

PSALM LXXXI.

TITLE—To the chief Musician upon Gittith. *Very little is known of the meaning of this title. We have given the best explanation known to us in connection with Psalm VIII. in Vol. I. of this work. If it e intended to indicate a vintage song, it speaks well for the piety of the people for whom it was written : it is to be feared that in few places even in Christian countries would holy hymns be thought suitable to be sung in connection with the wine-press. When the bells upon the horses shall be holiness unto the Lord, then shall the juice of the grape gush forth to the accompaniment of sacred song. A Psalm of Asaph. This poet here again dwells upon the history of his country ; his great forte seems to be rehearsing the past in admonitory psalmody. He is the poet of the history and politics of Israel. A truly national songster, at once pious and patriotic.*

DIVISIONS.—Praise is called for to celebrate some memorable day, perhaps the passover ; whereupon the deliverance out of Egypt is described, 1—7. Then the Lord gently chides his people for their ingratitude, and pictures their happy estate had they but been obedient to his commands.

EXPOSITION.

SING aloud unto God our strength : make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.

2 Take a Psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.

3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.

4 For this *was* a statute for Israel, *and* a law of the God of Jacob.

5 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.

6 I removed his shoulder from the burden : his hands were delivered from the pots.

7 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee ; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder : I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.

1. "*Sing*" in tune and measure, so that the public praise may be in harmony ; sing with joyful notes, and sounds melodious. "*Aloud.*" For the heartiest praise is due to our good Lord. His acts of love to us speak more loudly than any of our words of gratitude can do. No dulness should ever stupify our psalmody, or half-heartedness cause it to limp along. Sing aloud, ye debtors to sovereign grace, your hearts are profoundly grateful : let your voices express your thankfulness. "*Unto God our strength.*" The Lord was the strength of his people in delivering them out of Egypt with a high hand, and also in sustaining them in the wilderness, placing them in Canaan, preserving them from their foes, and giving them victory. To whom do men give honour but to those upon whom they rely, therefore let us sing aloud unto our God, who is our strength and our song. "*Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.*" The God of the nation, the God of their father Jacob, was extolled in gladsome music by the Israelitish people : let no Christian be silent, or slack in praise, for this God is our God. It is to be regretted that the niceties of modern singing frighten our congregations from joining lustily in the hymns. For our part we delight in full bursts of praise, and had rather discover the ruggedness of a want of musical training than miss the heartiness of universal congregational song. The gentility which lisps the tune in wellbred whispers, or leaves the singing altogether to the choir, is very like a mockery of worship. The gods of Greece and Rome may be worshipped well enough with classical music, but Jehovah can only be adored

with the heart, and that music is the best for his service which gives the heart most play.

2. "*Take a psalm.*" Select a sacred song, and then raise it with your hearty voices. "*And bring hither the timbrel.*" Beat on your tambourines, ye damsels, let the sound be loud and inspiring. "Sound the trumpets, beat the drums." God is not to be served with misery but with mirthful music, sound ye then the loud timbrel, as of old ye smote it by "*Egypt's dark sea.*" "*The pleasant harp with the psaltery.*" The timbrel for sound, must be joined by the harp for sweetness, and this by other stringed instruments for variety. Let the full compass of music be holiness unto the Lord.

3. "*Blow up the trumpet in the new moon.*" Announce the sacred month, the beginning of months, when the Lord brought his people out of the house of bondage. Clear and shrill let the summons be which calls all Israel to adore the Redeeming Lord. "*In the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.*" Obedience is to direct our worship, not whim and sentiment: God's appointment gives a solemnity to rites and times which no ceremonial pomp or hierarchal ordinance could confer. The Jews not only observed the ordained month, but that part of the month which had been divinely set apart. The Lord's people in the olden time welcomed the times appointed for worship; let us feel the same exultation, and never speak of the Sabbath as though it could be other than "a delight" and "honourable." Those who plead this passage as authority for their man-appointed feasts and fasts must be moonstruck. We will keep such feasts as the Lord appoints, but not those which Rome or Canterbury may ordain.

4. "*For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob.*" It was a precept binding upon all the tribes that a sacred season should be set apart to commemorate the Lord's mercy; and truly it was but the Lord's due, he had a right and a claim to such special homage. When it can be proved that the observance of Christmas, Whitsuntide, and other Popish festivals was ever instituted by a divine statute, we also will attend to them, but not till then. It is as much our duty to reject the traditions of men, as to observe the ordinances of the Lord. We ask concerning every rite and rubric, "Is this a law of the God of Jacob?" and if it be not clearly so, it is of no authority with us, who walk in Christian liberty.

5. "*This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony.*" The nation is called Joseph, because in Egypt it would probably be known and spoken of as Joseph's family, and indeed Joseph was the foster-father of the people. The passover, which is probably here alluded to, was to be a standing memorial of the redemption from Egypt; and everything about it was intended to testify to all ages, and all peoples, the glory of the Lord in the deliverance of his chosen nation. "*When he went out through the land of Egypt.*" Much of Egypt was traversed by the tribes in their exodus march, and in every place the feast which they had kept during the night of Egypt's visitation would be a testimony for the Lord, who had also himself in the midnight slaughter gone forth through the land of Egypt. The once afflicted Israelites marched over the land of bondage as victors who trample down the slain. "*Where I heard a language that I understood not.*" Surely the connection requires that we accept these words as the language of the Lord. It would be doing great violence to language if the "I" here should be referred to one person, and the "I" in the next verse to another. But how can it be imagined that the Lord should speak of a language which he understood not, seeing he knows all things, and no form of speech is incomprehensible to him? The reply is, that the Lord here speaks as the God of Israel identifying himself with his own chosen nation, and calling that an unknown tongue to himself which was unknown to them. He had never been adored by psalm or prayer in the tongue of Egypt; the Hebrew was the speech known in his sacred house, and the Egyptian was outlandish and foreign there. In strictest truth, and not merely in figure, might the Lord thus speak, since the wicked customs and idolatrous rites of Egypt were disapproved of by him, and in that sense were unknown. Of the wicked, Jesus shall say, "I never knew you;" and probably in the same sense this expression should be understood, for it may be correctly rendered, "a speech I knew not I am hearing." It was among the griefs of Israel that their taskmasters spake an unknown tongue, and they were thus continually reminded that they were strangers in a strange land. The Lord had pity upon them, and emancipated them, and hence it was their bounden duty to maintain inviolate the memorial of the divine goodness. It is no small mercy to be brought out from an ungodly world and separated unto the Lord.

6. "*I removed his shoulder from the burden.*" Israel was the drudge and slave of Egypt, but God gave him liberty. It was by God alone that the nation was set free. Other peoples owe their liberties to their own efforts and courage, but Israel received its Magna Charta as a free gift of divine power. Truly may the Lord say of everyone of his freed men, "*I removed his shoulder from the burden.*" "*His hands were delivered from the pots.*" He was no longer compelled to carry earth, and mould it, and bake it; the earth-basket was no more imposed upon the people, nor the tale of bricks exacted, for they came out into the open country where none could exact upon them. How typical all this is of the believer's deliverance from legal bondage, when, through faith, the burden of sin glides into the Saviour's sepulchre, and the servile labours of self-righteousness come to an end for ever.

7. "*Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee.*" God heard his people's cries in Egypt, and at the Red Sea: this ought to have bound them to him. Since God does not forsake us in our need, we ought never to forsake him at any time. When our hearts wander from God, our answered prayers cry "shame" upon us. "*I answered thee in the secret place of thunder.*" Out of the cloud the Lord sent forth tempest upon the foes of his chosen. That cloud was his secret pavilion, within it he hung up his weapons of war, his javelins of lightning, his trumpet of thunder; forth from that pavilion he came and overthrew the foe that his own elect might be secure. "*I proved thee at the waters of Meribah.*" They had proved him and found him faithful, he afterwards proved them in return. Precious things are tested, therefore Israel's loyalty to her King was put to trial, and, alas, it failed lamentably. The God who was adored one day for his goodness was reviled the next, when the people for a moment felt the pangs of hunger and thirst. The story of Israel is only our own history in another shape. God has heard us, delivered us, liberated us, and too often our unbelief makes the wretched return of mistrust, murmuring, and rebellion. Great is our sin; great is the mercy of our God: let us reflect upon both, and pause a while. "*Selah.*" Hurried reading is of little benefit; to sit down a while and meditate is very profitable.

8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me;

9 There shall no strange God be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god.

10 I *am* the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.

11 But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.

12 So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: *and* they walked in their own counsels.

13 Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, *and* Israel had walked in my ways!

14 I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.

15 The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever.

16 He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

8. "*Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee.*" What? Are the people so insensible as to be deaf to their God? So it would seem, for he earnestly asks a hearing. Are we not also at times quite as careless and immovable? "*O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me.*" There is much in this "if." How low have they fallen who will not hearken unto God himself! The deaf adder is not more grovelling. We are not fond of being upbraided, we had rather avoid sharp and cutting truths; and, though the Lord himself rebuke us, we fly from his gentle reproofs.

9. "*There shall no strange god be in thee.*" No alien god is to be tolerated in Israel's tents. "*Neither shall thou worship any strange god.*" Where false gods are, their worship is sure to follow. Man is so desperate an idolater that the image is always a strong temptation: while the nests are there the birds will be eager to

return. No other god had done anything for the Jews, and therefore they had no reason for paying homage to any other. To us the same argument will apply. We owe all to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: the world, the flesh, the devil, none of these have been of any service to us; they are aliens, foreigners, enemies, and it is not for us to bow down before them. "Little children keep yourselves from idols," is our Lord's voice to us, and by the power of his Spirit we would cast out every false god from our hearts.

10. "*I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt.*" Thus did Jehovah usually introduce himself to his people. The great deliverance out of Egypt was that claim upon his people's allegiance which he most usually pleaded. If ever people were morally bound to their God, certainly Israel was a thousand times pledged unto Jehovah, by his marvellous deeds on their behalf in connection with the Exodus. "*Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*" Because he had brought them out of Egypt he could do great things for them. He had proved his power and his good will; it remained only for his people to believe in him and ask large things of him. If their expectations were enlarged to the utmost degree, they could not exceed the bounty of the Lord. Little birds in the nest open their mouths widely enough, and perhaps the parent birds fail to fill them, but it will never be so with our God. His treasures of grace are inexhaustible,

"Deep as our helpless miseries are,
And boundless as our sins."

The Lord began with his chosen nation upon a great scale, doing great wonders for them, and offering them vast returns for their faith and love, if they would but be faithful to him. Sad, indeed, was the result of this grand experiment.

11. "*But my people would not hearken to my voice.*" His warnings were rejected, his promises forgotten, his precepts disregarded. Though the divine voice proposed nothing but good to them, and that upon an unparalleled scale of liberality, yet they turned aside. "*And Israel would none of me.*" They would not consent to his proposals, they walked in direct opposition to his commands, they hankered after the ox-god of Egypt, and their hearts were bewitched by the idols of the nations round about. The same spirit of apostasy is in all our hearts, and if we have not altogether turned aside from the Lord, it is only grace which has prevented us.

12. "*So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust.*" No punishment is more just or more severe than this. If men will not be checked, but madly take the bit between their teeth and refuse obedience, who shall wonder if the reins are thrown upon their necks, and they are let alone to work out their own destruction. It were better to be given up to lions than to our hearts' lusts. "*And they walked in their own counsels.*" There was no doubt as to what course they would take, for man is everywhere wilful and loves his own way,—that way being at all times in direct opposition to God's way. Men deserted of restraining grace, sin with deliberation; they consult, and debate, and consider, and then elect evil rather than good, with malice aforethought and in cool blood. It is a remarkable obduracy of rebellion when men not only run into sin through passion, but calmly "walk in their own counsels" of iniquity.

13. "*Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!*" The condescending love of God expresses itself in painful regrets for Israel's sin and punishment. Such were the laments of Jesus over Jerusalem. Certain doctrinalists find a stumbling-stone in such passages, and set themselves to explain them away, but to men in sympathy with the divine nature the words and the emotions are plain enough. A God of mercy cannot see men heaping up sorrow for themselves through their sins without feeling his compassion excited toward them.

14. "*I should soon have subdued their enemies.*" As he did in Egypt overthrow Pharaoh, so would he have baffled every enemy. "*And turned my hand against their adversaries.*" He would have smitten them once, and then have dealt them a return blow with the back of his hand. See what we lose by sin. Our enemies find the sharpest weapons against us in the armoury of our transgressions. They could never overthrow us if we did not first overthrow ourselves. Sin strips a man of his armour, and leaves him naked to his enemies. Our doubts and fears would long ago have been slain if we had been more faithful to our God. Ten thousand evils which afflict us now would have been driven far from us if we had been more jealous of holiness in our walk and conversation. We ought to consider not only

what sin takes from our present stock, but what it prevents our gaining: reflection will soon show us that sin always costs us dear. If we depart from God, our inward corruptions are sure to make a rebellion. Satan will assail us, the world will worry us, doubts will annoy us, and all through our own fault. Solomon's departure from God raised up enemies against him, and it will be so with us, but if our ways please the Lord he will make even our enemies to be at peace with us.

15. "*The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him.*" Though the submission would have been false and flattering, yet the enemies of Israel would have been so humiliated that they would have hastened to make terms with the favoured tribes. Our enemies become abashed and cowardly when we, with resolution, walk carefully with the Lord. It is in God's power to keep the fiercest in check, and he will do so if we have a filial fear, a pious awe of him. "*But their time should have endured for ever.*" The people would have been firmly established, and their prosperity would have been stable. Nothing confirms a state or a church like holiness. If we be firm in obedience we shall be firm in happiness. Righteousness establishes, sin ruins.

16. "*He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat.*" Famine would have been an unknown word, they would have been fed on the best of the best food, and have had abundance of it as their every day diet. "*And with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.*" Luxuries as well as necessities would be forthcoming, the very rocks of the land would yield abundant and sweet supplies; the bees would store the clefts of the rocks with luscious honey, and so turn the most sterile part of the land to good account. The Lord can do great things for an obedient people. When his people walk in the light of his countenance, and maintain unsullied holiness, the joy and consolation which he yields them are beyond conception. To them the joys of heaven have begun even upon earth. They can sing in the ways of the Lord. The spring of the eternal summer has commenced with them; they are already blest, and they look for brighter things. This shows us by contrast how sad a thing it is for a child of God to sell himself into captivity to sin, and bring his soul into a state of famine by following after another god.

O Lord, for ever bind us to thyself alone, and keep us faithful unto the end.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Title.—It is remarkable that as Psalm lxxx. treats of the church of God under the figure of a vine, so the present is entitled, "*upon Gittith,*" literally upon the winepress. Whether the expression was meant to refer to a musical instrument, or to some direction as to the tune, is uncertain. In our Saviour's adoption of the figure of a vineyard to represent his church, he speaks of a winepress dug in it, Matt. xxi. 33. The idea refers itself to the final result in some sense, in a way of salvation of souls, as the same figure of a winepress is used in Rev. xiv. of the final destruction of the ungodly.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 2.—"*Timbrel.*" The *toph*, English version *tabret*, *timbrel*, LXX. *τύμπανον*, once *ψαλτήριον*. It was what would now be called a tambourine, being played by the hand; and was specially used by women. It is thrice mentioned in the Psalms: lxxxi. 2; cxlix. 3; cl. 4.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 2.—"*The Psaltery.*" It is probably impossible to be sure as to what is intended by a psaltery. The Genevan version translates it *viol*, and the ancient viol was a six-stringed guitar. In the Prayer-book version, the Hebrew word is rendered *lute*, which instrument resembled the guitar, but was superior in tone. The Greek word psalterion denotes a stringed instrument played with the fingers. Cassiodorus says that the psaltery was triangular in shape, and that it was played with a bow. Aben Ezra evidently considered it to be a kind of pipe, but the mass of authorities make it a stringed instrument. It was long in use, for we read of it in David's time as made of fir-wood (2 Sam. vi. 5), and in Solomon's reign, of algum trees (2 Chr. ix. 11), and it was still in use in the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 3.—"Blow up the trumpet," etc. The Jews say this blowing of trumpets was in commemoration of Isaac's deliverance, a ram being sacrificed for him, and therefore they sounded with trumpets made of rams' horns: or in remembrance of the trumpet blown at the giving of the law; though it rather was an emblem of the gospel and the ministry of it, by which sinners are aroused, awakened and quickened, and souls are charmed and allured, and filled with spiritual joy and gladness.—*John Gill.*

Verse 3.—"The trumpet." The sound of the trumpet is very commonly employed in Scripture as an image of the voice or word of God. The voice of God, and the voice of the trumpet on Mount Sinai, were heard together (Ex. xix. 5, 18, 19), first the trumpet-sound as the symbol, then the reality. So also John heard the voice of the Lord as that of a trumpet (Rev. i. 10; iv. 1), and the sound of the trumpet is once and again spoken of as the harbinger of the Son of Man, when coming in power and great glory, to utter the almighty word which shall quicken the dead to life, and make all things new (Matthew xxiv. 31; 1 Cor. xv. 52; 1 Thess. iv. 16). The sound of the trumpet, then, was a symbol of the majestic, omnipotent voice or word of God; but of course only in those things in which it was employed in respect to what God had to say to men. It might be used also as from man to God, or by the people, as from one to another. In this case, it would be a call to a greater than the usual degree of alacrity and excitement in regard to the work and service of God. And such probably was the more peculiar design of the blowing of trumpets at the festivals generally, and especially at the festival of trumpets on the first day of the second month.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 3.—"In the new moon," etc. The feast of the *new moon* was always proclaimed by sound of trumpet. For want of astronomical knowledge, the poor Jews were put to sad shifts to know the real time of the new moon. They generally sent persons to the top of some hill or mountain about the time which, according to their supputations, the new moon should appear. The first who saw it was to give immediate notice to the Sanhedrim; they closely examined the reporter as to his credibility, and whether his information agreed with their calculations. If all was found satisfactory, the president proclaimed the new moon by shouting out, מִקְדֹּשׁ, *mikkodesh!* "It is consecrated." This word was repeated *twice* aloud by the people; and was then proclaimed everywhere by *blowing of horns*, or what is called the sound of *trumpets*. Among the Hindoos some feasts are announced by the sound of the *conch*, or *sacred shell*.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 3.—"In the time appointed." The word rendered "*the time appointed*," signifies the *hidden* or *covered* period; that is, the time when the moon is concealed or covered with darkness. This day was a joyful festival, returning every month; but the first day of the seventh moon was the most solemn of the whole; being not only the first of the moon, but of the civil year. This was called the feast of trumpets, as it was celebrated by the blowing of trumpets from sun-rising to sun-setting; according to the command, "It shall be a day of the blowing of trumpets to you."

This joy was a memorial of the joy of creation, and the joy of giving the law: it also pre-indicated the blowing of the gospel-trumpet, after the dark, the covered period of the death of Christ, when the form of the church changed, and the year of the "redeemed" began; and, finally, it prefigured the last day, when the trumpet of God shall sound, and the dead shall be raised.—*Alexander Pirie.*

Verse 5.—"I heard a language that I understood not." The "*language*" that he then heard—the religious worship of idolaters,—vows offered up "to birds and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things," Rom. i. 23, and strength and mercy sought from every object in nature, *except himself*,—was a language unknown to him—"he knew it not."—*William Hill Tucker.*

Verse 6.—"Pots," or *burden-baskets*. Compare Exodus vi. 6, 7. Rosellini gives a drawing of these baskets from a picture discovered in a tomb at Thebes. "Of the labourers," says he, "some are employed in transporting the clay in vessels, some in intermingling it with straw; others are taking the bricks out of the form, and placing them in rows; still others with a piece of wood upon their backs, and ropes on each side, carry away the bricks already burned or dried. Their dissimilarity to the Egyptians appears at the first view: their complexion, physiognomy

and beard permit us not to be mistaken in supposing them to be Hebrews."—*Frederic Fysh.*

Verse 6.—“*Pots.*” The bricklayer’s baskets; hanging one at each end of a yoke laid across the shoulders.—*William Kay.*

Verse 7.—To “*answer in the secret place of thunder,*” refers us to the pillar of cloud and fire, the habitation of the awful Majesty of God, whence God glanced with angry eyes upon the Egyptians, filled them with consternation and overthrew them.—*Venema.*

Verse 10.—“*Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*” Surely this teaches us, that the greater and more valuable the blessings are which we implore from the divine beneficence, the more sure shall we be to receive them in answer to prayer. . . . But, though men are to be blamed, that they so seldom acknowledge God in any thing, yet they are still more to be blamed, that they seek not from him the chief good. Men may, however, possibly cry to God for inferior things, and apply in vain. Even good men may ask for temporal blessings, and not receive them; because the things we suppose good, may not be good, or not good for us, or not good for us at present. But none shall seek God for the best of blessings in vain. If we ask enough, we shall have it.

While the worldling drinks in happiness, if it will bear the name, with the mouth of an insect, the Christian imbibes bliss with the mouth of an angel. His pleasures are the same in kind, with the pleasure of the infinitely happy God.—*John Ryland.*

Verse 10.—“*Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*” You may easily over-expect the creature, but you cannot over-expect God: “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;” widen and dilate the desires and expectations of your souls, and God is able to fill every chink to the vastest capacity. This honours God, when we greatness our expectation upon him; it is a sanctifying of God in our hearts.—*Thomas Case* (1598—1682), in “*Morning Exercises.*”

Verse 10.—“*Open thy mouth wide.*” This implies, 1. Warmth and fervency in prayer. To open the mouth is in effect to open the heart, that it may be both engaged and enlarged. . . . We may be said to open our mouths wide when our affections are quick and lively, and there is a correspondence between the feelings of the heart and the request of the lips; or when we really pray, and not merely seem to do so. This is strongly and beautifully expressed in Psalm cxix. 131: “I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.” . . . 2. It implies a holy fluency and copiousness of expression, so as to order our cause before him, and fill our mouths with arguments. When the good man gets near to God, he has much business to transact with him, many complaints to make, and many blessings to implore; and, as such seasons do not frequently occur, he is the more careful to improve them. He then pours out his whole soul, and is at no loss for words; for when the heart is full, the tongue overflows. Sorrow and distress will even make those eloquent who are naturally slow of speech. . . . 3. Enlarged hope and expectation. We may be too irreverent in our approaches to God, and too peremptory in our application; but if the matter and manner of our prayer be right, we cannot be too confident in our expectations from him. . . . Open thy mouth wide then, O Christian; stretch out thy desires to the uttermost, grasp heaven and earth in thy boundless wishes, and believe there is enough in God to afford thee full satisfaction. Not only come, but come with boldness to the throne of grace: it is erected for sinners, even the chief of sinners. Come to it then, and wait at it, till you obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Those who expect most from God are likely to receive the most. The desire of the righteous, let it be ever so extensive, shall be granted.—*Benjamin Beddome.*

Verse 10.—“*I will fill it.*” Consider the import of the promise: “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” “Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find.” Particularly, 1. If we open our mouths to God in prayer, he will fill them more and more with suitable petitions and arguments. When we attempt to open the mouth, God will open it still wider. Thus he dealt with Abraham when he interceded for Sodom: the longer he prayed, the more submissive and yet the more importunate he became. By praying we increase our ability to pray, and find a greater facility in the duty. “To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly,” 2. God will fill the mouth with abundant thanksgivings. Many of David’s Psalms begin with prayer, and end with the most animated praises.

No mercies so dispose to thankfulness as those which are received in answer to prayer; for according to the degree of desire will be the sweetness of fruition. . . .

3. We shall be filled with those blessings we pray for, if they are calculated to promote our real good and the glory of God. Do we desire fresh communications of grace, and manifestations of divine love; a renewed sense of pardoning mercy, and an application of the blood of Christ? Do we want holiness, peace, and assurance? Do we want to hear from God, to see him, and be like him? The promise is, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus," Phil. iv. 19. You shall have what you desire, and be satisfied: it shall be enough, and you shall think it so. "The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."—*Benjamin Boddome*.

Verse 10.—The custom is said still to exist in Persia that when the king wishes to do a visitor, an ambassador for instance, especial honour, he desires him to open his mouth wide; and the king then crams it as full of sweetmeats as it will hold; and sometimes even with jewels. Curious as this custom is, it is doubtless referred to in Psalm lxxxi. 10: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;" not with baubles of jewels, but with far richer treasure.—*John Gadsby*.

Verse 11.—"My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me." Know, sinner, that if at last thou missest heaven, which, God forbid! the Lord can wash his hands over your head, and clear himself of your blood: thy damnation will be laid at thine own door: it will then appear there was no cheat in the promise, no sophistry in the gospel, but thou didst voluntarily put eternal life from thee, whatever thy lying lips uttered to the contrary: "My people would have none of me." So that, when the jury shall sit on thy murdered soul, to inquire how thou camest to thy miserable end, thou wilt be found guilty of thy own damnation. No one loseth God, but he that is willing to part with him.—*William Gurnall*.

Verse 11.—"And Israel would none of me." It is added, "and Israel would none of me," more closely, *was not borne to me by a natural bent*. For this is the original force of the word כָּבַח, as it still survives in Job. ix. where it is used of the ships borne outward by a favourable wind and tide.—*Venema*.

Verse 11.—"Israel would none of me." That is, would not be content alone with me, would not take quiet contentment in me (as the Hebrew word signifies); the Lord was not good enough for them, but their hearts went out from him to other things.—*Thomas Sheppard*, 1605—1649.

Verse 12.—"So I gave them up." The word *give up* suggests the idea of a *divorce*, whereby a husband sends away a capricious wife, and commands her to live by herself. . . . Transferred to God, it teaches us nothing else than that God withdraws his *protecting* and *guiding* hand from the people, and leaves them to themselves; so that he ceases to chasten and defend them, but, on the other hand, suffers them to become hardened and to perish.—*Venema*.

Verse 12.—"So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts," etc. A man may be given up to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the soul may be saved, but to be given up to sin is a thousand times worse, because that is the fruit of divine anger, in order to the damnation of the soul; here God wounds like an enemy and like a cruel one, and we may boldly say, God never punished any man or woman with this spiritual judgment in kindness and love.—*John Shower* (1657—1715), in "The Day of Grace."

Verse 12.—"I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts." O dreadful word! The same will the Spirit do upon our rejecting or resisting of his leading. He may long strive, but he will "not always strive," Gen. vi. 3. If the person led shall once begin to struggle with him that leads him, and shall refuse to follow his guidance, what is then to be done, but to leave him to himself? Continued, rooted, allowed resistance to the Spirit, makes him so to cast off a person as to lead him no more. . . .

Let it be your great and constant care and endeavour to get the Spirit's leading continued to you. You have it; pray keep it. Can it be well with a Christian, when this is suspended or withdrawn from him? How does he wander and bewilder himself, when the Spirit does not guide him! How backward is he to good, when the Spirit does not bend and incline him thereunto! How unable to go, when the Spirit does not uphold him! What vile lusts and passions rule him, when the Spirit does not put forth his holy and gracious government over him! O, it is of infinite concern to all that belong to God, to preserve and secure to themselves the Spirit's

leading! Take a good man without this, and he is like a ship without a pilot, a blind man without a guide, a poor child that has none to sustain it, the rude multitude that have none to keep them in any order. What a sad difference is there in the same person, as to what he is when the Spirit *leads* him, and as to what he is when the Spirit *leaves* him!

OBJECTION.—“But does the Spirit at any time do this to God’s people? Does he ever suspend and withdraw his guidance from persons who once lived under it?”

ANSWER.—Yes; too often. It is what he usually does, when his leadings are not followed. This is a thing that grieves him; and when he is grieved he departs, withholds, and recalls his former gracious influences, though not totally and finally; yet for a time and in such a degree. As a guide, that is to conduct the traveller; if this traveller shall refuse to follow him, or shall give unkind usage to him, what does the guide then do? Why, he recedes, and leaves him to shift for himself. It is thus in the case in hand: if we comply with the Spirit, in his motions, and use him tenderly, he will hold on in his leading of us; but if otherwise, he will concern himself no more about us. O, take heed how you carry yourselves towards him: not only upon ingenuousness, it is base to be unkind to our Guide, (“Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way?” Jer. ii. 17,) but also upon the account of self-love: for “as we behave ourselves to him, so he will behave himself to us”: “*Ita nos tractat, ut a nobis tractatur.*”—Thomas Jacombe (1622—1687), in “*Morning Exercises.*”

Verses 12.—“*I gave them up . . . and they walked in their own counsels.*” That was to give them up to a spirit of division, to a spirit of discontent, to a spirit of envy and jealousy, to a spirit of ambition, of self-seeking and emulation, and so to a spirit of distraction and confusion, and so to ruin and destruction. Such, and no better, is the issue, when God gives a people up to their own counsels; then they soon become a very chaos, and run themselves into a ruinous heap. As good have no counsel from man, as none but man’s.—Joseph Caryl.

Verse 12.—God calls upon Israel to hear and obey him, they will not: “But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.” What was the result of their refusal? “So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels.” God doth not testify his anger for their contempt of him by sending plague, or flames, or wild beasts among them. He doth not say, Well, since they thus slight my authority, I will be avenged on them to purpose; I will give them up to the sword, or famine, or racking diseases, or greedy devouring lions, which would have been sad and grievous; but he executes on them a far more sad and grievous judgment, when he saith, “*So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels.*” God’s leaving one soul to one lust,* is far worse than leaving him to all the lions in the world. Alas! it will tear the soul worse than a lion can do the body, and rend it in pieces, when there is none to deliver it. God’s giving them up to their own wills, that they walked in their own counsels, is in effect a giving them up to eternal wrath and woe.—George Swinnoek.

Verse 12.—God moves everything in his ordinary providence according to their particular natures, God moves everything ordinarily according to the nature he finds it in. Had we stood in innocency, we had been moved according to that originally righteous nature; but since our fall we are moved according to that nature introduced into us with the expulsion of the other. Our first corruption was our own act, not God’s work; we owe our creation to God, our corruption to our selves. Now since God will govern his creature, I do not see how it can be otherwise, than according to the present nature of the creature, unless God be pleased to alter that nature. God forces no man against his nature; he doth not force the will in conversion, but graciously and powerfully inclines it. He doth never force nor incline the will to sin, but leaves it to the corrupt habits it hath settled in itself: “*So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels;*” counsels of their own framing, not of God’s. He moves the will, which is *sponte mala*, according to its own nature and counsels. As a man flings several things out of his hand, which are of several figures, some spherical, tetragons, cylinders, conics, some round and some square, though the motion be from the agent, yet the variety of their motions is from their own figure and frame; and if any will hold his hand upon a ball in its motion, regularly it will move

* “One’s soul to one’s lust”?

according to its nature and figure ; and a man by casting a bowl out of his hand, is the cause of the motion, but the bad bias is the cause of its irregular motion. The power of action is from God, but the viciousness of that action from our own nature. As when a clock or watch hath some fault in any of the wheels, the man that winds it up, or putting his hand upon the wheels moves them, he is the cause of the motion, but it is the flaw in it, a deficiency of something, is the cause of its erroneous motion ; that error was not from the person that made it, or the person that winds it up, and sets it on going, but from some other cause ; yet till it be mended it will not go otherwise, so long as it is set upon motion. Our motion is from God,—Acts xvii. 28, " In him we move,"—but not the disorder of that motion. It is the fulness of a man's stomach at sea is the cause of his sickness, and not the pilot's government of the ship.

God doth not infuse the lust, or excite it, though he doth present the object about which the lust is exercised. God delivered up Christ to the Jews, he presented him to them, but never commanded them to crucify him, nor infused that malice into them, nor quickened it ; but he, seeing such a frame, withdrew his restraining grace, and left them to the conduct of their own vitiated wills. All the corruption in the world ariseth from lust in us, not from the object which God in his providence presents to us : 2 Peter i. 4, " The corruption that is in the world through lust."—*Stephen Charnock*.

Verse 13.—"Oh that my people had hearkened unto me," etc. God sometimes doth not mind his children when they cry, that they may hereby take occasion to remember how oft he hath cried and they have not minded him. Doth not the Lord cry out to his people of duty, and they do not hear him ? Doth he not complain here of this neglect, not only as a dishonour, but as a grief unto him ? No marvel then if God let his people cry out of misery, and doth not hear them. The Lord shuts his ear that we might consider how we have shut our ears ; yea, he shuts his ears that he may open ours. We are moved to hear and answer the call and command of God, though we find that he doth not hear nor answer our call and cry. If the Lord should always be swift to hear us, how slow should we be in hearing him, and while we have our desires, forget most of our duties.—*Abraham Wright*.

Verse 13.—"Oh that my people had hearkened," etc. God speaks as if he were comforted when he is but heard, or as if we comforted him when we hear him. God beseecheth us, and speaks entreaties to us, that his counsels and commands may be heard : "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me." The Lord tells them indeed it would have proved their consolation (ver. 14) : "I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries." Yet while he speaks so pathetically, he seems to include his own consolation in it as well as theirs. "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me : " it would have been good for them, and it would have given high content to myself.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 13.—"O that my people had hearkened unto me," etc. There is to us a deep mysteriousness in all this ; but the desire of God for our salvation, and right moral state, is here most obviously manifested ; and let us proceed on that which is obvious, not on that which is obscure.—*Thomas Chalmers*.

Verse 13.—"Walked in my ways." None are found in the ways of God, but those who have hearkened to his words.—*W. Wilson*.

Verse 14.—"Turned my hand." God expresseth the utter overthrow of the enemies of his people, but by the turning of a hand : if God do but turn his hand, they are all gone presently, soon subdued. If he do but touch the might, the pomp, the greatness, the riches and the power of all those in the world that are opposers of his church, presently they fall to the ground : a touch from the hand of God will end our wars.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 16.—"Honey out of the rock." The rock spiritually and mystically designs Christ, the Rock of salvation, 1 Cor. x. 4 ; the "honey" out of the rock, the fulness of grace in him, and the blessings of it, the sure mercies of David, and the precious promises of the everlasting covenant ; and the gospel, which is sweeter than the honey or the honey-comb ; and with these such are filled and satisfied who hearken to Christ and walk in his ways ; for, as the whole of what is here said shows what Israel lost by disobedience, it clearly suggests what such enjoy who hear and obey.—*John Gill*.

Verse 16.—"Honey out of the rock." God extracts honey out of the rock—the sweetest springs and pleasures from the hardness of afflictions; from mount Calvary and the cross, the blessings that give greatest delight; whereas the world makes from the fountains of pleasure stones, and rocks of torment.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 16.—"Honey out of the rock." Most travellers who have visited Palestine in summer, have had their attention directed to the abundance of honey, which the bees of the land have stored up in the hollows of trees and in crevices of the rock. In localities where the bare rocks of the desert alone break the sameness of the scene, and all around is suggestive of desolation and death, the traveller has God's care of his chosen people vividly brought to mind, as he sees the honey, which the bees had treasured up beyond his reach, trickling in shining drops down the face of the rock.—*John Duns.*

Verse 16.—When once a people, or a person are accepted of God, he spares no cost, nor thinks anything too costly for them. "He would have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee." I would not have fed thee with wheat only, that's good; but with the finest wheat, that's the best. We put in the margin, "with the fat of wheat"; they should not have the bran, but the flour, and the finest of the flour; they should have had not only honey, but honey out of the rock, which, as naturalists observe, is the best and purest honey. Surely God cannot think any thing of this world too good for his people, who hath not thought the next world too good for them; certainly God cannot think any of these outward enjoyments too good for his people, who hath not thought his Son too good for his people; that's the apostle's argument, Rom. viii. 32: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" even the best of outward good things, when he seeth it good for us.—*Joseph Caryl.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Congregational singing should be general, hearty, joyful. The reasons for this, and the benefits of it.

Verses 1—3.—I. Praise should be sincere. It can come from the people of God only. II. It should be constant: they should praise God at all times. III. It should be special. There should be seasons of special praise. 1. Appointed by God, as Sabbaths and solemn feasts. 2. Demanded by providence on occasion of special deliverances and special mercies. IV. It should be public: "sing aloud:" "bring hither," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—The rule of ordinances and worship; pleas for going beyond it; instances in various churches; the sin and danger of such will-worship.

Verse 5.—What there is in the language of the world which is unintelligible to the sons of God.

Verse 6.—The emancipation of believers. Law-work is burdensome, servile, never completed, unrewarded, more and more irksome. Only the Lord can deliver us from this slavish toil, and he does it by grace and by power. We do well to remember the time of our liberation, exhibit gratitude for it, and live consistently with it.

Verse 7.—I. Answered prayers,—bonds of gratitude. II. Former testing times,—warning memories. III. The present a time for new answers as it is also for fresh tests.

Verse 7.—Waters of Meribah. The various test-points of the believer's life.

Verses 8—10.—I. A compassionate Father, calling to his child: "O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me." II. A jealous sovereign, laying down his law: "There shall no strange god be in thee." III. An all-sufficient Friend, challenging confidence: "I am the Lord thy God: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."—*Richard Cecil.* 1748—1810.

Verses 8, 11, 13.—The command, the disobedience, the regret.

Verse 9.—Idolatry our besetting sin. What are likely to become our idols. The

sin of permitting them so to be. The judgments we may expect. The means we should use to purge ourselves therefrom.

Verse 10.—I. Emptiness supposed in poor sinners: they have lost God. 2. A fill proposed and offered to empty sinners. This is a soul-fill; a filling with all the fullness of God. 3. The party communicating this soul-fill to the sinner: "I," more generally, "I the Lord," in opposition to strange gods. 4. The sinner's duty in order to this communication: "Open thy mouth wide."—*Thomas Boston*.

Verse 10.—I. The God of past mercy: "which brought thee out of Egypt." II. Expects present petitions: "Open thy mouth wide." III. Promises future good: "I will fill it."

Verse 11.—I. Who? "Israel," the chosen, instructed and favoured people. II. What? "would none of me," my laws, promises, calls, worship, etc. III. Of whom? "Of ME," their God, good, kind, loving, etc.

Verses 11, 12.—I. The sin of Israel. They would not hearken. The mouth is opened in attentive hearing: "open thy mouth wide:" but my people," etc. Their sin was greatly aggravated. 1. By what God had done for them. 2. By the gods they had preferred to him. II. The punishment. 1. Its greatness: "I gave them up," etc. 2. Its justice: "They would none of me."—*G. R.*

Verse 13.—The excellent estate of an obedient believer. I. Enemies subdued. II. Enjoyments perpetuated. III. Abundance possessed.

Verses 13, 14.—The sin and loss of the backslider.

Verse 14.—Spiritual enemies best combatted by an obedient life.

Verse 16.—I. Spiritual dainties. II. By whom provided. III. To whom given. IV. With what result—"satisfied."