

“THE TWO SILVER TRUMPETS.”

NUMBERS x. 1-10.

ARE YOU SOUNDING THEM IN THEIR
APPOINTED PLACE AND SEASON?

“MAKE thee two trumpets of silver, of a whole piece shalt thou make them, that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps.” Such was Jehovah’s command to His servant Moses, when He led the redeemed nation through the wilderness. It is a word whose moral signification is applicable to every Christian, though first spoken to Moses. Are we, then, obeying it? “for *to obey* is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

By means of these silver trumpets God provided a testimony from Israel in the wilderness, and also afterwards in the land. (Ps. lxxx. 3-5.) By their instrumentality He gathered together the assembly at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation (ver. 3), or He called the princes, heads of the thousands of Israel, to Him (ver. 4), or He started, by means of these trumpets, His people again in their wilderness journey (vers. 5, 6), or He proclaimed their approach to Him “in the days of their gladness, and in their solemn days.” Also, over their burnt-offerings and over the sacrifices of their peace-offerings, they must sound the blast from the silver trumpets. (Ver. 10.) All these were for the wilderness, but there was a testimony also to go forth in the land to which they were going. When they went to war against the enemy that oppressed them there, the silver trumpets are again to be sounded. (Ver. 9.) It was a sound going out from the redeemed people, and those only in

nearness to God were to sound. This charge was committed to the priests, the sons of Aaron (ver. 8), and it was to be an ordinance *for ever* throughout their generations. Observe then, obedience sounded the trumpets, dependence, as a necessity, followed, and all was a testimony. Obedience, dependence, and thus testimony were to characterise the people of God. And mark the importance Jehovah Himself attaches to it. It is never to be forgotten. "They shall be to you for an ordinance *for ever* throughout your generations."

"Now all these things happened unto them for (*τυποι*) ensamples, and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come." (1 Cor. x. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.) *All* believers are priests (1 Pet. ii. 9; Rev. i. 6); *all* ought to be habitually dwelling in nearness of communion with God our Father (1 John i. 3); *all*, therefore, ought to be sounding these silver trumpets in their full antitypical meaning. Does not our God record the minute details of this institution of the silver trumpets, connecting them, too, with all the onward history of His beloved people, in order to convey *to-day* suitable and needed instruction to us? Let the word we have quoted from 1 Corinthians x. be our sufficient answer to the question. I believe that that word declares most clearly that He does.

Testimony, *adequate testimony*, according to the mind of God, must be twofold—that of two witnesses at least. At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, was the execution of judgment to fall on the sinner in Israel, but never on the testimony of one alone. (See Deut. xvii. 6.) This principle is likewise maintained in the New Testament, and thus is brought down to our own day. Against an elder an accusation is not to be received, save on the testimony of two or three witnesses. (See 1 Tim. v. 19.) And the ample and sufficient testimony to us to-day is a further witness of this principle. It is *threefold*, that is, it is

more than enough. "There are three that bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood." (See 1 John v. 8.)

Testimony, then, must at least be that of two. The trumpets were two, the places in which they were sounded were two, in the wilderness and in the land. The trumpet blast in the wilderness was manward. It was from Israel, it was *for* Israel, and it was for the ear of any one in the nations around who desired to cast in his lot with God's people. In the wilderness it proclaimed that a stranger and pilgrim people was there who owned one God. "Jehovah our Elohim is *one* Jehovah." (Deut. vi. 4.) This was Israel's testimony, in contrast to the multitudes of the false gods owned by the nations. And this people was not at rest, but going through the wilderness in testimony, going to His rest, to which He Himself, in the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, was guiding them, and though *for* God's people the trumpet sounded, yet it might attract from the nations around, and provision was made for this result. (Ex. xii. 48.) (See Num. ix. 14; x. 32; and compare Josh. ii. 9; vi. 25, &c.) Egypt, their land of bondage, "was glad at their departing," yet the God of grace would have them be kind to the stranger, and consider him, for it was what they had been. (Deut. x. 19.)

Notice first the sound in the wilderness was for the ear of man. Secondly, the trumpet sounded in the land was not sounded to attract the ear of man, though man *might* hear it. No, it was the cry of His redeemed, who, seeking in conflict to maintain *His* ground against the intrusion and oppression of the enemy, found that the energy and might of His arm could alone meet them in their hour of need. It was His people's cry to *Him*. Nor was the appeal to Him made in vain. He declared that when they sounded it, they should be remembered before the Lord their God, and should be *saved from their enemies*. (See ver. 9.) This, then, is most important, for the

people are sustained, and are conquerors, notwithstanding every effort put forth by the enemy. As applied to ourselves, we should be found maintaining both—the testimony in the wilderness, for those who are the professed people of God, yea, and for any who yet know Him not, as well as that in the land for the ear of Jehovah alone. If we fail to do this, our testimony is incomplete, it is one-sided. But by far the more important of the two is testimony *Godward*, a sound going out from us for His ear alone, and which His ear only can understand. What is this testimony which delights the ear and satisfies the eye of Him who “seeth not as man seeth”? It is *Christ* going up from us in all our walk and ways. This went up from the apostle: “We are unto God a sweet savour of *Christ*,” he says, and it called forth the energy of His arm, whose ear is never weary of that precious name. So that he adds, “Thanks be to God who always causeth us to *triumph* in Christ.” (See 2. Cor. ii. 14, 15.)

This was the trumpet sounded in the land. Testimony from a *heavenly* man (Christ in Paul), which delighted the ear of our blessed God, and came up to Him as a sweet savour. And He owned it, and the might of His power caused the apostle to go forward triumphantly, notwithstanding the antagonism of Satan's rage.

The two sides of our testimony, then, are manward and Godward. A slight consideration must convince all that a clear testimony *Godward* must ever bear in it a testimony *manward*. But you cannot reverse the order. *God must be first*. To reverse this order, and to say that testimony to man is of necessity a testimony to God, is very far from the teaching of scripture. There is a day coming when the work of many will be burnt up, work done ostensibly to the Lord. And there is a class who will say, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many

wonderful works?" All these, mark, done to *man*; but observe His solemn answer. His reply is, "I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity." (See Matt. vii. 22, 23.) It is therefore plainly before us that there may be much testimony manward, when there is not a particle that delights the ear or satisfies the eye of the blessed God.

All this is most solemn. While one cannot but rejoice in all the testimony that is going out to *man*, I believe that it is a private testimony *Godward* that we lack to-day. I am persuaded that this lack is the secret of our powerlessness when we desire to testify to man. Never, I suppose, was there a day of such outward and manifest religious activity as we are living in, and never was there a day of such worldliness in the church, and such open wickedness among men in the world. I ask, then, does the activity in testimony among men successfully combat the weakness and worldliness of this age? It is clear that it does not, and that the days are becoming darker and more difficult. Such perilous times to walk in as we are in to-day were never known before, increased in difficulty tenfold by the fact that the *world* around us has become a professedly *christian world*. Look at the continent of Europe, and again at America; they are all professedly *christian*. But is it real? Is it Christ they present? Are they at rest in the world, or pilgrims and strangers in it? It is a solemn thing, which can be seen by any one, that the tendency of many professing Christians in these days is to cover up our weakness by religious activity and excitement, as though any amount of this could compensate the blessed God for departure from what only can delight His heart! But if the weakness and confusion are manifest, it is God's provision to meet them that ought to interest every heart. This we have before us in this chapter; the sounding of the trumpets in the wilderness and in the land.

Some believers may object to the thought of the

testimony in the land being of *first* importance, and that in the wilderness being second. But I ask, are you not *heavenly*? (See John xx. 21; xvii. 18, &c.) Taken *out* of the world, we are sent again into it, to live as He lived, with all that is necessary for this given to us by the indwelling of the Spirit of God; who, sent down from Himself in the glory, is here, and abideth for ever, to enable us to live as He lived, to walk as He walked, for, "as he *is*, so are we *in this world*." And He who walked here, in the midst of such a scene as we are in, never made man His first object, but the Father and His glory. In all His ways He sounded the trumpet of testimony, proclaiming that He was a heavenly man walking for God down here. This delighted the heart of God, and He opened heaven, and acknowledged it again and again. It was ever God *first* with Him.

While I desire then, to press, that adequate testimony is, and must be, twofold, it appears to me that the one is private between the soul and God alone; the other is public, and known to man. The first, it seems to me, has God alone before it (and Christ as only that which can satisfy Him); the other is more or less occupied with man. I desire also to notice that occupation with God will bring me, according to His mind, to be rightly occupied in testimony to man, but that occupation with man will not lead to occupation with God; for such are our hearts, that we are led away by great outward things and outward activities, and taught by them to have no taste for quiet communion, and a quiet presentation of Christ, and yet it is only this which God values and delights in.

I desire now to examine a little the trumpet blast of the wilderness, to distinguish it from that to be sounded in the land.

What, then, is the wilderness? It is the place in which we find ourselves, having been brought out of Egypt (this world), and through the Red Sea. The world has become a wilderness to us. We are in a

place where there is *compelled* dependence on God for every step. We are in "a great and terrible wilderness, wherein are fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there is no water." (See Deut. viii. 15.) It is thus that scripture describes the place we are in *to-day*, whatever *we* may think of this world. If, on the one hand, there is nothing to support life—"no bread and no water"—there is, on the other hand, and *surrounding us*, ever ready and ever watchful, everything to destroy life—fiery serpents and scorpions hover in our path. I believe there is but little sense on our spirits of the wilderness thus. Now the grand life-object of man in this scene—what was once *our* struggle—the effort of the natural heart, from the cradle to the grave, is to be *independent*, while the lesson God was then teaching Israel, and is now teaching us, is dependence on Himself. Let me ask any believer who has any sense of the place he is in, if there be any other means of going on? If we, though Christians, "*walk as men*" (1 Cor. iii. 3), we clearly can have no sense of the dependent place we are in. It is, then, from a people dependent on Himself that God will have a distinct testimony. The silver trumpets must be sounded. This is first done at their gathering together. *His call* was the grand and all-sufficient authority for any godly Israelite. They gathered to Him. Now apply this to ourselves. As we gather to *Him* we are a testimony against any other mode of gathering—any other centre and presence—save His. We gather *to Him*, and it is when thus gathered that a testimony goes out. Testimony is not our object in gathering, but *Himself* is, but it is when thus gathered to Himself that the testimony goes out. At the Lord's table, when thus gathered, the word says, "Ye do *shew* the Lord's death till he come." Is there, then, a testimony going out to others connected with my gathering together with other Christians? Is one call, *His* call, my only and sufficient authority?

But again, on a second occasion the trumpet was

sounded. Then the people had to go forward, every one in his place in his tribe. Have we not important instruction here also? Among the divinely-led people there is no confusion when they hear the trumpet sound. There is no jostling one another, no falling out by the way. (Num. ii. 17.) There is room for *all* when all are in obedience, an important principle for us ever to bear in mind as we journey on. (Num. v. 14-28.) Israel then, and we to-day, go through a before untrodden wilderness, on the authority of God, and are led in every step (for every step is an *unknown* step) by Him. The ark went before them. As they walk they proclaim to any that have an ear to listen, "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Beloved reader, is this world *really* a wilderness to you? and is this the testimony going out from you as you pass up and down amidst those who are at home on earth? Are you at home, or in the wilderness, as you stand in the midst of all the vain pomp and show that this world delights to present to you day by day? One fears that at times we speak of this world as a "*wilderness*," when we are not testifying to it in *our walk and ways* day by day. Are the tent, the girded loins, and the pilgrim's staff, the insignia that *we* present to our dearest friends, to those who are most intimate with us? Are *we* sounding the trumpet of testimony in this particular way?

There is yet another sounding of the silver trumpets in the wilderness, and it is connected with the approach of the people to God. The trumpets of testimony sound on every gladsome day as well as on every solemn day of His redeemed. We have two extremes here in the history of God's people, joy and sorrow. Joy must bear with it a testimony. Our joy is not the joy of the dweller on earth. "*Your joy no man taketh from you.*" If I have this in activity, it is a testimony to those who have it not. Then as to the solemn day. Is not every day a solemn day, as every day is a joyous one? Can there be any sense of what

we are, of the condition our dearest friends are in, of the shortness of the time, of the speedy coming of our Lord, and yet the soul know nothing of what it is to be sober, to be solemnised by these things? God gives us these two extremes, joy and sorrow, and we must fill up all between. Ah! the lesson I learn here is that every day, and every act of all my life, is to be a testimony, clear and distinct, to all around. But this is our approach collectively to God. Is there a testimony going out from us to others at such times as these? In all our meetings, in our hour of family prayer, does it bear distinctly, on God's authority, a testimony to those around?

Let me ask you now to ponder that testimony which is most blessed of all, the sounding of the silver trumpets in the land for the ear of Jehovah alone.

I believe that this testimony is a private thing between God and the soul in secret. It is the presentation to God of the walk, ways, and life of Christ, as seen and produced in me day by day. I am therefore convinced that it is not occupation with man as its object, but with what is suitable to *God*. In a day, then, with activity and profession all around us, it is most important to see that God is also seeking HIS delight. That delight to-day, even as it was His delight before the world was, is *Christ*. In this day of immense outward profession, a day wherein *man* is made the great object (and this too, to a great extent, is the case even in much evangelistic work and revival meetings), we are in danger of having the form of godliness in our midst, with the power thereof denied. Allow me to ask, what would have been the value of sounding the silver trumpets for the advance of the people, had they *not* advanced towards Canaan? And except I become less worldly, and more heavenly, day by day—except I become more like Him—the only heavenly Man who was ever *perfect* in this pathway, I blow the trumpet of testimony manward in vain. There is no power in it, it is denied by my walk and

ways, and "if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" How much of what is allowed among us, and called testimony, drags on, year after year, with no apparent results! In the family, perhaps, the children, the wife, or the husband, remain, year after year, unconverted. Why is this? It is because there is often a one-sided testimony. Is it not before the eyes of all, that while we can talk about being "dead and risen with Christ, and seated in him in heavenly places" (Eph. ii. 6)—thus a *heavenly* people, though still on earth—there is the allowance privately in our walk and ways of the grossest inconsistencies?

Look at our dress, at our associations, at our houses, and at the company we keep! Will any one deny that there is a vast amount of worldliness allowed by us in all these things? I repeat it then, and may the Lord wake us up to a due sense of it—my testimony to man is often powerless—powerless, whether it be to saint or to sinner, because my *private* walk and ways do not present daily Christ to God. Let me ask my own heart, and yours, beloved reader, is all that goes out from us to that blessed God day by day a sweet savour of *Christ*? Is it Christ that goes up, manifested in my temper, in my deportment, and in everything that concerns myself down here? In my business, in my family, in the assembly, in the world; is it this that goes out—*this alone*? By it I declare that I am *heavenly*, by it I am brought into direct antagonism to the prince of this world, by it I sound the trumpet of testimony *in the land* for the ear of Jehovah alone, and am cast on the energy and might of His arm to be sustained and carried on. But let us beware of the incomplete thing—the lip without the heart. There is a danger of activity before men satisfying us. If there is great activity, a great desire to bear the name of Christian, and to be known in service, coupled with a lukewarm condition of soul *Godward*, we are in danger of Laodiceanism. Laodicea is profession, and it is at

the end of the history of the church in testimony on earth, but observe, and it is most remarkable, and solemnly suggestive to us, it immediately follows Philadelphia, a day—*this* day—of the brightest revival of God's truth. (See Rev. iii.)

Now if you desire to express Christ down here, you must be content to be *unpopular*. "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." (See Luke xiv. 27.) You must be satisfied to pass through this world unappreciated and misunderstood by men. Now I ask if this is what you see all around you, that Christians, in consequence of their testimony, are unpopular? Why, it must be owned by every one, that to be a Christian, as the word is commonly understood to-day, is a very popular thing in this world. But was Christ a popular man in His day? and I ask the question reverently. He who was ever the heavenly stranger walked among men *as such*, unceasingly expressing it to God, and because of it the world "knew him not." (1 John iii. 1.) They saw the Son of man on earth walking as Son of God, and they did not know Him.

His path, uncheered by earthly smiles,
Led only to the cross.

The manner of the Father's love to me as a believer is that He has called *me* as a child of God to walk in *the same* path as Christ walked in, and to express my relationship therein as such. (Gal. iv. 6, 7.) Do you suppose, beloved reader, that the world has *changed* since the day when it thus treated the Son of God? Will they understand the meekness and gentleness of Christ, if they see them in *your* walk and ways? Will they esteem *your* taste in dress, if Christ govern you as to it? Will they understand *your* choice of company and friends, if you are found rejecting this world and willing to identify yourself with the people of God, *His* people taking up companionship with "the poor of this world, rich in faith," yet branded with the "*reproach of Christ*"? If it is the heavenly

stranger whom you are daily desiring to express, you will find yourself an *unwelcome* occupant of this scene, an *intruder* in it. You will learn something of the private character of your testimony, that which passes between your soul and God alone. For a testimony to *Him* entails suffering. God knows, and it is *He alone* who knows, whether day by day you are seeking to express Christ down here. Everything regulated by you, with your heart engrossed by the question, How will it affect Him? and thus bringing all to that divine touch-stone—CHRIST. None will be more bitterly opposed than those who, not only in word, but in their daily practice, are declaring that they are by faith *in the land*. But such are pleasing to God, and sustained by Him. They are also not only maintaining their ground, but are taking further possession, notwithstanding the most tremendous and subtle opposition that the saints ever had to encounter. For no days are so dark as the last days, *and we are in them*; no times so perilous, no amount of profession so great. Therefore we have to insist on being heavenly in our ways, because it is God's provision to carry us safely through the perils of this last hour. Corruption of that which was good may tower around us, and, rising to the mountain height, threaten to overwhelm us, as the waves might have threatened to engulf Israel in the Red Sea of old; but if we have *God's* provision, they surge and roar around us in vain. "Ye shall blow with the trumpets, and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye *shall be saved* from your enemies." (Ver. 9.)

But a word as to the testimony of the trumpets from God's beloved people Israel in the land of Canaan. This is full of the most solemn warning to us. They failed to expel the enemy, and to take full possession of the land. Not only so, but they are found to have fallen repeatedly under cruel bondage and bitter oppression. *God's* people in *His* land, with *His* power to sustain and maintain them there, against *His* enemies, why did

they fail? That they *did* fail, any one carefully reading the books of Joshua and Judges has doubtless seen. But all may not have observed that we never read there of their once using these silver trumpets for their deliverance, although this was God's own provision to meet the need. As far as I am aware, these books do not contain one single instance when these trumpets sounded to invoke God's help against the enemy! Need we wonder that the failure and slavery came in, or that when they did not resist those whose "iniquity was full" (Gen. xv. 16), but even permitted them to dwell among them—need we wonder that God's people dropped naturally to their level, and then beneath them as slaves, became "the tail, and not the head"? And what a contradiction it was, God's saved and redeemed people, His *free men*, under the oppression and slavery of Moab, Canaan, Midian, Ammon, or Philistia, through their own disobedience, and neglect of God's plain word to them!

Now what is God's voice in this to us? Is there no such thing as a reproduction of all this to-day, to our sorrow? Is there no such thing as the Christian fallen under the bondage of the enemy to-day? No such thing coveted among *us*, or hid away in *our* tents, as Achan's wedge of gold and Babylonish garment? Is there no such thing as God's beloved people in league with Gibeon, an enemy—*God's* enemy in the land? Do we need his assistance by a league in any shape or form, or do we desire his property? God forbid that we should desire even to *touch* either the one or the other. If we take of them we lose our strength. We are still God's Nazarites, but only so in name, and not in power. "Then shall I be weak, and be as another man," said Samson, and so it came to pass. And it is so still. Naught, surely, becomes *us* but shame and confusion of face, when we ponder the state of *oppression, worldliness, confusion, and weakness*, in which God's people are at this very moment. Let us arouse ourselves, beloved reader, if *we* require nothing from

the god of this world, the silver trumpets declare it; let us not covet it nor make a league with him, for we are a heavenly, and not an earthly, people. I believe firmly that nothing will avail in this day, or deliver us from the snares of the enemy, but the *practical declaration*, day by day, that we *are* heavenly. Those who declare this cast themselves on the Lord's arm, and surely it is not in vain. Again, for our comfort I repeat that His word is, "Ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and *ye shall be saved from your enemies.*"

"He abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself." (2 Tim. ii. 13.) Notwithstanding the forgetfulness or neglect of His word by His people, that they are to be a dependent and obedient people, God abides the same, and ever true to it, and to those who trust and use it. So on two occasions—remarkable ones—the Spirit of God reminds them (Israel) of their forgetfulness of this word. One is in Psalm lxxxi., written hundreds of years after the institution of the silver trumpets. "Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, *in the time appointed*, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. *This he ordained in Joseph* FOR A TESTIMONY, when he went out through the land of Egypt, where I heard a language that I understood not." God had not forgotten it, however much His people might have neglected it. But, on the other occasion I have alluded to, if Israel neglected God's provision in this institution, they were suffering in consequence. This, a *yet future* day of suffering for Israel, when God will thus by His word remind them of His long ago promised provision for their deliverance, and when He *will* actually come to deliver them in answer to it, is found in the prophecy of Joel (chap. ii. 1), "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound *an alarm* [compare Num. x. 9] *in my holy mountain*, let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand." And if we want to know how the Lord meets and answers the trumpet blast of His poor op-

pressed people in that day, we have only to read verse 11. "And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army, for his camp is very great, for *he is strong that executeth his word*, for the day of the Lord is great, and very terrible, and who can abide it?" I ask, beloved reader, will He not also *to-day* be true to His word, if *you* act upon it?

In the days of the apostles we know that the truth was held in the power thereof, and that the *public* testimony to this world was coupled with that *private* testimony of which we have been speaking, which refreshed and delighted the heart of our God. The saints who went forth *then* in evangelistic testimony, "ambassadors for Christ" to man, calling out of the world by the power of the Holy Ghost, were known to be carrying out the truth that they were not of the world, *that they were heavenly* in their private life day by day. They *suffered* for the truth they preached. Theirs was adequate testimony (twofold) and power attended it. (Acts ii. 41.) And though the agents of Satan, the prince of this world, wherein, and against which, they testified, might beat, imprison, or even kill, them, a testimony delighting to God, and "the power of God unto salvation to men"—CHRIST, whose they were, and whom they served, this ever went up to God. (See Acts vii. 59, 60; xvi. 23-25.)

Is it not clear that our God desires a similar testimony, a full testimony, from us to-day? And when some years ago, within the recollection of many yet living among us, God called out a people, over whose life and ways the recovery of truth, long lost to the church of God, had a manifest power, what was seen in them but the uniting of practice with what they preached? Where are we to-day as to this? All the truth then recovered is professedly known by many, and that which was the common portion of every believer, which was lost in the dark ages, and which the Lord at first unfolded to but a little few, has now (in doctrine at least) become the truth held by almost all

