

SUNDAY APRIL 26 1981
TEXT PSALM 23 V 6

Afternoon Lesson. John 14.

You will notice, beloved, the first word in the Text is of complete, filial assurance. Surely. I hope we shall not discourage those of little faith: the Lord increase your faith, so from your heart and lips comes forth in praise to Almighty God the blessed term of divine assurance imparted by the Holy Ghost. Surely. Let us see how the Lord's beloved people are brought to the richness and fulness of the sacred, blessed, very God-honouring assurance, for assurance expressed here brings glory and honour to the Lord.

There are two things in the main: the first is the most sacred, blessed, precious promise of the Lord,- the promises of the Lord which He speaks to the gracious, receptive hearts of His dear people. An aside observation. Those of you in the late sixties to eighties, now do you claim a word from God? Are there precious Scriptures hidden in your heart as treasure you firmly believed when the Lord delivered them to you that He would fulfil? It would be spiritually interesting to know what exceeding great and very precious promises the Lord has spoken to you as a flock. They are ~~perennial~~, evergreen. God is faithful to them and they are to you as a staff and rod. I will demonstrate as I dilate on the sacred truth of holy assurance,- it is not presumption. When Joshua succeeded Moses the servant of God,- and it was so in all illustrious cases, his blessed Lord, Father, Master, Captain and Friend spoke to him. If I quote the main section in my spirit it is, "As I was with Moses,- you witnessed and observed this My goodness and mercy to My dear servant Moses,- He says, "Look Joshua, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee I will ^{not} fail thee, nor forsake thee." It is a complete entity, it is divinely comprehensive. "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Think of it! and it is a remarkable demonstration of divine faithfulness, immortal love of the Lord in the case of Joshua and of all who fear God. As Commander-in-Chief of the army and Prime Minister, blessed days they knew in Israel. for "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua." I believe that was a good word to Mr J.K.Popham concerning Brighton, and it has been fulfilled here. So what happy days in the main for Joshua to see the people serving the Lord

and loving Him. The Lord hear our prayer that this may be wonderfully the case again, if it His pleasure, in our dear land.

Let us come to the crown of the matter. Joshua gathered together as he drew nigh to his eternal inheritance, the mansions of the blessed, all Israel. You see the two facts in his Book. He said, "Now look, concerning all the Lord promised, ye know, Israel, in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you," and the blessed last part, the crown set on it, "all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." You could not have anything more blessed than that. "Surely," If the Lord gives you a blessed promise, in the rejoicing of your soul in the promise you will say Surely. It does not infer that your soul will not be tried, tempted, buffeted, you will go into dark places, but there will be times when you rejoice in the promise because it has been made so sweet to you. It is a promise of God and it is not something that is cold, mechanical; it is that which comes with everlasting love, almighty power, divine efficacy to your soul: it melts, enriches, strengthens. You receive it: it is yours, your very own. What the dear Lord has spoken to you is part of your treasure. "Surely," You dear ones go back to the word the Lord made precious to you, and you may have a cluster like the grapes from Eshcol. Though you may go for a season with everything beclouded in your mind the Lord will bring the word with freshness to your spirit before you die. You will say, "He is a faithful, unchanging God and Friend." "Surely" You will be brought into sweet assurance by the spiritual experience of God's faithfulness over the years. You will know what the Lord has given you, and as you perceive the divine faithfulness of your God to His promise your faith is strengthened and enriched: you have proof and assurance of it and this is precious.

As you know, David was a wonderful shepherd and he had distressing experiences with his flock. For there came a lion and a bear against the flock, and it would have been easy to run away, but he loved his flock. He was a type of the Lord Jesus. He went out against the lion. What man in the congregation would go out against a lion or a bear? He went out and delivered the members of his flock and slew the animals.

It is a type of what the Lord Jesus did at Calvary. He entered the territory of death and destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. David knew these experiences, and he came by divine direction so wonderfully, taking provisions for his family. He hears the challenge of the giant,- he was between nine and ten feet high,-but he was not terrified. There was assurance in his spirit so strong was his faith. "Lord, increase our faith." He said to Saul, "Thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine." He had assurance from God, my friends. Deep in his breast God had given him complete assurance of the issue. If he leaned on God, God would give him the victory. Another expression that describes is, the triumph of faith. Faith knows nothing else but triumph. The exercise of living faith is a triumphant exercise. He recited his experience with the flock, how God had delivered him from the lion and the bear. That is how the Lord favours you with a degree of assurance. You know well that they were so terrified of the youth going that Saul armed him. He put it all off. It is great for ministers and people to divest themselves of all they could rely on and lean on Christ alone. You try: divest yourself of all and lean on the Lord Jesus. The Lord honoured this; he went with assurance. The Lord had given the giant into his hands and soon the pebble was deep in his forehead and he on the ground slain. O this assurance! Another thing is the reading of the Scriptures by the Spirit and the narratives of the saints of God: the Lord will strengthen your faith by it. You will see how He appeared for Israel; how He exalted Joseph out of the dungeon; how He turned the captivity of Job; how He heard the cry of Hannah. Go through the Biblical cases of the saints, and there will be times when the Lord will strengthen your faith. It will be Surely. It is blessed assurance. The Hymnwriter must have known this when he said,

"Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in Heaven."

So I wanted to name to you some of the characteristics of the vital thing so needful to the people of God, rich assurance. Surely. In your beautiful Hymn (961) you have the same blessed line of truth expounded,

and it is as we have said, your realisation and experience of the goodness of God to the present time. "He who has,"--Poor afflicted, anxious child of God, how many times has this been made a sweet encouragement to you? You have taken your Bible and Hymnbook to bed and opened on 961 and read the beautiful words. "He who has helped me hitherto," and in your breast you felt a sinking feeling and temptation, but you have gone on listening to the Lord.

"He who has helped me hitherto,
Will help me all my journey through."

That is how you get assurance by the Spirit. "Will help me," The Lord cannot deny Himself. It would be contrary to the character and nature and Name of God if He helped you so far and then dropped you. Sweet words! "He who has helped us, mother, father, daughter, son, brother, sister, lonely one, aged one, afflicted one, bereaved one.

"He who has helped me, us hitherto,
Will help us all our journey through."

all through, not nearly to the end and leave me. "all my journey through;
And give me daily cause, - I love that,-

"And give me daily cause to raise
New Ebenezers to His praise."

It is a cheerful, uplifting Hymn by the Spirit. It is calculated to raise you out of your dark place and the fears you have when the Lord sends it.

"And give me daily cause to raise
New Ebenezers to His praise."

You understand David then. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

Let us take a further step. We have said the Psalm is written in the key of Doxology, adoration, praise, gratitude and testimony. It is left behind by the wisdom of God and placed in the canon of Scripture for the comfort, good, peace of those who fear God in succeeding ages. You find your heart in tune with the Text. I will remind you before I pass to the next step, as I said this morning it was sweet to me concerning dear Grace Meadows. Poor dear girl, so solitary, no home, no parents. I looked to the mound where her body rests and I said, Grace, it has been goodness and mercy and you are in Heaven, and soon it will be so with many here. With all who fear God it will be, "Surely goodness and mercy

shall follow me, attend me all the days of my life." Then it will be your children to follow, and they by the grace of God will be in the same exercise, pleading for His goodness and mercy. You will be in Glory, and they here in tribulation. There is one safely landed, well laid in the grave as to their precious dust, and the Lord has crowned it all. It has been goodness and mercy.

Now we will turn to the next step. We have said the Psalm is written in the key of Doxology, praise, testimony, and to encourage the people of God in succeeding ages of time. We can think to day of some in the slave camps in Russia and persecuted people. The Text may be sweet to their souls. "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life." They have meat to eat the world knows not of. And in the slave camps in Siberia,- "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. My body is tortured, my soul is indulged. "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me," There is remembrance of former days until now: you remember them. That is why I read the Lesson where I did this morning. The Lord said, "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee," Here is remembrance. I will open this a little if the Lord will. Remembrance on the earth level is a remarkable thing. Think of the millions of cells, the memories stored, the finest remembrance of details, and it goes back to childhood in your conscious and subconscious mind. It is one of the offices of the Holy Ghost,- the Lord said He would send to His disciples "another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever...He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." It means from occasion to occasion the blessed Spirit will powerfully, sweetly, efficaciously, in a comfortable manner, bring to your remembrance what your Lord has said to you. It is not cold calculation: it softens and breaks your heart. You feel sacred dew on your branch, and with what love and sweet feeling do you remember the eternal word of grace and truth the dear Lord spoke to you in days passed. Why remember? Because there is something to remember, or there are things to remember. You remember because of their eternal value and blessedness. They are fadeless, glorious. And you remember because of the nature of

the things: they are of God. They are very precious and of holy value, and you will remember them. This is beautifully expounded in the case of father Israel and his son Joseph. He became sick, his last sickness that led to his blessed death, and when Joseph entered the room the first thing he said was, "God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me." He went back to Beth-el: it was with him. We have witnessed this in the cases of a number of aged saints of God in this flock, who lived through the days of their espousals on the verge of Jordan. With my dear mother all the holy joy she knew when she was baptised came back to her in her last illness. Very wonderful. Now you understand remember; how and why we remember,- because of the everlasting value and blessedness, and because it is to the glory of God that we remember. Would you not give Him all the praise and glory due to His Name for what He has done? You want to and you do remember. And it is for the refreshing of your own soul, and for the teaching and education of the Church.

So there is remembrance. "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me," One thing that is often a grief to me is that my thoughts are desultory: if only I could fix them in a straight line and not go off at a tangent, here and there. "Thou shalt remember all the way," This is often a precursor of the time of entering Heaven. "Thou shalt remember," So "Surely goodness," Who can ever assess or name the goodness of God? We can only refer to it, get a sip of it. The goodness of God is a divine perfection whereby He is eternally moved in Himself to be kind and loving to His dear people. Goodness and mercy. If you look to the Lord in trouble, look to His very heart, you will feel His bowels move toward you; it is His compassion. So He pities and relieves the miseries of His dear people. "Surely goodness and mercy shall attend me, pursue me, and when I am faint and weary they will run after and overtake and give me peace. It is a lovely, beautiful word. It is wonderful for me to preach the gospel to a loving people. You know the joyful sound, the faithfulness of your Friend and Saviour, and He has sent goodness and mercy to attend you right through. It is the same in all the phases of life. When you become infirm and weak you will see the good hand of God open a way before you.

"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." I wanted to

speak concerning those who love Him and keep His commandments, because there is an intense desire to dwell in the House of the Lord, more than a guest,- a child at home. Some of you are waiting for this.

"No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home."

You will be as Ruth: you will dwell in the House of the Lord for ever, not for a little while. Now here in His earthly courts you will behold His glory: it is a distant sight. Wonderful to behold the refulgent beams of grace and love in your souls! Presently it will be the heavenly mansions: it is the same House. I know the title to the Hymn (475) is "Desiring to depart," and the Lord does bring His people to that place. Jesus has ascended and is enthroned in the heavenly mansions in His Father's House, and He has prepared a place for all His people. By His present intercession and mediation and the fragrancancy of His infinite merit He has prepared the mansions. They are ready; your place is, my place is. So now what? "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Blessed be God.