

Faith Unto Enlargement Through Adversity - Part 8

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of thorough redemption and the need for the Lord's people to speak with one voice and be guided by the purpose of God.

Duration: 49:35

Scripture: Romans 10:6

Topics: "Adversity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of Christians being a testimony and conveying God's message to others. He uses the illustration of the two silver trumpets mentioned in the book of Numbers to emphasize the continuous process of being transformed by God. The speaker emphasizes that our ability to convey God's message is directly related to the extent to which we allow God to work in us. He also highlights the divine purpose behind our calling as Christians and the need for believers to understand and embrace this purpose.

Transcript

Make thee two trumpets of silver. Of beaten work shalt thou make them, and thou shalt use them for the calling of the congregation, and for the journeying of the camp. And when they shall blow them, all the congregation shall gather themselves unto thee at the door of the tent of meeting.

If they blow but one, then the princes, the heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee. When ye blow an alarm, the camps that lie on the east side shall take their journey. When ye blow an alarm the second time, the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey.

They shall blow an alarm for their journey. But when the assembly is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not sound an alarm. And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpet, and they shall be to you for a statute forever throughout your generation.

When ye go to war in your land against the adversary that oppresses you, then ye shall sound an alarm with the trumpet, and ye shall be remembered before the Lord, your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemy. Also in the day of your gladness, and in your set feet, and in the beginning of your month, ye shall blow the trumpet over your bount offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings, and they shall

be to you for a memorial before your God. I am the Lord, your God.

Now to the New Testament, the letter to the Romans, chapter 10, verse 6. For righteousness which is our faith saith thus, Say not in thy heart who shall ascend into heaven, that is, to bring Christ down, or who shall descend into the abyss, that is, to bring Christ up from the dead. But what saith it? God is nigh thee in thy mouth and in thy heart. That is the word of faith which we preach, because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be put to shame. There is no distinction between Jew and Christian.

Same Lord is Lord over all, and rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? Even as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things.

And now just a word in the first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 14, verse 7. Things without life giving a voice whether pipe or harp, if they give not a distinction in the sound, how shall it be known what is pipe or harp? For if the trumpet give an uncertain voice, who shall prepare himself for war? I want to say a very simple word, a word which to many of you may sound a very elementary one, based upon the 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 they claim to be. First of all then, a word to Christians about the two silver trumpets and their meaning for us.

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. Well, that of course is the first and most simple meaning of trumpet, that they give voice to something.

There's a great deal about trumpets in the Bible. Indeed, the word trumpet occurs no fewer than 100 times in the Bible, and that's 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. But God is a speaking God who makes his mind known to people.

That's 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. Let's look at the two trumpets then. First of all, we note the materials of which they're made.

They are said to be two silver trumpets, and you Christian people know very well, or it's a part of your very kindergarten of Bible knowledge, that silver in the word of God, in the symbolism of the Old Testament, is a type or symbol of redemption. I'm not going to gather up all that shows that to be so, but we know that it is so. 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. Trumpets are silver. They are the embodiment of that spiritual truth.

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, of course, is very elementary, but it's 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've got to be redemption in life, in experience.

We have got to be silver. Then it says, and all versions don't make this clear, but mine did, and mine is the right one, a beaten work, a beaten work. Now, you know what that means, simply.

Thing is hammered out. The thing is wrought into the very substance. It means that there's a 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've got to know what redemption means in a deep way, and that sometimes does mean there's a good deal of cutting into us by the hammer and chisel. It's beaten work. It's wrought work.

It's something that is very real. Dear friends, 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've only got a little bit and you've 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've got to let God do this thing in us very thoroughly. And I do feel that, simple as it is, elementary as it is, it's a very important thing to say. There may be here tonight those who have really come to the Lord, who could say that they are saved, they've given their hearts to the Lord, they've let the Lord into their hearts.

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've 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 hasn't touched some things in your life. You still have some associations.

You still have some pleasures, some interests. You still have some idols, some kind. You are Christians, yes, but you've only gone just so far and now you haven't gone any farther and you're not going any farther.

You've just stopped. You've just stopped. And all that great fullness that God has for you is suspended because, well, you've gone so far, you are the Lord, but you're not letting the Lord work the fullness 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. Oh, that's 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's only a very little thing.

So much more. And this redemption has got to apply to and touch everything until we are wholly on the ground of redemption. 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 worked, 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's 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, they did not allow it to be wrought into them, that they did not come into the full purpose of redemption and occupy the great land of promise. Now, that's all illustration.

It was true in history, but it's illustration of the spiritual life, that this thing has got to be wrought, this beaten work wrought into us thoroughly and exhaustively if we're going to come into all the good of redemption. So that while we can in a certain sense say, I am redeemed, we've got to be able to say, I am continually being redeemed, going on in redemption, supplying everywhere. Now, the point is this, that only in so far as the thing is wrought into us as the Lord's people have we a testimony.

We can't go in testimony, speaking to others beyond that which is true in our own being. So it is our beaten work. It is in raw.

Enough about that. Then simply again, the trumpets are two. Make two trumpets of silver.

What's the meaning of that? Why two? Why two? Well again, many of you Bible students can answer the question as well as I can, but for our purpose tonight let us note this, that in the Bible a legal position exists that the evidence of one person was never accepted. It was never accepted. It necessitated, required, demanded the corroboration of a second reliable witness before anything was accepted or established.

The law says in the mouth of two witnesses everything shall be established. And for our purpose this evening 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.

Adequate evidence for it because two is the number always 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 call to mind, Bible students, other things. The silver sockets of the boards of the tabernacle, for instance, two of them for every board, silver. So it is, God will have everything established, confirmed, ratified, sure.

No weakness, no question about it whatsoever. If you and I are going to convey in testimony, in ministry, anything of God, it's 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, I know. This thing is something which is altogether beyond a question with me.

Now you see, that is taken up by the apostle Paul in the passage we read about the trumpet not giving an uncertain sound. The trumpet gives an uncertain sound. Who shall prepare himself for the battle? If the instrument is indefinite, well who knows what it's all about? And I'm rather afraid that a good deal is like that, that people really don't know what it's all about.

People are not quite sure about these Christians, where they are. They're not quite sure that the Christians themselves know where they are. Far too much indefiniteness, uncertainty about many Christians.

And the point that I want to make is this, dear friends, 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's confirmed, it's established and that they know that we know what we are talking about.

How necessary that is, is it not, in the Christian life that there should be nothing weak and uncertain indefinite about us. It should all be a confirmed and established matter. So it is true, it is attested, it is confirmed.

Now the purpose of these trumpets, the calling of an assembly, 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, divide.

It must be unifying in Christ. It's a great ministry to bring the Lord's people together. I can hear in the psalm, the trumpet sounding, o'er the trumpet sounding, gather my people together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

Gather them together. Let us be careful that the influence of our life and our ministry is not the opposite of consolidation, of strengthening relationship, of bringing together. Let's change the metaphor of healing of breaching.

Gather the people together against the ordering of the life and the movement of the Lord's people. It's a very great need, 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, makes known to them what the purpose of God is and what the end of God is. Now it's very interesting to notice that these two silver trumpets come next to the cloud, the Shekinah cloud which came to rest upon the tabernacle.

See, these things go together. The cloud, the pillar of cloud and of 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, always onward and always nearer and nearer to God's great end. The type of

the land, the land of promise with all its spiritual fullness and wealth and beauty, that was God's object.

We as Christians know so well that the eternal purpose of God is right on to the fullness of Christ and the trumpets therefore proclaim, first of all, purpose, purpose, 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 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 don't wander stray indefinitely without assurance of where they are or what it all means and what it's all about, what it's 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. They're like that, you may not know it, but they are all over the world like that. They really don't know where they are, many of them.

They don't know what it's all about. They know they've been paved up. Beyond that, they know little more.

They know that they're going to heaven one day and that's all they've got. But oh the greatness of the purpose and object, the goal to which we've been called in Christ and the trumpets were to govern the Lord's people in relation to the ultimate fullness that God had for them. Of course there were other purposes as we had seen.

For war, the sounding of the trumpets for war. I'm sure that this note does not need to be made very clear amongst us that we really are in a warfare. Keep that in mind, perhaps you don't need to be reminded of it, you know it all too well.

But sometimes we're a little surprised, aren't we, that there is so much conflict. And sometimes we wonder about all this conflict, where it's all right, where things haven't gone wrong, but there is so much conflict. Don't make any mistake about it, we're 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 trumpet.

In other words, before I pass to others, the distinctiveness and certainty of testimony, there is a very real need for distinctiveness of testimony. I'm not now speaking about your testimony to salvation or to Christ as Saviour. But the Lord's people are so scattered and so uncertain, there's not the cohesion of a certain definite knowledge of the Lord, a distinctive testimony in the midst of the Lord's people.

I think you realize, don't you, as you take the world as a whole and Christianity in this world, well, 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. Maybe all playing their own little tune, but there's not very much harmony about this, is there? We're not all saying the same thing and the one thing, not all of the one mind and the one spirit and the one heart, there's a good deal of discord and conflict and grating on the nerves by what is given out today.

The Lord would have quite clear and distinct testimony in the midst of his people. The people, again, the world needs this. The world needs this, that the church should speak with one voice, speak with authority.

They know where they are, they know what God wants, and that there should be no diffusiveness and certainly no contradiction. Oh, it is necessary that this should be characteristic of us as the Lord's people. Let us speak without compromising and certainly without forfeiting anything that is essential.

Let us always seek to find the point where we are absolutely one with an affirmativeness. Well, so much to the Christians about the two silver trumpets. I told you it was going to be very elementary.

It's almost like the first class, isn't it, in Christian service, but there it is. I want to get over to the other. Some of whom may be here tonight, those who cannot be included and would not include themselves in the Israel of God, in amongst the Lord's people, who do not really know what it means to be the Lord in a living way.

Now, you see, some of those things that Paul said about sounds and the trumpet is applied to such people. That great passage in Romans 10 about not being able to hear unless someone sounded the trumpet, somebody told them. Certainly not being able to believe if they hadn't 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, he says, their sound went into all the earth.

Now, that's something for the whole world and that's something for you. There's a message for you. Let's begin and face this fact.

And it is an exceedingly solemn fact, nothing profound about it, there's an 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 today and very widely.

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, sensitive to this as they are in some places. I was saying, I think it was today, they seem so long, I'm not sure if it was today or yesterday, what I discovered over on the other side of America only a week or two ago, there right up and down that west side of the United States, large numbers of houses on a day like this up for sale and to let.

And living amongst many of them, I went around the neighborhood seeing all these boards up. I asked my friend with whom I was staying, why a day of such shortage? Why here in these salubrious parts people wanting to leave their houses? Oh, he said, you know, everybody over here living as on the edge of a volcano, they're scared of their lives, of these atomic bombs that they believe are coming anytime, and they're wanting to get right away from populated areas. They think that they're safer out in the desert, anywhere, but here they're just living like that and you feel the tension and you know it is so, and everybody speaks about it.

I don't know that it's not justified to some measure. They know over there all about it. You see, 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 that I couldn't understand it.

It created difficulty for speaking and I explained this to my friend. Oh, he said, you know, they exploded the bomb yesterday, blowing up here, blowing up here. Just a little taste, a little taste.

Well, now, I'm not a scaremonger. I'm not trying to scare you into anything, but we think we see the end is not far off, and men's hearts are failing them for fear. You find it out there, the scripture says it, men's hearts failing them for fear of the things which are coming upon the earth.

That scripture is verily being fulfilled and it is said to be a sign of the last times. Well, maybe. We'll leave it that it might be.

Supposing the time is getting short towards the end of this dispensation. People are getting nervy about it. Supposing.

May it not be that this great sovereign thing of God, because it's sovereign, we can't see any other explanation of what is happening in this great campaign, for instance. And the main figure in this campaign, there in Glasgow, was here in London last year, himself says, there's nothing to account for it for God. I'm no preacher.

Everybody who listens knows that. You're looking for a wonderful sermon and you don't find it there. You look for a great discourse on theology, you don't find it there.

It's a very simple. You wonder, you wonder how that can have the effect that it has. Certainly it's not beating the intellect.

And really, it's not beating the emotion. For everybody says, no, this is not a great emotional thing. God is sovereignly doing something, surely.

Oh, how widely flung this is. We've only heard this evening of it being talked about there up in Nairobi. Ungodly people talking about it.

They've heard the reports of what's going on. It is. 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, allowable, it's a very solemn thing, isn't it? That you, dear friends, if you are not in Christ, are hearing the trumpet sound. Are, yes, barely to my hearing it 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, I never heard, I never had a chance.

God has equally, sovereignly perhaps brought you to hear as he has sovereignly ordained that it should be said. That's something to think about. It's a very, very serious thing to have heard the gospel of the grace of God, to have been told of this wonderful redemption.

We put our hearts into it this evening when we sign. Believe it. Oh, sinner, believe it.

Receive the glad message. It is true. It is true.

It is true. God is calling you. God is calling you.

He is calling you to himself. Just as those trumpets call the people to Moses, to gather together unto him a greater than Moses is here. Lord Jesus, by this pounding fork of the message tonight, 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 heart.

It is a call of love, a call of mercy, a call of a treaty, that is a call of warning, a call of warning. You have no power to say, I'll hear the trumpet tomorrow. It may not blow tomorrow.

You haven't 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. Today if you will hear his voice.

Yes, it's love, it's mercy, but it is solemn warning. There seems to be two tones mingling in this sound. It's a joyful sound.

It's a joyful sound. How blessed, how pleasant is the gospel sound. It's the gospel sound.

Gospel means good news. It's good news. It's good news sounding forward.

God has by his son, his son's death, his son's bearing of our sin and our judgment, God has provided redemption. That's good news for you, dear friend, for you, he's provided. That's the joyful sound.

Psalmist speaks of the joyful sound, and they are blessed who hear the joyful sound. They want you to hear the joyful sound, and yet, and yet, mingled with the joyful sound, there is a solemn sound. The Bible speaks of solemn festivities.

Solemn festivities, the mingling of joy and solemnity because of the tremendous issues that are involved. And you wouldn't have me to other than tell you that it is, it is a solemn and a very terrible thing to close your heart and your ears to God speaking. A lot involved, a lot involved.

Oh, everything is involved. Everything is involved. I remember so well some years, yes, 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, I, somehow or other, I felt I got to come over here tonight.

He'd come right across from the other side of the city. Somehow I felt I got to come over here tonight. I don't know why, so he can't explain it at all, but there it is.

So I said, oh, well, probably as we talk on, we may discover why. And I then talked to him. It wasn't very long before we discovered the why.

God had some interest in that life for which I've been brought here tonight. And I said, what about it? Oh, he said, I must go away and think about it. And I said, don't think too long.

Arrive at the conclusion as quick as you can. He went away. Didn't hear anything of him for a little while.

Strangely enough, I was in that same home some few weeks afterward, and the same man arrived at the same time. He looked a little sheepish when he found I was there again, and at any rate, I was for business for long, and he said, well, what about that matter? Came up, and you said you believed that God had brought you right across the city for that thing that night. What about it? Oh, he said, yes.

Yes, I thought about it. And then I went to consult someone about it and asked them, a minister, by the way, a minister who he happened to know. And he said, oh, don't you worry about those things.

Don't you worry about those things. Don't you become fanatical. All right.

I said, oh, so it's this man or God. He said, you said that you believe that God had brought you and spoken to you and raised an issue, and then you allow man to contradict God and say it doesn't matter what God says. Well, we got down, and again he came to it.

He said, I can't get away and I believe, I believe that that's what God wants. And we got right to the point again that he wouldn't give in. He wouldn't 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 didn't 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, and I saw a man coming toward me on a cycle.

And he got within recognition distance of me and saw who it was. Wheeled around on his cycle and went for dear life. And I heard later that that man had gone headlong into sin and lost all hope down deep into a lost condition.

Don't run that risk. God speaks. If God brings you where the trumpet is sounding, it's a very, very big thing that's at stake.

Whether you respond or whether you say, well, I'll think about it, or I must stop and think about it and see what they say, or any other kind of prevarication, no, no. The Lord says today if you will hear his voice. While it is today, everything may hang upon death.

I'm not trying to be emotional. I'm not trying to be sensational, but I am saying that the trumpet sounds. The trumpet sounds.

You've heard it. Spirit of God speaking to you, telling you tonight what God wants where you are concerned. He wants you to himself as one of his redeemed ones in the enjoyment of that redemption 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.

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