

SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON PREACHED BY MR. OLDFIELD AT GOWER
STREET CHAPEL, LONDON, ON SUNDAY MORNING, 6th MARCH, 1892

Text: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted." (Psa.lxxxix.15,16).

GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

These words form part of a remarkable Psalm, one that is said to have been penned by David immediately after God had made a covenant of loyalty with him. He begins the psalm by speaking of that covenant of loyalty, but his mind very soon becomes absorbed with another and a greater covenant than that of loyalty made with himself - I mean that covenant made with David's Lord, that covenant made before time began.

He begins the psalm by saying: "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever" (verse 1). God had made a covenant with him which was for ever. This touched the heart of David and caused him to say that he would sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever, and with his mouth he would make known God's faithfulness to all generations.

Then we have God speaking: "I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever" (verse 2). Built up for ever, not merely in the earthly house of David, but in the heavenly house of Christ. "Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish in the very heavens," responds the psalmist.

"I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant" (verse 3). By David here we may understand the Lord Jesus Christ. One meaning of David is "living." It is a name peculiar to the Lord of life and glory, and it is said that God will establish for ever David's earthly seed and build up his throne to all generations (verse 4).

We read further: "The heavens shall praise Thy wonders, O Lord: Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints" (verse 5). And is it not so? We must die and go to heaven to praise the wonders of redeeming love as they are worthy to be praised. But, while here, we are to some extent to regard His power and faithfulness - His faithfulness every morning and evening.

Then we have the incomparableness of our God held up: "Who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?" (verse 6). Here is a question, and who can answer it?

"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints" - not merely professors, but the saints, signally shining ones, whom God has made shining ones by bringing them out of the darkness of their unregeneracy into the light of the living. "And to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him" (verse 7). Those who are in heaven above are those that are round about Him - that is to say, brought nigh unto Him by the blood of Christ, made experimentally His saints, and thus brought to praise Him.

Then, further, what a declaration there is of His power! "O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto Thee?" Are the saints of God? No. He has stopped His saints in their mad career of sin and folly, and turned their feet to Zion's hill. What a strong God He must be! "Or to Thy faithfulness round about Thee?" (verse 8). How firm is God's faithfulness to His unfaithful people (may not I call them? For which of them is not exceedingly unfaithful?) We do not always believe.

"Thou rulest the raging of the sea" - not only literally, but also spiritually; the raging of the sea of temptation, affliction, and sorrow. Before God made that covenant of loyalty with David, what places of trouble and sorrow his soul had to wade through! And so, when he penned this psalm, he could declare, for the encouragement of others, that God ruleth the raging of the sea. "When the waves thereof arise, Thou stillest them" (verse 9). Not one wave can arise unless God causes it to arise. Not one trouble can come unless He permits it to come. If they are stilled, He alone stilleth them. Can a man command the waves of the sea to be still? He may, but they will not be still. Can a man command the waves of affliction and sorrow to be still? He may command them, but they will not be still. They are stilled only when God speaks.

"Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain." Rahab signifies Egypt, and Egypt the world. Thou has broken the world in pieces. As though he had said: It is broken in pieces in your heart, so that it has not the hold of you that it once had. Neither do I live in it as I once did. Oh, then, to see that God has done something for one's never-dying soul in a gracious way, delivering him from Egypt! What an unspeakable mercy this is! "Thou hast scattered Thine enemies with Thy strong arm" (verse 10). God's enemies have ever been the enemies of His church, and the enemies of His church have ever been God's enemies.

"The heavens are Thine, the earth also is Thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, Thou hast founded them" (verse 11). Oh, what a God is our God!

"The north and the south Thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon (with all their beauty, grandeur, and glory) shall rejoice in Thy name" (verse 12).

"Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is Thy hand, and high is Thy right hand" (Verse 13).

"Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne" (whatever men may say, whatever Satan may suggest). He is holy in all His ways, righteous in all His works. "Mercy and truth shall go before Thy face" (verse 14). God has determined that they shall go, and therefore they shall go. He has made provision in this respect, and His people shall experience the provision that He has made for them.

Then follow the words of our text: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted."

We may notice -

- I. What is intended by the joyful sound.
- II. The pleasing blessedness of this knowledge.

I. The joyful sound. The psalmist here doubtless alludes to the two silver trumpets of the Old Testament dispensation. You will remember that they were used for announcing the year of jubilee, also for gathering together the assemblies of Israel, to direct them in their journeys, and to encourage them in their warfare. And so it seems to me that the psalmist has some allusion to those types which prefigure the glorious gospel of Christ, or the great trumpet of which we read just now: "In that day the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem" (Isa.xxvii.13).

We may briefly notice what these two remarkable silver trumpets typified or prefigured. God commanded Moses to make two trumpets of silver (Numb.x.2). It may be that they typified law and gospel. If both are to be sounded, God's ministers are to sound both. I cannot conceive how a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ can preach the law without the gospel, or the gospel without the law. They must both be sounded and preached. Some have thought that the two trumpets typify the Lord Jesus Christ and the blessed Spirit. Jesus is a precious trumpet and so is the blessed Spirit. Both may be termed living trumpets, for they are both Persons in the ever-blessed and glorious Trinity.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the channel, and the blessed Spirit is the Person Who prepares the hearts of God's people for these blessings. And not only so, but He communicates to the Lord's church and people in the wilderness those blessings that flow through the righteousness, life, and death of the Son of God. But we need not dwell upon this point. They were trumpets.

Those two trumpets were to be made of silver. How valuable and how typical of the gospel of Christ, and the grace, mercy, and love of our God! And then those trumpets, as I have said, were to announce the year of jubilee, which was a special year to some of the Israelites - for instance, to those who had been taken captive from their families and to those who had sold their possessions. You know that these two things are set forth in the book of Leviticus, that the people should return unto their own possessions and their own families in the year of jubilee (Lev.xxv). Now those people were specially favoured who had sold their possessions (or, perhaps we might say, had mortgaged them, to use a common phrase). They were not really sold, for God would not allow the land to be sold. What a type we have here of the Lord's people! In the Adam fall they would have sold themselves to Satan and to sin but for God's preventing it. They would have sold themselves for ever. They went as far as they could go in this matter, and they would have gone further had it been possible. But, as God said to the Israelites, "The land shall not be sold for ever" (Lev.xxv.23). No; she may sell herself and come into the possession of sin and Satan for a time, but not for ever. Blessed be God, it is not for ever.

"The appointed time rolls on apace,
Not to propose, but call by grace;
To change the heart, renew the will,
And turn the feet to Zion's hill" (76)

By the gospel, the great trumpet being blown, is announced the year of jubilee, that those who are in captivity may return to their own families. How alienated some of the Israelites might have become before the year of jubilee came! And so here are God's people in the world, dead in trespasses and sins; but they are His, He has chosen and redeemed them, and He will make them manifest in His own time and way. They shall return to their own family. And what a return it is when the Lord sounds in their consciences, discovers their guilt and ruin, and shows them that by nature they are the children of the wicked one, "children of wrath, even as others" (Eph.ii.3). How anxious they are to get out of this condition and to have an assurance of being the children of God! How fearful they are that they can

never be among them! But the gospel trumpet of eternal truth is sounded, enters their hearts, and they are put among the children; no longer the children of Satan, but the children of God. What a proclamation is this!

These trumpets, as I have said, were for the gathering together of the assemblies of Israel, as the gospel is for the gathering together of God's family. And I trust it is the gospel that has brought us (or many of us) together to this service - not merely custom, but that the gospel of our God is the great attraction and upon which our souls want to feed.

The trumpets were also for directing the people in their journeys; and so the Lord's family need the gospel trumpet to direct them in their journeyings. As soon as life divine enters into their souls, they begin to inquire. Saul of Tarsus began to inquire: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" When God has brought peace and pardon into the conscience, how one wishes to honour and praise Him! David says: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" (Psalm cxvii.12). Is not this the effect of the gospel coming into the heart with divine power? It makes poor sinners willing to serve God, willing to follow, honour, obey, and to be His disciples. Are not there many inquiring how they may serve, follow, and obey Him?

Then, again, the trumpets were to encourage the people in their warfare, for the Lord's people are warriors. They have to fight with the world, the flesh, and the devil. They need encouraging, and do not they get encouragement by the gospel of God's grace - the love of God the Father, the grace of God the Son, and the power of God the Holy Ghost - being preached to them? Is not there encouragement for them in these things that they will endure unto the end, and not be slain on the field of battle - not only confront the enemy, but finally overcome him and come out of the field "more than conquerors through Him" Who has loved them (Rom.viii.37)? How many times God's children have gone to His house in such a storm in their feelings, as though Satan, or indwelling sin, or the world had well-nigh slain them! But, hearing the gospel of Christ preached, they have said to themselves: "I shall be an overcomer, victorious in the end; I shall get to heaven after all; I shall bless and praise God for ever and ever!" There is nothing like the gospel, then, for the encouragement of the Lord's family who are in conflict.

II. Just to come a little to our second heading, The pleasing blessedness of this knowledge. The trumpet of the gospel was made by God Himself. The design originated in His eternal mind, and by His own almighty hand He made it before time began.

And love, grace, and mercy divine will be sounded by it, as they have been sounded. How this was first sounded by God Himself! And without His help it has never been rightly blown since. He blew it with His own blessed lips in the garden of Eden after Satan had been preaching a free-will sermon. That free-will sermon led to awful destruction. Following that, God comes and preaches a free-grace sermon. How He blew the trumpet (Zech. ix.14)! How it sounded! How it entered into the hearts of our first parents! "It (the seed of the woman) shall bruise thy head." What a sermon there is in these few words!

Then, again, the trumpet was sounded by types and shadows which God was pleased afterwards to use. It was proclaimed sweetly by angels despatched from heaven at the birth of Zion's King. What a proclamation there was on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down and caused it to enter into the hearts of three thousand people at once! And so this gospel trumpet has been blown ever since. Some of the instruments God has used have very recently been taken from us, but God can raise up others to blow the trumpet. Mr. Warburton* could not blow the trumpet aright without the breath of God the eternal Spirit. Unless that is in it, what is there for a poor sinner's comfort? You know what it is to hear the word in word only, and some of you know what it is to hear the word not "in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (I Thess.i.5) - that is the breath of God. "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live" (Ezek.xxxvii.9). "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound."

This knowledge, as many of you know, is not merely a knowledge of the doctrines of election, particular redemption, effectual calling, and so on - in the letter of them, I mean. True, there are those who know when the truth only in the letter of it is preached, and sometimes they are enraged by it. You know that, when Christ preached the sovereignty of God, there were people who understood Him, knew the letter of it, and they were enraged and filled with envy, led Him to the brow of the hill with a determination to destroy Him. They knew the sound in the letter of it, and they hated what they heard.

Then there are others who may know and may approve of it by their natural judgment. They believe those doctrines that are set forth in God's word. They have clear light in their heads, but no grace in their hearts. They hear the sound, and they know the sound when they hear it; but it is not a joyful sound, not glad tidings to them. It has a clear ring to them

* Died on 19th January, 1892.

so far as the letter goes. But there is no power - no life, joy, or peace communicated. It is not the joyful sound. Is there joy to our souls in the doctrines, promises, precepts, and ordinances of the gospel? "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound."

Well, now, just to look at these characters that are typified in the old dispensation. It is a joyful sound to those poor creatures who have lost their possessions. They are sold under sin; they know it and they feel it. They are sold under Satan; they know it and they feel it. They are led captive by it; he does as he pleases with them. They are, so to speak, his own possession, his own territory, and he has got them under his power and dominion. Such poor sinners fear that they will die before the jubilee comes, before the gospel reaches their ears. They fear that they will never know what it is to have peace as the church of God has, that they will be dead ere mercy shall be proclaimed or reach their poor heart. How well I remember when I was in this condition. I thought I should die, but I did not. Peace came at last through one whom I had never before heard or seen. In hearing him preach I was too much favoured in my soul to think about his name, but it was dear Kershaw. He took the trumpet and blew it, mercy entered into my heart, and I was brought to see and feel that it was the day of jubilee to my soul. I saw that I was raised to a place I should never have known had not Adam fallen. I saw that I had a greater possession than I had in Adam before the fall, that God had

"Fixed my standing more secure

Than 'twas before I fell." (94)

What a possession there is in grace and in the gospel for the poor, the needy, and the destitute! They are poor in spirit. They may be rich in this world's goods, but they are poor in spirit; they are emptied, impoverished, stripped, naked, black. They come to the Lord in tears, longings, cries, and groans. They come black, hungry, thirsty, but they do not come in vain; for God, in an unexpected moment, comes to them and drops more or less of His mercy and love into their hearts. They have not all the same signal deliverance that God was pleased to give to me; but, oh, to have any deliverance at all - in a word or whisper of our God - to have the least hope in His mercy, the least faith in the Lamb of God! O to know it, to be brought into the Lord's family - to have had enough of Satan's family and the world's family! Sometimes I sink very low in my feelings, and seem almost to doubt everything that God has done for me, when I lose sight of the Lord's special deliverances and darkness seems to cover them. Then the enemy takes advantage of those times, and one gets into such a low state as to wonder whether

the root of the matter is in him after all. But there is this in my lowest and darkest moments, I do not want to be a worldling. I am different in my lowest and darkest moments now from what I used to be. Who has done it? God; and only God could do it. He has done it, and He maintains it. One does not want to be with the world; he wants to be with the children of God. He says:

"I love to meet among them now,
Before Thy gracious feet to bow,
Though vilest of them all." (938).

And these are the people who want gathering together, who are gathered together by the gospel trumpet. They do not want to live to themselves or for themselves, nor to live alone. They are solitary for a time, and they sit and wish that God would come. What a longing to be gathered with the people there is in many who are not yet gathered! What a desire to cast in their lot with the people of God, but sometimes they cannot see the way, as they are hedged in on every side. How good it is when God makes the way! And often it is done by the blowing of God's trumpet, by the preaching of the ever-blessed gospel.

Then, again, I might say who they are that are willing to be directed by exhortations. Those poor creatures that are conscious of their blindness and cannot see the way. They value the precepts of the Lord when He tells them He was tempted, and says: "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isa.xxx.21). They love it. They feel to need the exhortations and precepts of God's word throughout their pilgrimage here below. And what an infallible directory we have in God's word, in Christ the Head of the church. A wonderful example! For instance, He has set us an example in the ordinance of baptism. Here is our Director, and in His word we have our directory. Our Director is Christ. He was not sprinkled when an infant, but He has set the example of immersion when He was thirty years of age. It was an unmistakable example. And then what did He say? "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi.15,16). He did not command what He had not Himself performed. No; He is our Director, and He has set us the example as well as given us His word to direct us. So that the gospel cannot be fully preached without preaching baptism. Christ cannot be fully preached without preaching it. Philip preached Christ unto the eunuch, and Philip baptized the eunuch, and so we see that Christ cannot be fully preached unless the ordinances are preached. He is but partially preached unless the ordinances, as well as the promises and doctrines, are preached. The word

of God is our directory.

What an ordinance is that of the Lord's Supper! It shows forth the life and death of our dear Redeemer. The bread sets forth that He is the staff of life to His people, that which they feed upon. His blood is their drink. His flesh is meat indeed to His saints; His blood is drink indeed (John vi.55).

"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound." When the doctrine comes with life and power and healing, dropping like dew or rain upon the herb and tender grass, how good it is! How good when the promises and precepts come this way! Then the word of God is precious.

In the words of my text it says: "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance." These are the persons who shall walk in the light of God's countenance. What a precious possession, and this is to be partially realised in the present time state, but not fully until we reach the mansions of eternal bliss above.
