

## **GOD MAY GIVE US UP TO OUR SINS**

Psalm 81: 1-16 and Romans 1: 21-28 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

One of the most interesting and fascinating aspects of Psalm 81 is the final word of Asaph, as he penned his final words of the psalm. He writes, “But I would feed you with the finest of wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.” I love this picture of honey in the rock. Once in a while, travelers and tourists visiting Palestine in the summer time, have had a special experience that is unforgettable. Sometimes when the tour guide is not pushed on a day’s plan, he ventures with his tour bus load of folk. He leads them on a walking tour, and then knowing what he wants to help them all find, he leads them to honey oozing out of a rock. To look at the landscape in Israel, the bare rocks, the desolation and death in the desert, and then to see sweet honey oozing out of a rock—what an amazing sight it is! It is a wonderful picture of God’s care for His people. Asaph had doubtless seen this phenomena more than once. Bees in Israel sometimes store this sweetest of all honey in a spot where no one and no animal can get to—a place inside a rocky cliff. There the honey is stored where no enemy can reach it. Yet, the honey builds up until it trickles out of the cliff, and down the face of the cliff. These rock honey hives are protected, but the guarded honey runs out of the hive, out to where it is available to anyone who comes near the cliff and is hungry or thirsty. What are the odds that anyone would ever find such a wonderful treasure as honey in the rock?

Jesus came incarnate against all the odds. In 742 BC, Micah prophesied Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. In 1012 BC, David prophesied that Messiah’s hands and feet would be pierced, referring to Christ’s crucifixion. That was 800 years before the Romans even instituted crucifixion as a form of capital punishment. Yet, this “honey in the rock” prophetically is that Jesus fulfilled 60 major prophecies in the Old Testament and he also fulfilled 270 more minor prophecies of the Old Testament. Scientists have said that the odds of the virgin birth happening and being prophesied to happen in Bethlehem is 1 in 10 to the trillionth power. It has never happened before and it will never happen again. That historical fact of Jesus being born of a virgin is equivalent to honey in the rock. Naturalists tell us that the richest and the sweetest honey in all the world is this rare honey in the rock. Honey in the rock should remind us all of Romans 8: 32. Paul wrote, “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” The joys of heaven are coming soon, but Jesus plans this side of heaven for those who will eat His honey, to supply us with the rarest honey in the rock. What a promise in Psalm 81: 16. “But I would feed you with the finest of the wheat; and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you. Am I stretching things by taking you from “honey in the rock in Palestine” to “honey in the Rock in Jesus?” The rock in the wilderness, beloved, that Paul spoke of in I Corinthians

10: 1-4, spiritually speaking, is the Rock, Christ Jesus, the Rock of our salvation. In Jesus we have the sure mercies of David, the precious promises of God's everlasting covenant, the Gospel revealed to us. In all the Bible, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the sweetest story ever told. The Gospel is spiritually, the sweetest honey ever eaten, honey in the rock. And this honey in the rock is for all who will hear and obey Jesus.

Back in the late 1800s, a little boy named Freddie had his Dad die of tuberculosis when he was only six years old. Three years later, Freddie's Mom died leaving his three brothers and one sister spoken for in homes, but there was no home for Freddie. A farmer, with no care for the 9 year old orphan boy, thought Freddie might be a help on his farm. That Christmas, he was asked to open his stocking only to find the farmer, Mr. Hollis, had filled his stocking full, only with wood shavings. On this farm, Mr. Hollis grew moody, and he left the house, went out to his barn and hung himself. This orphan boy had all the odds stacked against him, but as a grown man who came to know Jesus, Frederick Arthur Graves married a wife and they had three children, Irene, Arthur and Carl. In 1895, their Dad wrote a well known hymn called, "Honey In The Rock." Freddie's youngest son, Carl, became a pastor and missionary to Ceylon. Irene became an author and a teacher in the Assemblies of God, and Arthur became the Founder and President of Southeastern Bible College in Lakeland, Florida. What were the odds? They were "honey in the rock" odds. The second verse of Freddie's song, "Honey In The Rock" goes like this: "Have you tasted that the Lord is gracious? Do you walk in the way that's new? Have you drunk from the living fountain? There's honey in the Rock for you. Oh, there's honey in the Rock, my brother; There's honey in the Rock for you. Leave your sins for the Blood to cover. There's honey in the Rock for you." Since earliest days, even in the days of Adam and Eve, God has had honey in the Rock for those who will listen to His voice, who will obey Him, who will give up their stubbornness in their hearts, and who will stop walking in their own chosen ways. Listen to Psalm 81: 11-13. Nevertheless, generation after generation of people called by God's name have chosen to walk away from the Lord and God has given them over to their own stubbornness of heart. What might they have had? What do we miss in our stubbornness? Notice Psalm 81: 14-16. The phrase I want to camp on today is in verse 15. It is striking. "Those who hate the Lord would pretend obedience to Him, going through the motions." Can God see through our pretense and our religious façade, our spiritual spoofing? Notice verse 15. He can see through our pretense and He states that those who pretend obedience to Him face their time of eternal punishment—"Their time of punishment will be forever." God led me to capture in our message title what does with stubborn hearts—Psalm 81:12 was apparently on Paul's mind, and certainly on the mind of the Holy Spirit of God as Paul wrote Romans 1:24-28. I have no

desire to teach any of us how to leave God behind so that He gives us over to our own sins. I do want to teach us how to live and love and laugh and long to follow our Shepherd obediently. I see in Psalm 81: 1-16 four amazing supplies God has reserved for those of us who forsake our own way and follow Him. What are these four amazing supplies for obedient believers?

**THE LORD PROMISES OBEDIENT AND FAITHFUL BELIEVERS THE FINEST OF WORSHIP.** (I.) Notice Psalm 81: 1-4. “Sing aloud to God our

strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob! Raise a song; sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp. Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day. For it is a statute for Israel, a rule of the God of Jacob.” God summons His people who will obey Him to the finest of worship—here it is to a music festival. God is calling us continually to sincere praise and thanksgiving. There is nothing shallow or “same old, same old” about the worship God has for us. It isn’t tame and boring. It is worship with the deepest of devotion, with jubilant voices, with deep joy, and with deep appreciation. God knows who we all are, and He longs for those who worship the God of Jacob to burst with passionate praise. Jacob, the deceiver, finally became Jacob whom God renamed Israel, a prince with God. God is calling for percussion—sound the tambourine, stringed instruments—the sweet lyre along with the harp, and the wind instruments, blow the trumpets. God calls for singing. “Raise a song!” Don’t think God has changed. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever. He is not requiring us to abandon all instruments in His house, but to play and sing to Him with abandon. Notice verse three that there were calls to worship—like our doxology with the trumpet—at the new moon, and at the full moon. No doubt the haunting blowing of the ram’s horn ushered in the festivals to the Lord, and the playing of metal trumpets doubtless also was part of the praise. God speaks here of these times of praises as a fixed statute, a rule of the God of Jacob. Some years ago, in one of our Idaho churches I superintended, I learned that the pastor was splitting the church by robbing his flock of the finest of worship. When I went to the church, I found the church no longer sang. All they did was gather and their pastor preached the entire time. Without apology, I rebuked this wickedness of robbing God’s people of the finest of worship. God led me without any hymnal to lead the flock in six songs. At first I sang alone. I wondered why they church wouldn’t sing. I asked them and they told me—“Our pastor forbids us to sing.” Oh, how I love to come to preach after God has fed His flock with the finest of worship. Secondly,

**THE LORD PROMISES OBEDIENT AND FAITHFUL BELIEVERS THE FINEST OF ADMONITION AND PREACHING.** (II.) Notice Psalm 81: 5-10.

“He made it a decree in Joseph when He went out over the land of Egypt. I hear a language I had not known: “I relieved your shoulder of the burden; your hands were freed from the basket. In distress you called, and I delivered you; I answered

you in the secret place of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah. Selah. Hear, O my people, while I admonish you! O Israel, if you would but listen to me! There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god. I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” Let’s face it. In a nutshell, the finest of admonition and preaching is to echo God’s one demand of His Bride, His people, and that one demand is—“No strange gods.” (Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.” This demand is introduced as a message spoken by both divine and human lips—this demand is a speech, an admonition, a preached sermon or message. God promises a feast of preaching, of His Word. Notice v. 5—By God’s decree, I hear a language I had not known. What a picture this is—Asaph is imagining 400 years of Israel living in captivity in Egypt, but any Egyptian listening would have still heard 400 years later since Jacob came with his 70 to Egypt—now as then, kept teaching their children the same Hebrew language. It was a language the listener in Egypt would not have known, and now it was not just in the Exodus, the word of a preacher and prophet, Moses. God had put the finest message in the mouths of all the people. What they heard, they now spoke. God never wants any of us to forget His message. And what is this message on the lips of the people as God came to set them free. These Israelites had to be bi-lingual to be slaves and work for the Egyptians. The Egyptian language has little affinity with their Hebrew language. But God sent a message and a messenger to Egypt to the beleaguered people. Behind Moses, the people were hearing a message from a ruler greater than Pharaoh, and in a language they spoke in their lives daily, and in their worship. God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, different from Pharaoh and his taskmasters, He knew their language—a language they had not known—that is a language from above that they had missed for 400 years, although they had cried out to God in bondage and had kept their feast days.

And the message and the language they heard, they now repeated to their children. Notice God’s message, and He is the greatest preacher of all the ages. What is He saying in this language not known to come from any Egyptian ruler? Here are the words in verses 6-10. Talk about a Preacher! God Himself is speaking. God wants no rival. God is calling and admonishing His people to spiritually open their mouths and He would fill them with the finest of admonition and preaching. And lest anyone would ever doubt who this Preacher is, God says, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” And lest any of you think, why do I have to put up with you, Pastor, let me tell you all, God has sent me as His ambassador to tell you, “I am the Lord your God, who took you from almost losing your identity as a flock, who kept your sanctuary for you when you had no finances to pay the mortgage. I am the Lord who miraculously *intervened* so that you were able to pay off your mortgage, and burn it, who took you from having to

put up with one preacher, and who has given you seven preachers, five speaking English and two speaking Spanish. I want no rivals, Rock Springs Ev. Free Church. Hear me, while I admonish you. If you would but listen to Me. I will continue to bless you with the finest of worship and the finest of admonition and preaching. Open your hearts—let Me fill your hearts, says the Lord.

**THE LORD PROMISES OBEDIENT AND FAITHFUL BELIEVERS THE FINEST OF WHEAT TO FEED UPON.** (III.) Now notice as the same Preacher, the Lord is talking in verses 11-13, and the first part of verse 16. “But my people did not listen to My voice; Israel would not submit to Me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels. Oh, that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in my ways! But I or He would feed you with the finest of wheat. First of all, notice with me that this is a promise of intention by God for the obedient only. Notice verse 15 that many pretend obedience, but pretended obedience never fools the Lord. The very antithesis of walking in God’s ways is to walk in our own counsels. The happy man in Psalm 1 is the man who “walks not in the counsel of the ungodly or stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.” Stubbornness is native to all of us—to you and to me. None of us need training to be stubborn. Just to try to suppress stubbornness is a colossal and impossible task. Obeying the Word of God, the will of God, and the voice of the Spirit of God can only happen by the almighty work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the obedient believer. Alexander MacLaren well said, “The highest blessedness of man is to have a will to be submissive to God’s will, and to carry out that submission in all details of life.” Self-engineered paths are always hard and eventually they lead us into the dark. A listening heart will never lack guidance. Obedient feet and hands will always find God’s way to ultimately be the way of peace. God’s path always climbs higher and higher to that perfect day of glory. In a commentary by Cheyne, he wrote, “When we yield ourselves to God, it is in order that we “might be never exhausted people.” I have a son in law who is a wheat farmer. What is this finest of wheat? It’s clear from verses 14,15 that the spiritual equivalent of the finest of wheat is spiritual victory over our enemies of every sort. But pretended obedience or “obedience” as we conceive it to be will not reap God’s “finest wheat” rewards. Notice verses 14, 15. “I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes. Those who hate the LORD would cringe toward Him, and their fate would last forever.” What is the finest of wheat? It means literally the fat of the wheat, the best of the wheat harvest. Not just the bran or the wheat flour, but the finest of the flour. You see expensive flour at times in the store. When Isaac blessed Jacob in Genesis 27: 28, he said, “Now may God give you the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth.” The good land and the good times for the obedient believer will produce the finest of the wheat, the most wonderful harvest of all—and the blessings will overflow to others. But another

clue to the meaning of the finest of wheat is found in Psalm 147: 14. There we read, “He makes peace in your borders; he satisfies you with the finest of the wheat.” This peace can be nationally, but it can be domestically, peace in the borders of your home. It is hope for your home, peace for your home, the finest of wheat in a world that is gorging itself on the chaff of strife, chaos, and divorce which is ruining families. God give us in this next year as obedient believers, the finest of wheat—peace in all our borders. 4thly and lastly, the last amazing supply:

### **THE LORD PROMISES OBEDIENT AND FAITHFUL BELIEVERS**

**HONEY IN THE ROCK TO SATISFY US.** (IV.) This is a drastic shift from the finest of wheat to honey in the rock. Yet the two pictures are coupled together in Psalm 81: 16. “But I would feed you with the finest of the wheat; and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.” Besides the precious harvest of the land that is so fertile, God is promising that the most barren land will produce the best gift of all. The most barren times of our lives, the hardest things to obey the Lord in, the sand in our oysters, spiritually speaking, that cause us so much pain, as we seek to deal with the irritants God brings into our lives, these will now produce the incredible pearls God has in store for us. To think of cliffs and clefts in the rock serving as the best bee-hives in the world, what a picture of fruitfulness our barren deserts can be. The finest of wheat is the natural product of the finest of fertile soils. But honey is not the natural product from a barren rock. This is a picture of incomparable abundance from the most unexpected spot or trial or circumstance that God ordains. Those who truly hearken to God’s voice, His Word, and His will find honey in the rock, they will find furtherance in what appear to be hindrances, fertility in barrenness. Yes, the rocks of barrenness ultimately for the obedient, drop and ooze out honey.

When it is God’s idea, and not the tempter’s snare, rocks will ooze with honey. Beloved, hearken to the Lord. Listen to His Word. Do His will. Obey the voice of Jesus and every prompting of God’s Spirit. Out of the barrenness will come honey in the rock for you. Out of the misunderstandings, out of the attacks, out of the bitterness and out of the longings unfulfilled will come honey in the rock. Hang on, beloved. This is the promise of God. Who would know better what we need and how to meet that need than the Rock of our salvation—Our honey in the Rock. I want to open the altar this morning. Are we willing to submit our life, our will, our stubbornness, and our future to the will of the Lord? Are we willing to give God our wood shavings, our tears, and our better ideas than His? If God is speaking to you, and calling you to a new obedience to Him, come to the altar today. God will give you the finest of worship, the finest of admonition from Himself, the finest of wheat, and beyond all else, He has for each obedient believer, honey in the rock. Amen.