

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

OPENING THE MOUTH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

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“Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.”—Psalm lxxxi. 10.

SOME have considered that our text contains an allusion to a singular custom of showing favour which has been occasionally adopted by eastern monarchs. It is not a very long time ago that a former Shah of Persia bade an ambassador, who was in great favour with him, open his mouth, and when he had done so the monarch filled it with pearls and gems of great value, which of course were a present to him. This certainly affords an illustration of the text, even if the passage contains no allusion to it. If we will but open the mouth of our desire, God will give to us mercies infinitely more precious than the rarest gems. I warrant you that if any emperor or king should bid us open our mouths that we might have them filled with diamonds, we should be very sure to extend them to their largest possible capacity, and hence this custom may serve as a good enforcement of the text. Open thy mouth wide, for God will not fill it with secondary things, but will satisfy thee with divine mercies of exceeding preciousness.

I think, however, that the illustration which we have mentioned is far fetched, and I seldom like an explanation of a passage of Scripture which demands the introduction of a very rare incident. Illustrations are used in Scripture not to perplex us, but to render the teaching more clear. We will therefore look to some commoner act of eastern life for the explanatory allusion. Those who have been at the tables of the Orientals know that there is another very common custom which meets the case. The host, when you are at supper, will take the fattest portions of the lamb, if that happens to be the viand, and he will apportion them to you. He may even take up the fattest and choicest morsels in his hand, and, asking you to open your mouth, he will place them in it. This is a common practice of the country, and lies at the bottom of many a Scriptural expression. “Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed

like the eagles ;” “ My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips ;” and a great many other texts which I might quote, all allude to that custom. A man greatly beloved would be asked to open his mouth wide that he might receive a very large portion of the dainties before him.

I confess, however, that I am not much enamoured with even this simile. I believe it to be a valuable side light, but I had rather, after all, look to nature for an illustration than dwell upon a custom which is purely oriental, and is hardly relished by our western delicacy. Come with me, then, to the woods, where the songsters of the grove have built their habitations. Look at the little birds in the nest : for there you have the text. They are newly hatched, and unable to feed themselves, and therefore they are wholly dependent upon the parent birds. When I have peeped into their abode they seemed to me to be all mouth and beak, with but faint trace of wing. If you put out your finger, or dangle a worm near them, no feature strikes you but those gaping ravenous mouths ! When the mother-bird brings food she never has to ask the little ones to open their mouths wide ; her only difficulty is to fill the great width which they are quite sure to present to her : appetite and eagerness are never lacking, they are utterly insatiable. If you want my text before your eye in living realisation, only picture a nest of little birds reaching up their mouths, and all opening them as wide as they can. Instead of the poor little mother-bird that has been hard at work to gather a scanty portion for one of them, you have an infinite God filling all open mouths, and bidding them open again, for he is able to fill them however many they may be, or however vast their needs. It is that great Lord of ours of whom it is written, “ He shall cover thee with his feathers and under his wings shalt thou trust,” who now speaks to us, as little birds, and says, “ Open your mouths wide, for I will fill them.” That is at any rate a pleasing illustration of the text, even if it be not the exact idea which was in the psalmist’s mind.

The text divides itself into *the exhortation* and *the promise*.

I. The exhortation is, “ OPEN THY MOUTH WIDE.”

How are we to do this ? The precept relates to prayer, and desire, and the like ; but there is here also an exhortation to *labour after a great sense of need*. For what makes a bird open its mouth wide but its hunger ? The young ravens cry because they want food, and nobody will ever open his mouth wide for spiritual blessings until he has a very deep and solemn sense of his need before God. You sinners will never pray till you know you want something : why should you ? All the prayers offered by people who have no wants are so much vain complimenting of God. If you have no sense of need how can you pray ? Would you knock at the door of charity, and then tell the good man of the house that you require nothing of him ? Is not that man an arrant trifler who rings the surgery bell, but tells the surgeon that he has nothing the matter with him, and does not need his care. Prayers that are not based upon a sense of need are mockeries.

And I say this to Christians too. You never pray, brethren, except when you are in need ; and rest assured when you think you have no more needs, you have lost the strongest motive for prayer and the

main element of power in it. You may feel at times that there is little to request on your own account, and you may rejoice that the Lord has filled you to the full for the time being; but then there are the needs of the church and of the world, and these should press upon your heart as if they were your own. You cannot pray without a sense of need, it is out of the question. The man who comes to you begging because he has not a night's lodging, or has not broken his fast all day, how well he begs; you do not need to send him to school to learn the art of mendicancy, his hungry belly makes him eloquent: and so when a man feels he must have heavenly blessings or be lost; or when he feels that being saved he must still be kept by daily grace, or else he will start aside; or when he feels that his work of faith and labour of love will be good for nothing without the divine blessing, or when he feels that the church must have the anointing of the Holy One, and that the world needs a visitation from God:—when any of these needs solemnly weigh upon his soul, then it is that he prays. The man does not open his mouth wide till he is conscious of a great want, which only the Lord himself can supply. I exhort you, therefore, dear brethren, to shake off the idea of being rich and increased in goods, and having need of nothing, for this proud notion will strangle prayer. You are weakness itself, and emptiness itself, and a mass of sin and misery, apart from God your Father, and Christ your Redeemer, and the Spirit the indweller; and when you know this, then you will open your mouth wide. Airy notions about having reached a higher life, and being perfect, will make fine gentlemen of you, but will spoil you for being beggars at the mercy-seat. The mouth of dire necessity God always fills, but pride has short commons, for is it not one of the proverbs of his kingdom, “He hath filled the hungry with good things; but the rich he hath sent empty away”?

Then, dear friends, next *seek after an intense and vehement desire*, for the mouth is opened wide only when the desire becomes intense. You know how David says, “I opened my mouth and panted.” You have seen a dog after a long run; how he stands with opened mouth panting for life and breath. Oh, that we had desires after God and divine things strong enough to make us thus open our mouth and pant! We may never have seen a stag *in extremis*, but I dare say David had. He had seen it in the fierce hunt, when it longed to lave its smoking sides in the water brooks and to drink long draughts, and he said, “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.” Nothing puts such energy into prayer as intense anguish of desire. Desire comes out of a sense of want; and in proportion as the necessity is overwhelming, the fervency of the desire will be vehement. My brethren, we have not, because, although we ask, we use a kind of asking which is as though we asked not. An old Puritan says, “He that prays to God without fervour asks to be denied.” There is a way of asking for a thing in which the person to whom the request is made finds it very easy to decline the request, but persons in dire necessity understand how to put the case, so that only a very hard-hearted person could say “no.” They know how to place their petition in such a way that the request wins, not merely because of the rightness of the petition, but also

because of the very style in which it is put. We must learn how to pray with strong crying and tears, for there are mercies which cannot be gained by any other mode of supplicating. Did you ever try your little child by holding fast in your hand something that he wanted? You wished to see whether he had perseverance enough to pull open your fingers one by one to get what he wished for; and you have shut your hand very tight, and tried his endeavours so long that at last you have seen the big round tear stand in his eye, and then you have held out no longer. The tear opens the hand. I believe that our heavenly Father exercises us in that manner at times until he gets us right down to this—that we *must* have it, and we shall die if we do not have it, because it is for his glory, and we have his promise for it. When we come to that point we are where the Lord meant us to be, and having brought us there he gives us our desire, having already doubled the blessing by stirring us up to vehemency. Open thy mouth wide man! Do not play at praying. Nobody is saved between sleeping and waking, and nobody wins rich blessings by being lukewarm. I have heard mothers say of a child that “he cried all over,” and that is the right way to pray. Let your whole man wrestle with the Most High. “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” Deep necessity and urgent desire are two great openers of the mouth in prayer.

To my mind the pith of the text may be compressed into such words as these—*Ask for large things*. Do not restrict your requests and pray with bated breath, but plead with the great God for great things, such as it will be to his glory to bestow. In this point we too often fail. I remember praying before I preached in a certain provincial town, and asking the Lord that he would enable at least one poor soul to lay hold on Christ. I went home to tea with a very worthy brother, and a fine old Christian gentleman at the tea-table said to me very kindly, “I do not know what you did with your faith this afternoon when you were praying, for you asked the Lord to give you one soul, and the sermon was such that I saw no reason why it should not be blessed to a thousand. I could not say ‘Amen’ to such a very narrow prayer as that. Why,” said he, “Man alive! with such a gospel as you were preaching, and such a crowd of people, you might as well have asked for a thousand souls as one.” I thought so too, and confessed the poverty of my prayer. Brethren, many of us have made great mistakes, and have shut ourselves up in the cells of poverty when our feet might have stood in a large room. We have laid down pipes too small to bring us a full current of blessing. We have half killed our prayers by tight-lacing them, even as foolish mothers kill their daughters. Our cup is small, and we blame the fountain. The Israelites, according to this psalm, did not believe in God as they should; they did not expect their enemies to be driven out, nor hope to be fed with the finest of the wheat. They thought their God was a commonplace God, like the gods of Egypt. They did not know what a rich, generous, great-hearted, large-giving God he is, and so they failed in asking, and therefore they did not obtain the richest boons of grace. Christians should elevate the scale of their praying and enlarge their requests, and never let it be said that they lose blessings solely by failing to ask for them.

Dear brethren and sisters, we may well ask great things, for we are asking of *a great God*, who fills immensity, who has all power, who has all blessings in his stores. If we were to ask him for a world, it is no more for him to bestow a world than it would be for us to give away a crumb. When the poor widow gave her two mites she gave her all, and knowing her poverty one would ask very little of her, and expect even less; but when you ask of a king you do not expect two mites from him. That poor woman who said "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the Master's table," was far nearer the mark than most of us, for much as she valued the inestimable blessing which she sought, she reckoned it as being nothing more than a crumb as it came from God. The greatest blessings which can yet be received through Jesus Christ, though we cannot prize them enough, and they are beyond all calculation precious, are little in comparison with the unspeakable gift of his Son, which has already been bestowed. Open your mouth wide, for wide are the supplies of love, and boundless the riches of the sovereign grace of so great a God.

Besides his greatness, remember his *goodness*. The good Lord delights to give, it does not diminish his possessions, but affords him satisfaction. The sun is just as bright, notwithstanding all his shining, as if he had stored up his light. It is the sun's nature to shine, and it may as well shine upon us as anywhere else; and it is God's delight to distribute his goodness and bless his creatures, and therefore we may well ask large things from one whose very nature it is to scatter his fulness among the poor and needy. Remember, dear brethren and sisters, what he has already done for us. "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee up out of Egypt," says he, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." See what he has done. Is it a trifle to have had all your sins forgiven, to have received a new heart and a right spirit, to have been saved by the precious blood of his dear Son? If we made our prayers to scale, if they were proportioned to the measure of God's past favours, what great prayers they would be! I love a gospel on a grand scale. I cannot bear to see anything about it lowered, or cut down, not even the terrors of it. I am certain that those who make out the punishment of the wicked to be upon a smaller scale must, ere long, diminish the glory of the atonement, and bring down their conceptions of God himself, for they are all proportioned: but you and I, who see everything to be grand, vast, infinite, ought to open our mouths wide, to keep our praying somewhat proportionate to the condition of things around us.

Remember, beloved brethren and sisters, what *great pleas* you have to urge when you come before God. Your main argument is the gift of his dear Son. Now, if you pray according to that plea, you will have this consideration to support you—"He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things"? What a word is that—"all things!" Your prayers cannot outrun those comprehensive words—"all things." Should you not open wide your mouth? Would you employ before God the magnificent plea of the atoning blood, and then come down to ask for pence and halfpence, when you might as well have countless riches? Will you ask for enough grace to keep you out of hell, when

you might have grace enough to make you habitually reside in the suburbs of heaven? Will you ask to be useful to two or three, when you might with the same plea prevail to be a spiritual benefactor to hundreds and thousands? He deserves to be poor who has no desire to be rich, and will not even take the trouble to ask for wealth. He who will not so much as open his mouth must expect no pity should he starve. Oh, beloved, do not pinch yourselves, but ask the largest conceivable boons. Spread your most capacious net, for the multitude of fish will fill it; dig the deepest pools, for the rain will brim them; bring forth all your empty vessels, for the oil shall be multiplied till all are overflowing.

Beloved, let us ask *great things for ourselves*. I do not mean let us ask great temporal blessings: we may leave everything of that kind with God, and this is the limit he puts to such prayer:—"Give us day by day our daily bread." Having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But as for spiritual things, ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. Here the treasury has neither lock nor key. The lid is taken off from the casket; help yourself, and if you are straitened you are not straitened in God, you are straitened in your own bowels. I beseech you, young Christians, do not be satisfied with getting as much grace as the people you live with, who profess to be Christians; for there are hosts of them that I would not like to risk my soul with. I am not their judge, but *I think, I think* it will be an extraordinary thing if they get into heaven. I know some very loud-mouthed talkers whose actions are not pretty at all, and the less said about them the better. I mean some professors when I speak thus. Members of churches, I mean. Now, do not you young people make them your standard: get far beyond them. Outstrip the ordinary run of Christians, who are *consistent*, and no more. I would urge you to seek far higher things than they possess. They are said to be "consistent," though I do not know what they are consistent with. They do nothing that is grossly wrong, and they are good, ordinary, respectable people, but as to joy in the Lord, and being filled with the Holy Spirit, and real faith—daring faith, and love, and zeal for God's glory, and agony for the conversion of souls, why, large numbers of very consistent people know nothing about these things except when they read about them in the Bible. Surely their condition is more consistent with membership in Laodicea than in the New Jerusalem; their consistency is not consistency with the divine will, but a miserable consistency with their own dead-and-alive profession. Oh, you that are beginners in the divine life, I pray you be not as your fathers. Do not take any of us for a standard. We are a good-for-nothing generation, taking us all round, and there had need be a far better race springing up, that shall really believe and act upon their faith, and so live unto God with an intenser, stronger, mightier life than most of us have ever realised. Open thy mouth wide, young Christian, for a large measure of the Holy Spirit, and for a mighty fulness of the life of God, that it may be in thee a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

Open your mouths wide, dear friends, and ask *great things for the church*. The church of God, I hope, is in a better condition than she was some years ago, but we have not yet learned what it is to believe in

great works being done for God. There are still churches which if they were to have half-a-dozen added to them in a year, would be intensely satisfied, if not overjoyed, instead of calling for prayer and fasting and humiliation because so few are brought to Christ. There are church members around us who do not believe in many people being converted at once. If the gospel were preached so that a dozen were brought in at one time, they would impute it to undue excitement, and doubt its being the work of the Spirit of God, though we have the New Testament, and the Acts of the Apostles especially, to lead us to expect such things. There are churches, to which if God were to send a hundred converts at once, they would not receive them, but would put them through a rigid quarantine; and you may be sure our heavenly Father will not send his new-born babes to places where they will not be cheerfully admitted. There are certain churches whose modes of testing and trying are such that the young lambs would be torn to bits before they would get into the green pastures, and there would hardly be two legs and a piece of an ear left after they had passed the examination: the Good Shepherd will not send his lambs where such a tribe of wolves stand gaping for prey. Pray for the church that she may have greater faith in her God, greater belief in the gospel which she preaches, greater closeness of walk with Jesus, greater care to obey her Master's precepts; and then you may open your mouth wide and expect to see the kingdom of Christ more fully come.

Open thy mouth for *this great city*. Who can think what a city we live in without desiring to be mighty in prayer for it? At this moment Scotland is a land where religion has mighty influence, and I trace it mainly to the prayers of John Knox. His mighty pleadings with God anchored Scotland to the gospel, and she cannot get away from it. We have urgent need to pray for England in these evil times. Many are preying *upon* her, we had need to pray *for* her. The darkness thickens; amongst the learned it has blackened into Egyptian night, and among the illiterate it is as the valley of the shadow of death. Scepticism is descending upon us like a horrible mist, chilling faith even to the very marrow of her bones; and superstition like a feverish miasma pollutes the air. We have need to cry to the Lord to do some great work in these days—to smite his enemies upon the cheek-bone, and to send forth his power among his friends.

I think I have explained sufficiently that the text means, ask great things; but one more remark I must offer, and that is that many of us have need to *ask for enlarged capacities*. It would be of no use to open your mouth if you could not swallow what was put into it, or if you could not digest it after you had swallowed it; and there are many precious truths of the gospel which uninstructed believers could not digest if they knew them, and therefore there is great need that their minds should be strengthened and fitted to feed upon strong meat. The grand truths of the covenant, the doctrines of election and predestination, the glorious facts of the immutable love of God, and the indissoluble union of the saints with Christ, and their consequent everlasting safety,—all these are sublime matters which cannot be appreciated by every novice, but require a spiritually educated mind to enjoy them. Thousands of professors sneer at these eternal

verities because they have not the spiritual digestion which could assimilate such grand soul-feeding meat. They remind me of little, conceited boys affecting to despise the diet of men because they themselves have no taste except for sugar-plums and sponge cakes. There are many mercies which persons ask for, and if God were to bestow them they would not know what to do with them: it would be like giving them a white elephant; they would not know where or how to keep it. Yonder brother asks for more talent, and yet he does not use what he has already. Another brother begs the Lord to make him successful in his work, but he would be top-heavy, and proud, and exalted above measure if he were favoured with a little success. One man craves that he may know, but his knowledge would puff him up; another prays that he may feel, but his feelings would drown his faith. If we had more room for the Lord's gifts we should receive more. I have half a mind to exhort you to imitate the rich fool, and pull down your barns and build greater. He was a fool because he meant to gather a store of wheat and grain of the earth, but if you can build greater barns to hold the precious grace which comes from heaven you will be wise indeed. God will not give you what you cannot receive or put to healthy use. But, oh, pray to him, "Lord, enlarge my heart, expand my soul, and give me a nobler mind, more free from selfishness, less cramped with ideas of my own consequence; make me less important, more loving, more careful for the souls of others, more ambitious for thy glory, more intensely consecrated to thy word and will." While self hoards up its treasures there is no room for divine things, and the surest way for our enlargement is to turn out the vile stuff. Tobiah's furniture is in the chamber of the house of the Lord, and out it must go, and then there will be room for the treasure which the Master bestows.

II. The second head is the promise. "Open thy mouth wide, AND I WILL FILL IT."

You might expect such a promise as that. You could not think it possible for the Lord to say, "Open your mouths for nothing." It would not be according to his usual way of procedure. He does not set his servants praying and then say somewhere behind their backs, "they shall seek my face in vain." Tantalus belongs to the heathen mythology, not to the Christian's experience. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

I gather from this promise, first, that *it is a promise only made to those who do open their mouths wide*. Some brethren never get their mouths filled because they never open them to any extent. They ask for some little mercy, and they may get it, or may not; there is no promise about such shut-mouthed prayers, but if they had opened their mouths wide they would to a certainty have had the mouth-filling blessing. With the world it is, the less you ask for the more likely you will be to obtain it, but God's thoughts are not as our thoughts: with God the more you ask the more likely are you to be heard. Half open your mouth and it may or may not be filled, but "Open your mouth *wide*, and I *will* fill it." We always pray well and successfully when the Spirit of God enables us to stand on elevated ground, and plead on Godlike terms for blessings which for value, number, and

greatness are worthy of the infinite bounty of Jehovah. We are then dealing with God as he loves to be dealt with, for he is a rich and great God, and loves to be approached with great prayers and great requests, and when we draw near in that fashion we shall be quite sure to succeed. I would encourage dear brethren and sisters who seem to have failed in their supplications to enquire whether they may not have failed because their requests were too little. God seems to say to his servant, "Thou hast not asked enough. Come, man, thou art trifling with me. Here is my mercy-seat; I am rich, infinitely rich, and willing to give thee according to thy desires, and thou art asking me for mere odds and ends. Do not play with me in this way. Ask for something which I can feel a pleasure in giving to you—something worthy of a God." "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Should not this thought greatly strengthen us when next we draw near to God in prayer?

Remember, too, that *this is a promise given by one who can fulfil it and will.* "Open thy mouth wide, and I *will* fill it" is a sort of challenge. "See whether you can ask for more than I can give you." Try whether your faith can outrun your God. See whether you can expect more of God than he will bestow. Take his promise and challenge him, and see whether he will run back from it. He promises great things and unsearchable, let your soul's necessities impel you to ask for the greatest conceivable blessings, and see whether he will deny you. "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, and see." Oh, if Israel had been in an experimenting mind what wonders would they have seen! How would the windows of heaven have been flung back, and infinite good have been showered down! But they were not in a praying mood. God encouraged them to ask by the favour with which he had surrounded them, for of old he had scattered manna about their habitations, and from the smitten rock he had drawn forth flowing streams. Thus he seemed to say to them, "Oh, Israel, see how you are surrounded with miracles. Heaven and earth are made subservient to you. Nothing is too hard for me: I open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the deserts. Believe in me, and act according to the scale upon which I am acting to you, and see whether I shall fail in anything." Even so the Lord puts it to you, dear brethren, and it is not an empty vaunt. He is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

Oh, what stories I could tell here of my own experience if it did not seem like egotism. When I read, as I continually do, slurs put upon our prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God, and find that it has become a current opinion that there really is no such a thing as an answer to prayer I feel indignant. Why, sirs, I am as sure that God hears my prayers as I am certain that you hear me. To me the energy of prayer is as self-evident as the weight of a substance, or the force of a motive power. The law of gravitation I might doubt, but the law that God hears prayer I cannot doubt. The wonder to me is that men should stand up and assert that God does not hear prayer when they cannot be supposed to know everything, and dare not claim to have any very special

acquaintance with prayer itself, such as to qualify them to calculate its results. Those who deny the efficacy of prayer never pray ; nay, are not capable of offering prevalent prayer. Why do they speak so positively? What do they know about it? How dare they, as philosophers, speak dogmatically of that which they have never tried? I can say, and I do say it honestly, that hundreds of times, about all sorts of things, I have taken my case to God and have obtained the desire of my heart or something far better, and that not by mere coincidence, as these objectors assert, but in a manner palpably in reply to my pleadings. There are multitudes of brethren and sisters here who, from their own experience, can bear the same witness. Yet a fellow gets up who never tried prayer, and says it is of no avail. We find it hard to have patience with him. How does he know? He reminds me of the Irish prisoner who was brought up for murder, and half-a-dozen people swore that they had seen him do the deed. "Your lordship," said he, "I could bring ten times as many that *didn't* see me do it." Yes, but that was no evidence at all; and in the same way these people have the impudence to set up their theory on no better grounds than the fact that they do not pray and God does not hear them. What is the good of such evidence? We knew he would not hear them if they did not pray. When he does hear simple men and women, guileless persons who, if they were put into the witness-box, would be reckoned to be the best witnesses a court could have, is their witness to go for nothing? And others of us, whose character, I trust, would bear us through any cross-examination,—are we to assert that God has answered our prayers, and be prepared to die to prove our sincerity, if need be, and yet be told that men who have not tried it, and say it is not so, are philosophers, and are to be believed sooner than we are? We may not be philosophers, but we are honest men, and have done nothing to make our testimony unreliable. It is easy to call us fools, but hard names prove nothing but the weakness of those who use them. Take Christians as a rule and they are not less sharp-witted than sceptics; indeed, even when they have been fanatical, they have seldom said or done such unwise things as sceptical philosophers have propounded and attempted to carry out. However, little matters it what the ungodly say, the foundation of God standeth sure. Oh, brethren, we will prove the power of prayer more than ever. If we have asked and had, we will ask more and we shall have more. If we have opened our mouths and God has filled them, we will open our mouths wider and obtain a larger blessing. The very best way to put to rout the falsehood of these philosophic atheists is more real prayer: facts are unanswerable.

Christian brethren, look at the promise again. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," and then answer the question—*how will the Lord fill our mouth?*

First, he will fill it with *prayers*. Do you ever feel as if you could not pray? Do not yield to the feeling, for then is the time to pray. When you cannot pray you *must* pray. Hold your empty mouth open before God, for the Holy Spirit to put the prayer into it. I have come away from attempting to pray, and felt I did not pray; and the next time I have knelt down I have been very fluent in prayer, and yet there was more real prayer in my groaning and sighing and heaving heart

when I thought I failed, than there was in the fluency of the second occasion. Open thy mouth wide, dear brother, and God will fill it with petitions of an acceptable kind. The Holy Spirit will give you "groanings that cannot be uttered." No prayer excels that in which the creature feels as if it could not pray and did not pray, and yet the Creator himself strives mightily within.

Then, open thy mouth wide, and he will fill it with *the actual blessings*. He will not merely put blessings into your hands, but he will fill your mouth with them. It is one thing to have the cup of blessing in your hand, and quite another thing to drink thereof. Many a man possesses what he never enjoys: the fruit on the tree is his own, but its sweet flavour never gladdens his mouth. When the Lord in love bestows a blessing he teaches us how to enjoy it. He gives us the essence of the meat, the soul of the solace, the juice of the vine, the heart of the joy, not merely the legal claim to it but the actual enjoyment of it. This is the cream of the cream, the mercy of the mercy, the filling of the mouth with the promised good.

The Lord will also fill our mouth with *praises*. Open thy mouth wide, and God will fill it with songs, with shouts, with gratitude which cannot be expressed in words. Some of us know what it means to have our mouths so full of God's praises all the day long that we have wanted all mankind and all the angels to help us magnify the Lord. Open your mouths wide, then, and God will fill them with prayer, with blessing, and with praise.

In conclusion, is there not very much of rebuke in this to most of us? Parents, have you prayed for the salvation of your children—vehemently and earnestly? All your children? Teachers in the classes, have you expected the conversion of all your children, and prayed for it? Preachers of the gospel, have you looked for many conversions and prayed for them? Brethren who labour for Christ, in any capacity, have you expected to see London converted to God, and looked for it and worked for it? In gospel fisheries we generally catch what we fish for; if we angle with a fly we may get one fish, but if we know how to use the great drag-net, by mighty faith we shall take one hundred and fifty and three great fishes, and for all that the net will not be broken. Open thy mouth wide, brother, and be rebuked to think thou hast not opened it wide before.

But is there not also a word here of consolation to the sinner? "Open thy mouth wide," saith God, even to thee, "and I will fill it." What do you want, sinner? "Well, I want a little comfort." Do not ask for it, brother. Ask for the Lord Jesus Christ at once. "Open thy mouth wide." "Oh, I want a little peace. I am so troubled." Do not ask for it, brother. Ask for a whole Christ and a perfect salvation now. "I want to feel some measure of impression under this sermon." Do not pray for it, brother. Ask God for a new heart and a right spirit outright, and now. "Open thy mouth wide." "Should I have it if I asked for it?" It is written, "He that asketh receiveth; he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." If thou believest on the Lord Jesus Christ, thou shalt have this unspeakably great blessing of being immediately saved; for "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life." "Open thy mouth

wide." "But I am such a sinner." Open thy mouth, man: the promise makes no limit as to who you are. "But I am—I am—." There, I mind not *what* you are. Open your mouth, man! Open your mouth wide. If we were to gather together in one place all the little waifs and strays of London streets, and were to say to them, "Children, we are going to give you a good dinner, and all you have to do is to open your mouths," I do not suppose one little hungry wretch would shut his mouth, or turn away muttering, "I am not fit." Oh dear, no! Be you quite sure that they would open their mouths if they were hungry, and would need no pressing either: and so will you too, if the Spirit of God has made you hunger and thirst after righteousness. Open your mouth wide; believing that Jesus is the Christ; trust your soul with him, and ask now for immediate pardon through his precious blood, and you will not be denied. May the Holy Spirit make you hungry, and then your longing mouth shall be filled, and God shall have all the glory.

May his blessing rest upon you for Christ's sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm lxxxi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—978, 986, 980.

By the blessing of God I continue to gather strength, and, although still very weak, I hope after two more Sabbaths to resume my work. Meanwhile the needs of the Stockwell Orphanage call for the generous help of all my friends. God will certainly supply all that is wanted, but he does so through his stewards; to those stewards the question is hereby put, "How much ought you to send towards the support of the two hundred and forty orphans at Stockwell?" I have no anxiety but I feel it right to use the means.—C. H. SPURGEON, Clapham, London.