people or these things which are the Lord's people and which the Lord has used and blessed. Let me put that in this way. I may believe in the depths of my heart that organized Christianity and the present system of things is a Philistine idea, and is not in the mind of God, but I am not allowed of the Lord to make it my business to go out to smash that up. God has used it; God has blessed it — sovereignly, and He is doing it. That is not my business. I am not allowed to turn upon children of God who have only a

mental apprehension of things of greater fulness. It is not my business to turn my hand upon them and begin to slay or destroy them. No, they are God's children.

But as with David, so with us. We may turn the full strength of our divinely given power and testimony against the Philistine principle. You see the difference. Oh, when it comes to the Philistines themselves and Goliath — no compromise! The thing itself, the principle, the spiritual thing in its nakedness, must go to the sword. Those caught in it who are, nevertheless, the Lord's people are not the object of our slaying, not at all. We must not touch them. I do not regard it as my commission to denounce the Lord's people in that realm of things, neither do I regard it as my business to begin to try and break up and bring to an end the system of things as such. It is my business to expose the spiritual principles which lead to the undoing and the destruction of the testimony of Jesus. That is, ours is a spiritual ministry or, with a final word which I think is consummate, our wrestling is not with flesh and blood, be it systems or people, but it is with principalities and powers, the world-rulers of this darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God. I wonder if you can see that? Now you see how necessary it is to say that. Our business is a constructive spiritual one which itself will expose what is false, and I trust lead to the deliverance of many of the Lord's people therefrom.

The testimony of Jesus is that which governs everything. It is a man-child, a vessel brought into a peculiar spiritual condition, position and relationship with God for His testimony's sake. Antichrist is a principle at work; later it will manifest itself in some abnormal form of expression, a monstrosity. But it has worked through the ages as a principle, subtly insinuating itself, undermining, seeking to set aside the glory of God in Jesus Christ.

The Lord give us understanding and bring His Word home to our own hearts with practical application and challenge!

A NEW INSTRUMENT FOR THE TESTIMONY'S SAKE

Reading: 1 Samuel 16:1, 6-13; 17:4,11,17,31; 1 Cor. 1:26-30.

We have come now to a more serious consideration of David and the significance of David as an instrument and God's reaction to the course taken by His people in their spiritual weakness. Saul has failed and his setting aside definitely has been pronounced. David is brought in by God in relation to His full thought, His whole thought, regarding the testimony of Jesus. But there are one or two things which should be noticed.

Firstly, that which has been rejected by God and quite definitely so, may go on for some considerable time holding the ground, but it is doomed. On the other hand, that which is God's full thought may be driven out, excluded and persecuted by the false thing for a long time, but it is destined to govern. Nothing can ultimately defeat that. But the history of that duration of government on the part of that which is not according to God's mind and the history of that rejection of what God has appointed, is full of revelation and wonderful meaning. Something of that meaning will occupy us at this time, for in the meantime it becomes very necessary for us to know what it is that is in God's eye, and what are its characteristics, that which David really represents.

To begin with, there will be nothing about this thing which God Himself has chosen, has appointed, has secured that will be a response to man's expectation. Ask the Lord to enable you to grasp these things that we are saying, for we are dealing with principles that do not change from age to age; they are the same in all ages. While this book of Samuel is a book of history, within the history there are principles which are not merely history. They are principles which govern the testimony of Jesus right to the end.

Let me repeat. In the instrumentality which God Himself chooses and constitutes in relation to His testimony, the testimony of Jesus in fulness,

there will be nothing which is an immediate response to man's expectation. All the principles of men as to fitness or qualification or justification will be upset and perhaps be scandalized. In this matter before us, the contrast with human choice will be most marked and manifest. That is, David as over against all his brethren, the other sons of Jesse, but even more as over against Saul, man's choice. You can follow the working out of that principle all the way through the Word of God. A little later in the life of David himself, you will find that another effort is made, still on the principle of Antichrist, to drive out that which God had brought in — David. This time it will be by Absalom, and the secret of Absalom's strength and influence is that he is so commendable as a man to the natural taste, desire and preference of the people. He is so beautiful; he looks so fine. He immediately secures that response which is based upon what a man is according to human standards, and there you have the principle of Antichrist at work.

As with David, so it will always be that the values of God's instrumentalities chosen for His deepest purposes, so far as the instrument is concerned, are heart values, that is, spiritual values. Even a godly man like Samuel will need a special dispensation of grace to deliver him from human judgment in this matter. "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him." That was taking the man at his face value. The Lord had to check that impulse. It is again a very dangerous thing. "Look not on his countenance ... the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." The values of God's instruments are always heart values. They are spiritual values. When the Lord sees a man after His own heart, a man that satisfies His own heart, what does the Lord look for in the heart? Well, in the case of David the thing is quite patent, for a basic and governing factor in David's life was his absolute dependence upon the Lord. That is only one way of saying that he gave the Lord the unconditional and unlimited place, so that everything could be of the Lord. "That no flesh should glory before God. But of Him are ye...". That is the principle, perfect dependence upon the Lord, and that is the thing which so clearly marks David. It is to have that dependence perfected in a people that the Lord works and takes such pains, because it means so much to Him. Where He has that inwrought, there He has an instrument which is going to serve His ends in the fullest way, and be of the most vital value to the testimony of Jesus. That kind of dependence upon God is produced through the line of testing and secret experiences, as we see in the case of David.

One or two things may be noted here. David was chosen and anointed, but immediately upon the choosing and anointing, he went back to the ordinary sphere of life to prove the power of the anointing. I believe that the incidents of the lion and the bear about which David told Saul occurred after the anointing, the choosing. David went back to his sheep. He was now, in the virtue of the anointing, the king; as truly before God as ever he would be. In the mind and will of God that was his position secured beyond any question or reservation, but he immediately goes back to the sheep, and in that ordinary sphere of life, proved God, proved the anointing, while being tested. A king, the greatest of the kings of Israel, qualified, tested, proved, by looking after a few sheep, and meeting lions and bears and wild beasts. You expect something more dignified for a king's qualification. No, this is the ordinary sphere, the everyday order, things common to anybody in that sphere of life. No special kind of testing and qualifying, but proving God right there where he had been all along. I want the young people to get hold of that. There is all the peril of the other Philistine line of things. The idea that to be the Lord's servant means that you must leave at once the ordinary sphere of life and come out in public and take up things in a public way. You prove your anointing back there where no one else knows anything about it, no one sees. It is between you and the Lord. You are proving God in secret, in the ordinary difficulties of your ordinary life and occupation.

Note the weapons used by David against Goliath were those proved in ordinary life. There was no mere official or professional equipment for David. Saul put his suit of armour on him. What did he say? "I have not proved them." That is saying in another way, I want that which I have proved, that is the only thing for me! Oh, to be clad in a suit of Saul's armour makes you a professional soldier at once; it puts you into an official position. Oh, that is a Philistine snare! Goliath comes out in that way, but he cannot meet Goliath on that ground. No, that which has been proved by trust in the Lord, in the ordinary and the secret sphere of daily life, that which we know wrought in our secret experience with God, is that which will be effectual against the greatest giant, the whole Philistine system of trust in the flesh. There is no virtue in office. A position into which we may be placed carries no power with it that is spiritual power. If we do not have spiritual virtue and power before we get the position, God have mercy upon us, especially in this matter of dealing with that which is opposing the testimony of Jesus. You want something more than office, more than position; you need to have a background knowledge of the Lord

proved, you need to have learned how to meet the enemy in secret before ever you can meet him in public. That which David is to encounter is wholly carnal on the face of it, but it is also energized by spiritual evil. Back of Goliath is Dagon, back of the Philistines is Dagon, and this thing which on the face of it is all carnal, has spiritual energies behind it. Flesh and blood — yes, but energized by spiritual forces. David cannot just meet the thing on the face of it. He must be sufficient for what is energizing behind. That is, he must have the secret of a superior power over the spiritual energy that is maintaining this carnal system which is opposing the Lord's testimony all the time. It is spiritual power, and we never come to spiritual power by public displays. We come to spiritual power by the secret proving of God. The destruction of the carnal must be by a superior spiritual position, and that means that there must be no carnal element about God's instruments.

We have turned to the letter to the Corinthians, and it seems to me that that letter is parallel to what we have in this first book of Samuel. Organized Christianity today is an expansion of the first letter to the Corinthians. Sectarianism, worldly-mindedness among the Lord's people; that is First Corinthians. The natural man handling the things of God; that is First Corinthians. Disorder, or no order at all among the Lord's people, and much more that is in that letter, is, speaking generally, the state of things in Christendom today; and that Philistine element, as we have seen in our previous meditation, has got in by way of a Saul, a ruling thing among the Lord's people, to hold the office, have the official position. Although it is outwardly and ostensibly against the world, against the Philistines, right there at its very heart the Philistines have a footing because of the carnality which is represented by that which governs, by Saul, and that is why the people in the days of Saul could not overthrow the Philistines.

In order that the Lord may change the situation, get through to the better position, the fuller expression of His thought, He must have an instrument that is altogether other than both the Philistines and Saul, and that is an instrument which is wholly separated from the flesh, the life of nature, and knows only its resources in God, and we find that in David. David was despised of men, but chosen of God. "Ye see your calling, brethren ... not many wise (according to the world), not many mighty, not many noble..." . "God has chosen the foolish ... the weak ... the despised ... things which are not...". That is the story of David and Goliath — again very clearly something despised.

If this message is the Lord's message to us, as it would be to all His people, I am quite sure that He is seeking for Himself a vessel in this time of declension, when that which is not true to His thought holds the ground, when the system in Christendom is so contrary to what God intended, when there has come in something which God did not bring in. If this message is to you, you will often be oppressed as you look at yourself and those round about you, because of the apparent futility and impossibility of such an instrument accomplishing such a work. You will often be inclined to say, Oh, that the Lord would bring people of greater stature into the testimony! Yes, that is the temptation, and it will often be almost a matter of offence, a stumbling stone, that it is so much otherwise. "Not many ..." — almost I would go further and say, Not *any* wise, not any mighty, not any noble — at any rate, not many; but plenty of foolish, weak, despised people, things that are not.

Now you may ask, what is the hope? What is the prospect? Is it not vain to contemplate such a tremendous thing as the changing of the situation, the bringing through of that transition to God's fuller thought? Remember what we have said, that this whole movement sprang out of Samuel, whose significance is that of prayer. You may not, in a great public way, go out to assail this Goliath. You may never figure very largely in the public ministry, but remember David was the fruit of Samuel's intercession, and Samuel is as much responsible and accountable for all that followed in the life of David as David was himself. Even David, as we have seen, secretly resorted to Samuel in the day when his heart was overwhelmed, and Samuel became his support, and it is just there that the prevailing may be done. There may be the public side, that ministry which is more outward, but how it depends upon that tremendous prayer backing of the Samuel instrument! I want to say to you that that is the ministry which counts behind everything, and that can be carried out by anyone. You do not need special qualifications for prayer; any child of God, however simple and weak, can know the Holy Spirit for a ministry of intercession. If only you would be content with that! If only you would recognize that, when all other ministries or forms of ministry have been taken into account, that is the one that goes to the root of everything — a prayer ministry! Then you would have the secret of the man-child, the secret of that which prevails for the testimony of Jesus. Do remember it is there.

To be continued