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Substance of two Sermons preached by our Pastor
on Sunday, April 26. 1981.

Morning Lesson. Deuteronomy 8.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Psalm 23. 6.

The Scripture, the whole Psalm and the Lesson has been influenced in our minds by the attainment of our dear elder deacon to a great age, and a number of you are in the same region or a few years less. So the Scripture and the whole of the beautiful, unparalleled Psalm is a tribute of praise, gratitude, adoration to Almighty God for His unfailing goodness, divine compassion vouchsafed to His servant and handmaiden. All who love and fear God know the rich, amazing, incredible manifestation of the two divine attributes of Jehovah, exercised so abundantly, liberally to His people, His goodness and mercy. I will give you a personal thought and consideration: as I parked my car in the car park and came along the end of our beautiful little Cemetery, I glanced in the direction of the plot of ground and the mound where our dear sister Grace Meadows rests. She is with the Lord. Knowing her for many years and her sad life more or less, almost shunted about from one place to another I thought, Yes, Grace, now you are in Heaven and through your life you could have said, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." I looked on this as a demonstration; it is the epitome of the Text. Whenever a child of God is laid to rest and the happy, ransomed soul is with the Lord they know the fulness of the Text. "Surely" The rich ingredient in the word is holy faith. It is so savoury, acceptable to God, and precious to us.

"Surely," Some of you are already saying, Amen. The Lord has provided for you in old age: you have seen goodness and mercy. So to all who fear God in the congregation, from the youngest to the oldest, there is one word for you as you are journeying souls walking by faith, not by sight, - sight is reserved for Heaven; - the testimony from you is, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me." You cannot deny it: to this moment

it has been goodness and mercy. So this is a word for you to strengthen faith, cheer your spirits, refresh your sight, increase the measure of grace in you. "Surely, without a doubt, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life," not some of them, not 85%, or 97%; every day, in every vicissitude, every part of life, periods, times, occasions: all the days of your life you may expect this goodness and mercy of the Lord, - not because you are a good man. You say, "I am a bad man, a bad woman," "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

I want to make an appeal to you who are elderly, in the region of 70 and 80 and beyond: you have seen a few days in your time. It has been chequer work, a chequered path, dangers, anxieties, afflictions, sorrows, bereavements: it does not take long to say it, but oh the concentration in it! You know London, the provinces, the bombs, the dangers at home and abroad, loneliness, widowhood, desolations, recessions, unemployment, prosperity and adversity. Has the Lord been faithful? The loss of a dear mother, father, husband, wife, dear children, - what about it to this day, the last Lord's Day in April 1981 and you in Zoar Chapel, Dicker, what is your testimony, beloved friends? will you not join in the Doxology? For the whole tenor of the Psalm is a testimony to the glory of God. Will you not join and say, "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life."? What is your prospect? is it violence, agony, distress, miseries, wrath, curse? No: goodness and mercy. What a legacy for you! What happy souls to anticipate nothing but goodness and mercy! Trials, difficulties, dilemmas; yes, but goodness and mercy. So from the rich fulness, the reservoir of grace and love flow from the precious Head to the Church goodness and mercy and every blessing.

What about those in middle life? You have seen a few things too: you have known black, sombre days, you have been brought to the end of all your wisdom; you have known days of adversity, trials, afflictions. In the changing pattern of the world in the West you have seen strange things but you have experienced goodness and mercy. So let us praise and bless God and take courage. Often the lower we come the more we see the goodness and mercy of God. The Text contains the rudiments of the New Song in the House of God for ever.

I want to come to the younger friends, the dear younger friends who fear God, who pray, read the Bible and it is precious to you. You seek the Lord by prayer and supplication concerning your steps, exercises, progress, friendships, and all concerning you. Happy souls when you love the House of God! What about it? is it goodness and mercy for the dear younger friends? Has the Lord helped you to pass difficult examinations? did He hear prayer and help you to go sailing through? I appeal to you, have you not seen goodness and mercy? This is delightful. Think of any young person and take the contrast: take the young people, girls and boys wearing trousers, smoking, going in for pleasure and gaiety: it is a solemn way to live; it is like dancing the hell-ward road apace. It will be fire and ashes presently. You by contrast are sober, modest in your apparel, in speech, in behaviour, and it is the Bible you read and seek the Lord by prayer, and you have beautiful things you are favoured to observe, and what you observe is goodness and mercy. What a favour you have! You are not dissipating your time in a vain manner: this is nauseating in the extreme; God's people do not know how to bear to see it. You who fear God are not in it: you are observing the goodness and mercy of God. When we speak concerning other young people we would say, the Lord of His mercy quicken them to life if it please Him, and open their blind eyes. We are not careless and indifferent concerning the human race. The good Lord awaken, convict, convince them of sin. You who are younger see a lot of younger people: their life is aimless; it is vain pleasure, maybe sinful promiscuity. They think it is marvellous to be promiscuous. The Lord keep and bless the dear young friends and give you to go on observing His goodness and mercy to you. I am glad to speak in this way. I had not thought of speaking to the dear young friends. It is my special privilege and fatherly right in the Church. The Lord bless you, so that you love His Word and the Throne of Grace and do all by prayer. It is a wonderful thing. How many this morning are joining in the ascription of praise and gratitude to God? "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

Let us run over the word. Have you not seen the goodness of God in your soul? His goodness and mercy spiritually? Do you see it in the

gospel, in crumbs, in handfuls of purpose for you? in providence, in your afflictions, in trials and anxieties? How has it worked out? Have you been put to confusion and shame? No: why? Goodness and mercy has appeared. You have seen the Lord's goodness, and in the whole human race there is a certain sense where 'all are Thy servants' to act according to the influence of God on them to be favourable to His dear people. They have to take a certain line because of a supernatural power and influence affecting them. The child of God understands why. Your affliction is goodness and mercy; there is no curse. The Lord is making your bed in sickness, directing you in reference to the physician. He is so exceptionally kind to you, or the nursing sister. It is the goodness and mercy of God all through and in everything. Life is a canvas, and on it is all the goodness and mercy to us through our days. I wonder what your personal response to this is? Have you been short of money this last week? has the Lord supplied all your needs? Have you been short of a good meal, warm clothes, anything you needed? "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me." If you could have looked ahead and seen the various vicissitudes and paths of anxiety you would come into you would have said, "I could never go through it. I should sink in that." You have been brought through and you are the other side of it. Who did it? God, with His goodness and mercy.

I will make reference to one other facet of this. When the Lord disappoints, frustrates us it is disappointing to the flesh and it is a keen thing. My friends, you will live to praise God for His goodness and mercy in doing it. There are times when the Lord shuts a door, you are hedged about: it is not according to your fleshly wish and it is bitter to you at the time: you do not know how to drink it. You will bless God for it because it is goodness and mercy, and you see why it was. You will say, "See what the Lord mercifully bestowed on me! I can bless Him for disappointing me; because He closed a door and overturned things." I remember well in my boyhood one of our dear old friends, a very keen business man and there was an attractive proposition before his eyes, - to go into partnership with another man. He was brimful of it: there would be a marvellous prospect. He got back to his wife, a sober, godly woman, and she turned it over and he was quite cross. He called her his

old skid-pan. A skid-pan was used to bring the wheels of a vehicle to a halt, and she did that for him, Are any of you in that now? You are for going ahead and the Lord frustrates you; turns it over completely so it is finished, there is no point in naming it again, it is done. This is the goodness and mercy of God to His dear people. Things are abrasive and traumatic. You will say, the Lord is in that. "Lord, forgive Thy rebellious worm." How you will praise and adore Him for His goodness and mercy in that He demolished things. I may be speaking to some of the dear younger friends. You may have met or meet with keen disappointment: if you fear God it is not against you; it is the love, mercy and goodness of God to you. The Lord give you a quiet mind to submit to Him. After a while, it may be in a few years, you will see this wisdom and goodness and mercy of God to you. God knows I have gone in a line of truth I had no premeditation of. I believe it to be most profitable and relevant. We get ideas,- goodness and mercy! all will be pleasant, wonderful, sweet, and we have to prove there are bitter things for us in the flesh; painful, trying things, but it is all goodness and mercy. What do you think of being preserved from a snare/which if you had got into it, it would have closed on you? It is goodness and mercy. You were going in: God stopped you. Even with those who have gone in and it has meant a degree of sorrow and difficulty in life, it is still goodness and mercy for the people of God. See how full the subject is! and it has been my delight to speak to the dear younger friends and those who are older. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

I feel now I will call over a few of the salient things. I said the whole Psalm is in the category of a testimony to the praise and glory of God. It is a testimony, it is a Doxology, it is a song of praise to the Lord, and it is full of all the graces of the Spirit that make it a treasure house in praise and gratitude to God. Are you in it? do you wish to be in it? do you wish to join in the noble, blessed company of King David and all His saints who have gone to Glory and give your tribute? "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." What a word for you! You can go out a happy child of God. What have you to be unhappy about? You say, "My sin." I know, but it is goodness and mercy. The Lord favour you to come to the precious fountain, to dear

Jesus, and He will make you glad. I see from your faces you are seeking to give God the glory because you have proved it. With all your wanderings here and there,- "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord."- with things you had no knowledge of before, you prove goodness and mercy beyond all you could anticipate. So join in the song! Christ will be our song and the glorious Trinity. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." The vital, potent grace of faith makes it so savoury. There are things that have no taste. If the Spirit of God is there, there is taste and your mouth will soon water. The Lord has given His people taste buds of faith: it is good when they are activated. When a good meal is prepared the smell of it is nostalgic to you: you long to get to the table and partake. Faith makes this so savoury. "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." All the graces of the Spirit are here and make it so wonderful to a child of God. There is life, beauty, taste, virtue, glory in it: the Lord is in it. So that is the second consideration with you.

I will mention, "follow me," accompany, attend me, all the days of my life, as a bridesmaid. It is the bride of Christ with her bridesmaids. Goodness and mercy always attend you. Do you hope you are the bride of Christ with bridal attendants? You could not have better. "all the days of my life." - when you are young, old and worn, withered, bent,- and this is according to the course of nature; goodness and mercy still attend you. When you begin to bow yourself and decay sets in, goodness and mercy are still there. They attend you. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me." Another word is, pursue me. Whatever you come into, affliction, trial, bereavements, difficulties, anxieties, goodness and mercy run after and overtake you. You may say you feel so dark, tried, tempted, and goodness and mercy are pursuing and overtake you. Blessed be God.