

The Silver Trumpets of Redemption

Reading: Num. 10:1-10; Rom. 10:6-15; 1 Cor. 14:7-8.

I want to say a very simple word, a word which to many of you may so and a very elementary word, based upon these two silver trumpets about which we have read in the book of Numbers. In the first place I want to speak to Christians, and then a word to any who may not lay claim to being such.

I think it is perfectly clear from our bringing together of the New Testament passages, and those words in the Old Testament, that the Lord has something to say and He wants His people to know what He has to say. The Lord has given voice, and is giving voice, to His mind, for that is the first and most simple meaning of trumpets. There is a great deal about trumpets in the Bible. Indeed, the word 'trumpet' occurs no fewer than a hundred times in the Bible, and that is impressive, because it does mean that the Bible is God's trumpet, or that God has something to say, to announce, to make known, by means of His Word and that God is a speaking God who makes His mind known to people. That is where we begin, and this has very definite and immediate application to those of us who are His people, and, being such, are to be His servants.

Only Redeemed People Can Speak for God

Let us look at the two trumpets, then. First of all, we note the material of which they are made. They are said to be two silver trumpets, and silver in the Word of God, in the symbolism of the Old Testament, is a type or symbol of redemption. Silver speaks to us of redemption, so that the trumpets are the means of proclaiming, redemption making known the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

But it also says that no one can be a trumpet who is not redeemed. The trumpets *are* silver, they are the embodiment of the spiritual truth of redemption - and only redeemed people can speak for God, only redeemed people can convey God's message; only redeemed people can voice the mind of God. That is very elementary, but it is not universally recognized or acknowledged. Before we can speak or proclaim the message of redemption, we have got to know redemption in the very constitution of our being, we have got to be redemption in life, in experience. We have got to be silver.

The Message Wrought Out in Experience

Then it says, although all versions do not make this clear, "*of beaten work*". Now you know what that means. The thing is hammered out, the thing is wrought into the very substance. It means that there is some very real and deep and thoroughgoing experience in the matter of which we have to speak. The Lord does not just commit to us something to say. The Lord works the thing into us before He allows us to say it if we are really going to be His messengers. He takes pains to see that the pattern of the thing is hammered into our very being. We have got to know what redemption means in a deep way, and that sometimes does mean there is a good deal of cutting into us by the hammer and chisel. It is beaten work, it is wrought work, it is something that is very real. These things according to God's mind are to characterize everyone who would be a messenger of God to others. The thing has got to be wrought into you, and may I say that, while it is not conveyed here, this matter is a continuous process. We shall only really express God, convey God to others, be able to speak of God and for God, be able to give to others God's thoughts and God's mind in so far as the thing is wrought into us. If you have only got a little bit and you have only let the Lord take you so far, that is just the measure of your witness, of your testimony, of your real ability to convey what God wants conveyed. We have got to let God do this thing in us very thoroughly, and I do feel that, elementary as it is, it is a very important thing to say. There may be Christians who

have really come to the Lord, who can say that they are saved, they have given their hearts to the Lord, however you might put it. There is that initial transaction with the Lord by which you have come to be His. That has taken place, but you have only gone just so far, and there are still things which have not come into the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The redemption has only gone so far. It has not touched some things in your life. You still have some associations, you still have some pleasures, some interests, you still have some idols of some kind. You are Christians, yes, but you have only gone just so far and now you have not gone any further, and you are not going any further. You have just stopped, and all that great fulness that God has for you is suspended because you have gone so far, but you are not letting the Lord work the fulness of redemption into your life, because redemption is a very comprehensive thing.

Redemption does not begin and end with our just being saved from judgment and hell and being assured of heaven, forgiveness of our sins, and becoming the Lord's. That is a mere fragment, a large fragment an important and valuable fragment, but after all in the light of all the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, it is only a very little thing, for there is so much more. And this redemption has got to apply to and touch everything until we are wholly on the ground of redemption, and everything is on that ground.

Take an illustration from the life of Israel. You remember, when they were redeemed by God from their bondage in Egypt, the Lord so thoroughly worked, so drastically worked, that He was not going to have, as it is put, the hoof of one ox left in Egypt. Yes, He applied this matter of redemption to the last hoof of the last animal to leave Egypt. His idea is a very thoroughgoing redemption with nothing left outside. It has got to cover all that we are and all that we have, and it was because that generation of Israelites did not allow the principle to be wrought into them, the principle which God had established in that objective way, that they did not come into the full purpose of redemption and occupy the great land of promise.

Now that is all illustration. It was true in history, but it is illustrative of the spiritual life, that this thing has got to be beaten work, wrought into us thoroughly and exhaustively, if we are going to come into all the good of redemption, so that while we can, in a certain sense, say, 'I am redeemed', we have got to be able to say, 'I am continually being redeemed; I am going on in redemption.'

Now, the point is this, that only so far as the thing is wrought into us as the Lord's people do we have a testimony. We cannot go in testimony speaking to others beyond that which is true in our own being. So it is all of beaten work, it is inwrought.

A Positive Witness

Then, simply again, the trumpets are two. "*Make two trumpets of silver*". What is the meaning of that? Why two? Well, again, many of you Bible students can answer that question as well as I can, but for our purpose let us note this, that in the Bible a legal position exists that the evidence of one person was never accepted. It necessitated, required, demanded, the corroboration of a second reliable witness before anything was accepted or established. The law said, "*At the mouth of two witnesses ... shall every word be established*" (2 Cor. 13:1), and for our purpose that means this, that our testimony, our witness, what we have to give and what we give is something confirmed and established and corroborated. There is something which has adequate evidence for it, because two is always the number of adequate witness, or adequate testimony. It is the irreducible minimum of God. As many more as you like, but no less than two. God requires this, that the thing is substantiated, the thing is borne out, the thing stands upon this double basis. Now you will call to mind other things, the silver sockets of the boards of the tabernacle, for instance, two of them for every board. God will have everything established, confirmed, ratified, sure, without any weakness or question about it whatsoever. If you and I are going to convey any testimony, any ministry, anything of

God, it has got to be something that is absolutely sure, absolutely true, no theory, no guesswork, no 'I think, my idea is so-and-so', but, 'I know. This thing is something which is altogether beyond a question with me'.

That is taken up by the apostle Paul in the passage which we read about the trumpet not giving an uncertain sound. "*If the trumpet give an uncertain voice, who shall prepare himself for war?*" If the instrument is indefinite, who knows what it is all about? And I am rather afraid that a good deal is like that, people really do not know what it is all about, people are not quite sure about these Christians, where they are. They are not quite sure that the Christians themselves know where they are. There is far too much indefiniteness, uncertainty, about many Christians, and the point I want to make is this, as the Lord's people and as the Lord's witnesses, we have got to be very positive and very sure. We have got to be of that kind that no one is left in any doubt about this matter at all; it is confirmed, it is established, and that they know that we know what we are talking about. How necessary that is in the Christian life, that there should be nothing weak and uncertain or indefinite about us. It should all be as a confirmed and established matter. So it is two. It is attested, it is confirmed.

A Calling Together

Now the purpose of these trumpets was the calling of an assembly, as we read. This is something that brings the Lord's people together, that establishes the relatedness, the oneness, the fellowship, the solidity, of the Lord's people. This is a unifying thing. The influence and effect of our lives must not be to scatter, disintegrate or divide. It must be uniting in Christ. It is a great ministry to bring the Lord's people together. I can hear in the Psalm the trumpets sounding: "*Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice*" (Psa. 50:5). Gather them together. Let us be careful that the influence of our life and our ministry is not the opposite of consolidation, of strengthening relationships, of bringing together; to change the metaphor, of healing of breaches. 'Gather the people together'.

An Ordering of Life and Movement

Again, the ordering of the life and the movement of the Lord's people. There is a very great need indeed of that kind of ministry that helps people to know which way to go, what they ought to do, gives them real direction for their lives and makes known to them what the purpose of God is. Now, it is very interesting to notice that these two silver trumpets come next to the Shekinah cloud, which came to rest upon the tabernacle. These things go together. The cloud, the pillar of cloud and the fire over the tabernacle was given for the guidance of the people of God and the guidance that was given was always, when the people were rightly adjusted to the Lord, onwards and nearer to God's great end, the type of the land, the land of promise, with all its spiritual fulness and wealth and beauty. That was God's objective. We as Christians know so well that the utter purpose of God is right on to the fulness of Christ, and the trumpets, therefore, proclaim first of all great purpose.

The Proclaiming of a Great Purpose

We cannot sound that note too strongly and too clearly. We are not just called to be Christians to escape judgment and somehow get to heaven. We are called with a great divine purpose which God formulated before this world was. The Lord's people need to know, they need to have it made known to them, that there is a great purpose governing their being called into the fellowship of God's Son, and they need to be told not only of the purpose, but of God's way of realizing it. They need that, that they do not wander or stray indefinitely without assurance of where they are or what it all means and what it is all about and what it is all unto. Oh, for a ministry coming through you and through me which will deliver these multitudes of the Lord's people from both their ignorance and

their uncertainty. You may not know it, but there are many all over the world like that. They really do not know where they are. They do not know what it is all about. They know they have been saved, but beyond that they know little more. They know that they are going to heaven one day, but that is all they have got, but oh, the greatness of the purpose and object, the goal, to which we have been called in Christ. The trumpets were two, governing the Lord's people in relation to the ultimate fulness that God had for them.

A Calling to War

Of course, there were other purposes, as we have seen such as the sounding of the trumpets for war. I am not sure that this note does not need to be made very clear among us, that we really are in a warfare. Keep that in mind. Perhaps you do not need to be reminded of it. But sometimes we are a little surprised that there is so much conflict, and sometimes we wonder whether it is all right and that things have not gone wrong, that there is so much conflict. Don't make any mistake about it, we are in a battle which will go on to the end, and we need to be rallied continually in this matter by the voice of the trumpets.

The Distinctiveness of Testimony

One other word before I pass to others — the distinctiveness and certainty of testimony. There is a very real need for distinctiveness of testimony. I am not now speaking about your testimony to salvation or to Christ as Savior. The Lord's people are so scattered and so uncertain. There is not the cohesion of a certain definite knowledge of the Lord, of distinctive testimony in the midst of the Lord's people. I think you realize, as you take the world as a whole and Christianity in this world, while there are so many voices, as Paul says, there are so many voices in the world, and while he goes on to say, "*and not one of them is without signification*", it does seem that the band has got out of tune a bit! They may all be blowing their own little tune, but there is not very much harmony about it. We are not all saying the same thing and one thing; we are not all of the one mind and one spirit and one heart. There is a good deal of discord and conflict and grating on the nerves by what is given out today. The Lord would have a quite clear and distinct testimony in the midst of His people. The world needs this, that the Church should speak with one voice, with authority. The Lord's people should know where they are, what God wants, so that there should be no diffuseness and certainly no contradiction. Oh, it is necessary that this should be characteristic of us as the Lord's people, and let us seek, without compromising and certainly without forfeiting anything that is essential, to find the point where we are absolute one with an affirmative note.

Well, so much to the Christians about the two silver trumpets.

A Call to Salvation

I want to get over to the others, those who cannot be included and would not include themselves in the Israel of God, among the Lord's people, who do not really know what it means to be the Lord's in a living way. Now, some of those things that Paul said about sounds and the trumpet apply to such people. There is that great passage in Romans 10 about not being able to hear unless someone sounded the trumpet, that is, unless somebody told them, certainly not being able to believe if they had not heard. Maybe some of you here tonight are in that position where you are not yet what are called 'believers' in that New Testament sense that you belong to the Lord's people, and the trumpet has something to say to you. Paul says about this sounding forth of the Gospel: "*Their sound went out into all the earth*". That is something for the whole world, that is something for you. There is a message for you. Let us face this exceedingly solemn fact that the trumpet is sounding, that is, that God is speaking, God is in the world making known His mind for you, for all men. God is not silent, God has not stopped speaking. He

is speaking very loudly and widely today. Some of us are wondering whether God is not speaking as He is today for the last time. We believe that the Lord Jesus is coming back, we believe that His coming is drawing near, we believe that the end of this dispensation can almost be seen. We in this country are not so alive and sensitive to this as they are in some places. I was saying earlier what I discovered over on the other side of America. Only a week or two ago I was right up and down that west side of the United States; large numbers of houses were up for sale and to let, and as I went round the neighbourhood seeing all these boards up, I asked my friend with whom I was staying, Why, in a day of such shortage, here in these salubrious parts, are people wanting to leave their houses? 'Oh', he said, 'you know everybody over here is living as on the edge of a volcano. They are scared of these atomic bombs that they believe are coming any time, and they want to get right away from populated areas. They think they are safer out in the desert, anywhere but here'. They are living like that, and you feel the tension, and everybody speaks about it. I do not know that it is not justified to some measure. At any rate, they know over there all about it.

I went out into the city of Los Angeles in a car one day, and I found my eyes beginning to get so painful that I could hardly keep them open, and my throat becoming so dry, I could not understand it. It created difficulty for speaking, and I explained this to my friend. 'Ah', he said, 'you know they exploded the bomb yesterday, it is blowing up here, just a little dust'. Well now, I am not trying to scare you into anything, but we think the end is not far off, and men's hearts are failing them for fear. You find it out there and the Scripture says it. "*Men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the earth*" (Luke 21:26). That Scripture is verily being fulfilled, and it is said to be a sign of the last time. Supposing that the time is getting short towards the end of this dispensation, people are getting nervy about it, may it not be because of the great sovereignty of God? We cannot see any other explanation of what is happening. The man who figures in the campaign there in Glasgow and here in London last year himself says that there is nothing to account for it but God. He says, 'I am no preacher', and everybody who listens knows that. If you are looking for a wonderful sermon, you do not find it there. If you are looking for a great discourse on theology, you do not find it there. It is of the very simplest preaching, and you wonder how that can have the effect that it is having. Certainly it is not beating the intellect, and really it is not beating the emotions, for everybody says this is not a great emotional thing. God is sovereignly doing something surely, and how widely flung this is! We have only heard this evening of it being talked about in Nairobi by ungodly people. They have heard the reports of what is going on. Is God sounding the trumpet for the last time? Is He sovereignly letting it be known that redemption is in Christ Jesus for all men? I put it in the form of a question, but if the question is permissible, it is a very solemn thing that you, dear friends, if you are not in Christ, are hearing the trumpet sound announced that God has provided redemption for you in His Son Jesus Christ. You can never before God, in time or eternity, say, 'I never knew why I never heard; I never had a chance.' No, God has equally sovereignly, perhaps, brought you to hear as He has sovereignly ordained that it should be said. That is something to think about. It is a very serious thing to have heard the Gospel of the grace of God, to have been told of this wonderful redemption. We sang, "Believe it, O sinner, believe it, receive the glad message, 'tis true". It is true. God is calling you, He is calling you to Himself, just as those trumpets called the people to Moses, to gather together unto him. A greater than Moses is here. The Lord Jesus, by this sounding forth of the message, is calling you to Himself. Jesus is tenderly, but loudly and definitely, calling today, and the word is, "*Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts*" (Heb. 3:7-8). It is a call of love, a call of mercy, a call of entreaty.

A Call of Warning

But it is also a call of warning. You have no power to say, 'I will hear the trumpet tomorrow'. It may not blow tomorrow. *You* have not got the control of the trumpet; God has. God's Holy Spirit is the breath by which the trumpet sounds, and you cannot order

the Holy Spirit to speak to you another time. He says, "Today if you will hear". 'Today, I guarantee nothing after today, I call today'. Yes, it is love, it is mercy, but it is solemn warning. There seems to be two tones mingling in this sound. It is a joyful sound. How blessed, how precious, is the Gospel sound — and Gospel means 'good news'. There is good news sounding forth. God has, by His Son's death, His Son's bearing of our sin and our judgment, has provided redemption. That is good news for you. He has provided. That is the joyful sound. The Psalmist speaks of the joyful sound, and they are blessed who hear the joyful sound (Psa. 89:15).

And yet, mingled with the joyful sound, there is a solemn sound. The Bible speaks of solemn festivities, the mingling of joy and solemnity, because of the tremendous issues that are involved. And you would not have me do other than tell you that it is a solemn and a very terrible thing to close your heart and your ears to God's speaking. There is a lot involved. Oh, everything is involved! I remember so well many years ago, I was visiting in the house of a friend, and there came to that house that evening a man, and we got talking after the evening meal, and he said, 'Somehow or other, I felt I had got to come over here tonight'. He had come right across from the other side of the city. 'I don't know why, I can't explain it at all'. So I said, 'Oh, well, probably as we talk on, we may discover why', and I began to talk to him. It was not very long before we discovered why. God had some interest in that life, and when we arrived at that, he said, 'I believe you are right, I believe that is the very thing for which I have been brought here tonight'. 'Well', I said, 'what about it?' 'Oh', he said, 'I must go away and think about it'. 'Well', I said, 'don't think too long, arrive at a conclusion as quickly as you can.' He went away, and I did not hear anything of him for little while. Strangely enough, I was in that same home some few weeks afterwards, and the same man arrived at the same time. He looked a little sheepish when he found I was there again. I said, 'Well, what about that matter? It came up and you said you believed God had brought you right across the city for that thing that night.' 'Oh', he said, 'Yes, I thought about it, and then I went to consult someone about it, and asked them' (a minister, by the way, whom he happened to know). 'And', he said, 'Oh, don't you worry about those things, don't you become fanatical, it is all right.' I said, 'Oh, so it is this man or God? You said that you believed God had brought you, had spoken to you and raised an issue, and then you allow a man to contradict God and say that it does not matter what God says.' Well, again he came to the point and said, 'I cannot get away from it, I believe that that is what God wants.' But he would not give in, he would not have that transaction, and he went away again. It was some months before I saw him, but the third time this thing happened. Still he did not respond to God, and then sometime afterwards I happened to be right on the other side of the city, and was walking along a certain road. I saw a man coming towards me on a cycle, and he got within recognition distance of me and saw who it was, wheeled round on his cycle and went for dear life, and I heard later that that man had gone headlong into sin, and lost all hope; he had fallen deeply into a lost condition. Don't run that risk. If God speaks, if God brings you where the trumpet is sounding, it is a very big thing that is at stake, whether you respond or whether you say, 'Well, I will think about it', or 'I must ask so-and-so about it, I must see what they say', or any other kind of prevarication. No. The Lord says, 'Today if ye will hear His voice, while it is today'. Everything may hang upon that. Now, I am not trying to be emotional, I am not trying to be sensational, but I am saying that the trumpet sounds, you have heard it. The Spirit of God is speaking to you, and telling you what God wants where you are concerned. He wants you for Himself as one of His redeemed ones in the enjoyment of that redemption. It is for you to say, 'Yes, I hear, and I respond, I come, I answer the call.' May God so influence you that you will do that.