

GOD'S GRACIOUS CALL AND PRECIOUS PROMISE, CONSIDERED.*

SERMON XLIII.

PSALM lxxx. 10,

Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.

THE great design of the gospel, and of all gospel-ordinances, is to make souls happy, and for this end to bring them to God through Christ, in whom they may find solid and complete satisfaction. All men desire to be happy; they are conscious to themselves of wants, which the natural desire of happiness influence them to get supplied. But, alas! they apply to improper quarters, and suck at those breasts which can never fill them, even those of their lusts. Since Adam forsook God for the creature, mankind have been so intoxicated with creature-sweetness, that they stand as it were chained at the creature's door, begging satisfaction, even after a thousand denials. They cannot lift their eyes to the Lord, they cannot move their feet towards him, till grace break the bands of iron and brass with which they are held.

In the text, the Lord comes to sinners as thus situated, and outbids all others which they in their hearts and lives are following after; and he does this even while they will not look over their shoulder to him, from their madness on their idols. This is the scope of the text: for in this verse the Lord pleads the grand purpose of love laid down, ver. 9, which is, that they should renounce all others for him, give up with their idols, and take him for and instead of all. And to enforce this, he thus reasons with them: 1. I have done for you what all your idols never did, and never could have done, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt." Where were all your strange gods, when Pharaoh refused to let you go? Dent. xxxii. 11, "So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." Look to all the real good that ever you met with, and say, Was it the Lord or your idols that did it for you?—2. I will do and can do for you, what they cannot all do for you: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it abundantly." Many a time you have opened your mouths, and wide enough, to your idols; so wide that it has been no small pain to get them shut again; and yet they remain still empty for them, they were never

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filled. But says the Lord, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Where more particularly observe,

1. That there is an emptiness supposed in poor sinners, which needs to be filled. They have lost God, and a thousand worlds cannot fill up his room. That man who has Christ in his heart, has enough to satisfy him, want what he will. And let a man have what he will, if he has not Christ in him, he has not what can satisfy him. All the devil's trash can never fill the heart; many an empty space is in that heart where Christ is not; which plagues them with a dog-like appetite, which is never satisfied.

2. There is a fill proposed and offered to empty sinners. This is a soul-fill; a filling with all the fulness of God. This is the only thing which can fill the mouth of the soul, which is the mouth meant in the text; for it is an easy thing to find among the creatures a fill to the mouth of the body, which can hold but little; but the whole creation cannot fill the mouth of the soul. The Lord only can fill it, he only can satisfy and still the restless soul, and so make it, after many years, disappear, and fall asleep in the bosom of God; and after the most pinching straits to say, "I have all, and abound."—We have,

3. The party communicating this soul-fill to the sinner: *I*, more generally, "I the Lord," in opposition to strange gods. That fill you could never get from your idols, you shall have from me. More particularly, it is Jesus Christ, the second person, the great treasurer of heaven, and steward of the fulness of God. It is plain that it is the same Lord who brought the Israelites out of Egypt; and this was no other but Christ, who was known under the Old Testament by the God of Israel, *Exod. iii. 2—8*. It was he who wrought that deliverance, as a type and pledge of the great redemption. It was he whom the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire did represent, even God veiled with flesh. He who brought them out of the land of Egypt, he whom they tempted in the wilderness, and this was Christ; *1 Cor. x. 19*, "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents."—We have,

4. The sinner's duty in order to this communication: "Open thy mouth wide." The word here used is, in *Gen. xxvi. 22*, rendered "making room." O the freedom of grace! only make room for a fill, and ye shall have it. Let the soul only, as an hungry infant, lay its mouth by faith on the breasts of Christ's consolations, and they shall flow abundantly. If the spiritual appetite be not wanting, ye shall have a fill; and what can be desired more? unless we would have him to force it upon us. Open thy mouth, do not keep

it close, and say you will have none of him. Open to receive, and he will give. Open it wide, the wider you open, the more that your souls desire of him, you shall get the more. I cannot think the wideness in the text is intended to straiten the offer, but rather informs us that there is a fulness in Christ, sufficient to satisfy the most extended desires of the soul.—From this subject, I take the following

DOCTRINE, That Christ Jesus can and will fill the soul whose mouth is opened wide to receive of and from him.—For illustrating this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew what it is to open the mouth of the soul wide to Christ.

II. How Christ fills the soul, so as no other can do. And then,

III. Conclude with some improvement.—We are then,

I. To shew what it is to open the mouth of the soul wide to Christ.—This opened mouth consists,

1. In a sight of wants. The soul must be brought to a sight of its own emptiness, ere it will open its mouth for a fill from the Lord: Prov. xxvii. 7, “The full soul loatheth an honey-comb: but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.” The want of this was Laodicea’s ruin. She thought herself rich, and increased in goods, and having need of nothing, and knew not that she was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. When Christ comes to the soul, he says to it, as he did to the blind man, “What will ye that I should do unto you?” He makes persons sensible of their diseases, before he applies the remedy, that his free grace may thus be glorified. Jesus, by his word and Spirit, gives the soul a view of God in his glory; and then the soul cries, I want peace with God: a Mediator, a Christ to stand betwixt me and his consuming fire. He gives the soul a view of the tribunal of God, before which it must soon appear: and then it cries, Ah! I want a righteousness, a better righteousness than my own, a complete and everlasting righteousness, without which I can never appear with acceptance before this tribunal.—A view of his sins: and then he cries, Where shall I find pardon?—A view of what the law requires, and of what the sinner is in himself: and then he cries, Ah! I am all wants. I have nothing of myself good, and can do nothing.—This opened mouth consists,

2. In a sense of need. Persons may see their want of those things who are not pinched with felt need, but reign as kings without Christ, and say unto God, Job xxi. 14, 15, “Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit should we have if we pray unto him?” But the soul whose mouth is opened wide, says,

with the prodigal, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" Luke xv. 17. They find that they are undone without Christ. The soul is pressed with that question, What shall I do to be saved? No happiness to the soul without the enjoyment of God, and no enjoyment of him, but through Christ the Mediator between God and man.—This opened mouth consists,

3. In a holy dissatisfaction with all things besides Christ. Clothe a starving man with scarlet, and fill his pockets with gold, and advance him to the highest honours; all this is not meat, and therefore he cannot be satisfied. And to the hungry soul there is none, nothing but Christ, which can give satisfaction. They loathe their lusts, which they loved before. A thousand worlds will not satisfy the soul which sees its need of Christ. When the soul comes to itself again, after it has gone the round of the whole creation for satisfaction, it returns with the report, Eccl. i. 2, "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." It finds at length that the bed is shorter than that one can stretch himself upon it.—This opened mouth consists,

4. In the soul's removing its desires from off vanities, and fixing them on Christ for satisfaction. Like the hungry infant, which has been sucking in vain at this and the other object which was nearest it, and could never rest; when the breast is put in its mouth, it opens its mouth, and fixes there to suck. The soul gives over the pursuit of happiness in lusts, he finds that gall and wormwood are now on these breasts. It ceases from hammering its happiness out of the law, and finds that there is no pleasing that rigorous husband; the ladder of their duties has so often broken with them, that they despair of ever climbing to heaven this way. And so, like men out of breath, in seeking their happiness from other things than Christ, they lie down before the Lord, turning their eyes towards him, that he may take them up, and give them what in vain they have been looking for elsewhere. Their language is, Jer. iii. 23, "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains; truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel."—This opened mouth consists,

5. In an assured expectation of salvation from Christ: Hos. xiv. 3, "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the works of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Matth. xxi. 22, "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." The soul believes that Christ can do it: and so far believes he will do it, as that it ventures on him. Without this, the soul cannot

open its mouth to Christ, but shuts it without hope. Though the hopes may be very faint, yet the trembling hand may receive Christ, and the quivering mouth may be filled.—This opened mouth consists,

Lastly, In a hearty willingness to receive Christ as he offers himself in the gospel. Christ says, "I am the bread of life;" the soul is well content to receive him as such, for all and instead of all. They fed on the husks before, and loathed the manna; now nothing relishes so well with them as the bread which came down from heaven. They are brought over all their objections against him, and are well content to venture their souls on him, as it is he alone who can fill them with all the fulness of God.—We now proceed,

II. To shew how Christ fills the soul so as no other can do: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." This promise imports four things.—It imports,

1. Such a suitableness in him to the necessities of the soul, as is to be found in no other. Sinners seeking a fill of the creatures, are but feeding on wind, which can never satisfy. There is no suitableness betwixt the desires of an immortal soul, and the produce of this earth: Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." What avail riches, honours, and pleasures, to a soul pressed with guilt! But Christ is suited to all the wants of the soul. Speaking of the excellence, suitableness, and fulness of his salvation, he says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear: and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see," Rev. iii. 18. His blood and Spirit will answer all cases which the soul can be in.—The words import,

2. That there is a sufficiency in Christ for all their needs: Col. i. 19, "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." There is enough in him to satisfy all the desires of the soul. Persons may travel through the whole creation, ere they find an object commensurable to the desires of their souls; but when the soul comes to Christ, it then and there finds an object, than which the soul, when extending its desires to the utmost, cannot crave more. Here, though our boundless desires should launch forth into this ocean, they shall never be able to reach the bottom, or find the shore.—The words import,

3. That there is a communication of this suitable sufficiency unto that soul which opens its mouth wide to receive it. Thus,

(1.) Christ gives himself to that soul, so that such an one might

say, Song ii. 16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his;" or, with Thomas, cry, "My Lord, and my God." They have him by the surest tenor of an indissoluble union; John vi. 56, "He that eateth my flesh," says Jesus, "and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him," A wicked man may have many poor *mys*, Dan. iv. 30, compare chap. ii. 47. But they cannot call God theirs; and besides, they want a thousand things more than what they have. But what want can they have who want Jesus, who is all in all?

(2.) Christ gives them all good with himself: 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?" Psalm lxxxiv. 11, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Having a right to himself, they may write their names upon, and claim a title to, all that are his. They are rich, seeing they are married to Jesus, the heir of all things. No sooner does the soul close with Christ, than they get this right; and though they get not all presently in hand, yet they have all in hope; a hope of which they will never be ashamed.—The words import,

4. The soul's satisfaction upon that communication. In what measure the soul opens its mouth to Christ, in that measure Christ communicates of his fulness; for this is the standing rule, "According to thy faith, so be it unto thee." And in what measure Christ communicates of himself to the soul, so the soul has that satisfaction. Accordingly the soul rests in Christ, and having enough in him, never goes out, as it was wont, to beg at the world's door: John iv. 14, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up to everlasting life." "It is enough," said Jacob, "Joseph is yet alive." When all the cisterns are dried up, the believer has enough. He can rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation, Hab. iii. 17. He can say also with Paul, Phil. iv. 18, "But I have all, and abound." I am full; and no wonder, for the soul having Christ, has,

(1.) A fulness of merit to look to: 1 John i. 7, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." When the soul looks within itself, it sees a fulness of guilt, debt, misery, and poverty. It sees heart, lips, life, and duties, all full of sin; sins which tears of blood and rivers of oil cannot wash away. But, looking to Christ, it sees a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 1. The rock struck by the rod of justice, and the waters gushing out, and following them through the wilderness, a sea to overwhelm all their guilt! Mic. vii. 19, "He will turn again, he

will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."—The soul sees,

(2.) A fulness of spirit in Christ to take away the power of sin. He hath the seven Spirits of God, Rev. iii. 1. When they look within themselves, they see a very scanty measure of the Spirit. When they look above them to the Head, they see it there without measure poured out upon their Head, to that very end that it may go down to the skirts of his garments, even to every member of his mystical body.—The soul sees,

(3.) A fulness of grace in him, lodged in him as the common storehouse of all the saints: John i. 16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." If they want wisdom, or righteousness, or sanctification, they have it in him: 1 Cor. i. 30, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." They have all in him; and seeing God treats with them no other way but as in him, they are complete in him, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, who is the Head of all principality and power."—I come now,

III. To conclude with some short improvement. And this only in a use of exhortation.

I would exhort you, then, to come to Christ with enlarged desires, that your souls may be filled. I direct you to one who can give your souls full satisfaction. Open your mouths wide, O communicants! Open your mouths wide, one and all of you, make enlarged demands from Christ the Saviour.—To prevail with you in complying with this exhortation, I offer you the following motives:—

MOT. 1. Ye have many times opened your mouths wide to the world, and your lusts, but were you to this day ever filled? Prov. xxiii. 5, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle towards heaven." Have you not enlarged your desires as hell? If there had been any satisfaction which you could have got out of Christ, have you not squeezed so hard as that you would certainly have pressed it out? But you have never got it, and never shall get it there. Come, then, to Christ, and try him.

MOT. 2. Has not the world and your lusts oftentimes rewarded your love with hatred? When you have been hammering for satisfaction at these things, have you not struck fire instead of water, out of these barren rocks, and lain down in sorrow? O! if you had bestowed that strength of affection and desire on Christ, which you have on these things, ye had never been so rewarded.

MOT. 3. If Christ fills you not, you shall never be filled. Many have sucked at these breasts which you are on, but never one came speed; as little shall you; Eccl. ii. 12, "And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which has been already done?" There was a sign of emptiness hung out at the creature's door in paradise, the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And has that vanity which sin subjected them to since filled up that emptiness? No, no. Ah! you shall as soon grasp your arms full of shadows and dreams, as fill your souls without Christ.

MOT. 4. Consider that Christ can and will fill your souls, if you will only open your mouths wide, and receive him.—For consider,

(1.) That all fulness is in him: Col. i. 19, "For it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." He is the storehouse of all fulness: it dwells in him, it can never be missed there. The fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in him bodily, Col. ii. 9. Can there be ever any want with him?—Consider,

(2.) That the fulness that is in him is to be communicated by him: John i. 16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." It is lodged there to be communicated from him to poor souls: Zech. xiii. 1, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." The fulness of Christ is not the fulness of a vessel, but of a fountain that casts forth its waters, and yet hath still enough.—Consider,

(3.) That it belongs to him, and to him alone, to distribute that fulness: John v. 22, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." He is the great steward of the fulness of God. The keys hang at his girdle. Never any soul was filled, but whom he filled. The Father directs the hungry soul to his Son: Matth. xvii. 5, "This," says he, "is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." The Spirit points you to Christ. And Christ is saying to you what Joseph said to his Father and brethren: Gen. xlv. 9—11, "Haste you, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not. And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou and thy children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast. And there will I nourish thee, (for yet there are five years of famine), lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty."—Consider,

(4.) That you have his word for it, that he will do it: Isa. lv. 1, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that

hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price." John vi. 37, "All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out." And you have the testimony of them who have gone before you: Luke i. 52, 53, "He has exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things."

Here, however, there may be proposed this objection. Is it possible for a person to find satisfaction in such a course, turning his back on the world and its lusts? ANSW. Come and see. The saints have found and do find satisfaction, and this such as has made them despise the smiles and frown of the world: Psalm iv. 7, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time when their corn and their wine increased: Heb. xi. 24—26, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Esteeming the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of reward." Is there any perfection or sweetness in the creature but what comes from God? does not the whole creation shine with borrowed light? If so, then God must be more sweet, infinitely more sweet, than all the creatures, even if combined together. And does not the natural constitution of the soul call for the enjoyment of an infinite good? It must then be the greatest reality.

Still, however, some may press this objection, But will he fill me who am full of sin? ANSW. Christ fills freely, as freely as the rain falls, and the sun shines, without hire, and his fulness will wear out the fulness of sin: Isa. i. 18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool." Amen.

THE NATURE AND SOURCE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.*

SERMON XLIV.

JOHN vi. 57,

He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

You have been eating the bread of the Lord: who those are who have done this may be already known; happy are those who

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