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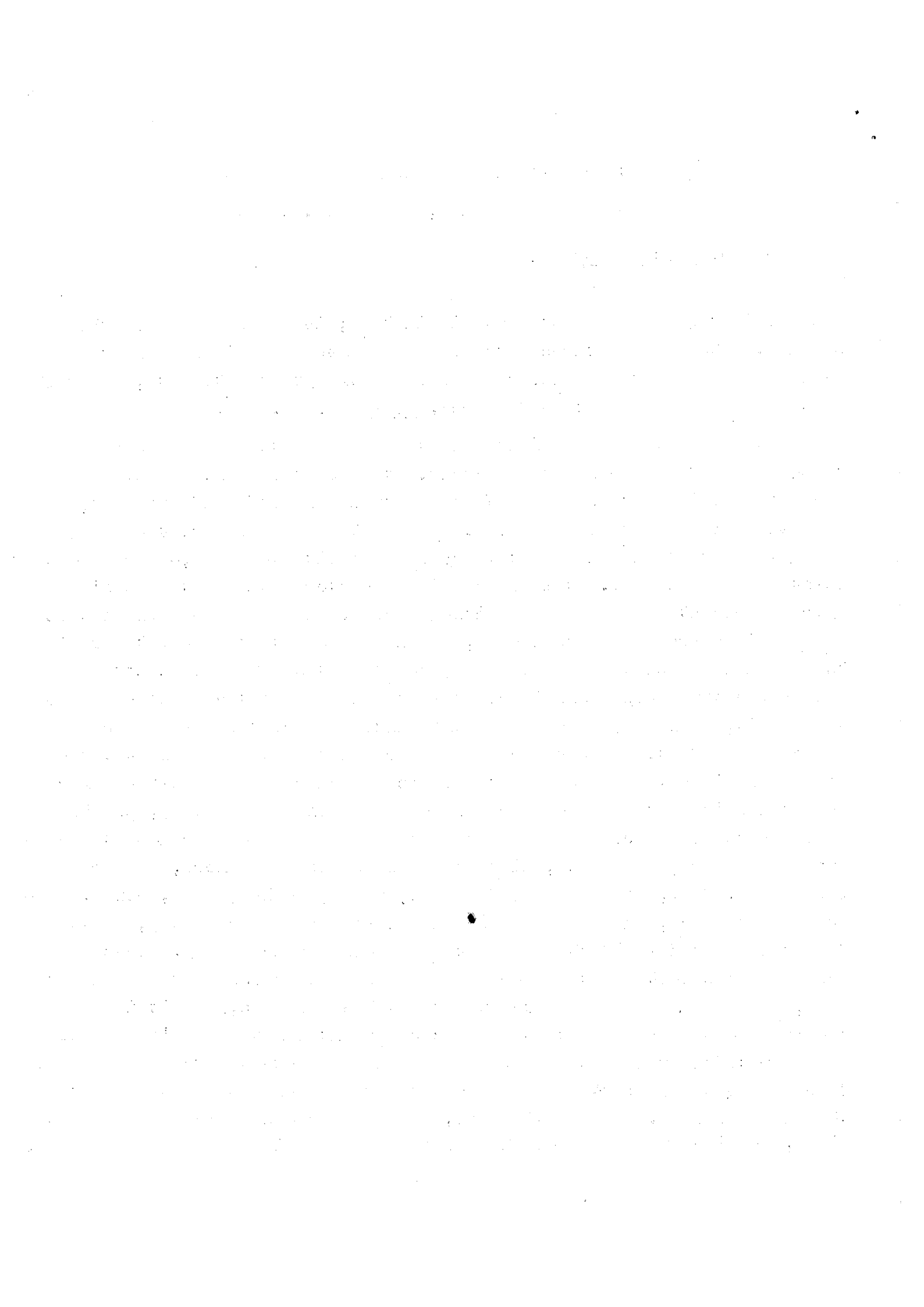
Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor
on Sunday Evening, August 17. 1980.

Lesson. Deuteronomy 33.

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. Psalm 84. vv. 5-7.

Let us deliver to you initially this evening the sacred concept of these verses from the beautiful Psalm. It is that favoured people who have vital union with the Lord Jesus so their immortal life is sure, and all flows from Him that they need. As we often plead before the Lord, there is body of divinity that is synonymous with the Text, - the word that relates to golden oil. It is a word for ministers and for the Lord's beloved servants and His dear waiting people. The golden oil flows through golden pipes from a divine source, and it flows into the bowl to supply the seven lamps of the candlesticks, and many times in the ministry of the everlasting gospel and in relation to all our felt need in body, soul and spirit, in family life and in the Church of God the word has been a source of comfort, strength and divine consolation to our spirits: the source is divine. So we have these blessed characters of divine grace in vital union with the dear Son of God, and all flows freely, sweetly, divinely to their souls and persons. It is a word of encouragement: whatever your fears, anxieties, distresses, if you know the Lord you will never sink, fail, be forsaken, for life, peace, health, love, mercy, all-sufficient grace, and all one's need in providence flows freely, sweetly from the Great Head of the Church to His dear mystical Body. These dear ones had an objective: they were on their way to Jerusalem to worship the Lord, and their passage was through the valley of Baca, and it is a remarkable word of exposition and encouragement for the Lord's people.

First, the valley of Baca. "Who passing through the valley of Baca," There is no by-pass: you pass through the valley of Baca. There are two things to be said. As you well know, a valley is a low place between the hills, and it may be some of the Lord's living family are in a low place.



In the beautiful pastoral Psalm of King David's we have the beautiful word, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,- death is casting its shadow over me,- I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." This may be a reference to the whole of the journey through the wilderness,- the valley of the shadow of death, and to specific experiences: a low place, the shadow of death over you. "I will fear no evil:" why? "for thou art with me. I have Thy divine presence, divine support, The Lord is with me, and I am supported by His staff and rod." So here is the valley of Baca, a low place. You are well acquainted with the meaning of Baca: it is a valley of weeping, tears; also a valley of mulberry trees and fountains. Take first the valley of weeping; of misery, sorrow and distress. "Who passing through the valley of Baca," and the Lord's dear people know this. I wonder how we may refer to it prudently? It is to have a heavy cross, and to prove that all below is balanced: it is a matter of coming to Marah and the waters are bitter. How will you drink the cup? Blessed be God for the cross of His dear Son incarnate, making such waters sweet. This is a miracle only the Lord's dear people know. The valley of weeping: things that make you weep are painful, distressing, they penetrate the heart. They are not on the perimeter, but in the centre of your affections, and they distress you and make you weep. You will know in the case of godly King Hezekiah the Lord sent a message to him through Isaiah, and how blessed and wonderful it will be if the dear Lord sends the same message to us. "Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer; I have seen thy tears." This is an amazing truth. He did not think highly of his prayer. "Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove." The Lord said, "I have heard thy prayer," You will know if the Lord hears you. "I have seen thy tears," Do you believe the Lord has seen yours? It is a mercy to have a soft heart and a weeping spirit: the Lord is going to wipe them from your eyes. The basic concept of the passage is for the Lord's people sorrow turned to joy. "Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well." God blesses them. So there is a coming to the valley of weeping, and those of you in the House of God will know how to fill in the section. It is a lonely path. You must walk the darkest path alone, and the Lord knows all about it,

but there is a passing through the valley of tears. It is a mercy if your priority is weeping over your sins, a broken and contrite spirit. What a blessing if you are favoured to weep in relation to the agony of your Saviour! And there are things that affect you closely and your spirit weeps. Look at the miracle: "who passing through,- you must pass through,- the valley of Baca make it a well."- transform the whole scene. The Lord is pleased to bless and indulge and favour them. It is a word of encouragement for you. Your sorrow is turned into joy, weeping to rejoicing distress to deliverance; but you pass through the valley of Baca. It is impossible for me because of the need for prudence, to name the things that will cause you to weep, but you know what they are.

Beloved Hannah's case demonstrates the truth before us. First you see the external part, although it is closely connected with the internal. She was persecuted in a cruel fashion and it went on for a while: also she was in a place where she felt reproached and deprived; passing through the valley of Baca. When she gave her testimony in gratitude, praise and adoration she did not refer to the external part; she spoke of how the Lord used it for the eternal good of her immortal soul. "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes." She could sing of it because the Lord had blessed her soul and sanctified the dispensation to the good of her immortal soul. Blessed be God for the divine record and narrative, because we see the end of going to the valley of Baca, her tears and distress, and as we have said, she had her crisis at the Throne of Grace. How soon did the Lord make the valley of Baca a well and fill it with His blessing! for soon Eli realised his mistake and the Lord poured into his spirit a wonderful word for Hannah. You can see the joy in his soul when he declared to her, "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him."

"Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools." There is a well and pools. It may appear difficult to expound the word: let us take pools. This is how it appears in my spirit: as they passed through the valley there was a wonderful

well, a source of living water,- life, joy, refreshment, and they were strengthened to go on, and there were pools. This seems to suggest reservoirs they dug, probably lined with stone, to catch the water, and I say to the friends, the term pools seems significant to me: the rain filled them; they were not left empty. The preacher speaks from his own experience over the years. I went to Burgess Hill on the August Monday for the special services, and the Lord had been digging ^{a hole} in my heart. Do you know what it is? It was a time of sore affliction and great trial, so I could see clearly that the Lord had dug a pool. The rain filled the pools, and it did for the preacher on that August Monday. I went with a hole in my heart the Lord had dug. You dear ones know what the preacher is saying: it is as though the Lord has dug in your heart. You have been in pain, distress, sorrow, affliction, trial, and you are able to give a word of exposition from your own spiritual, vital experience of the same. That day the rain from Heaven, the mercy, grace, love of God filled it, and this you will prove. (The liberty I feel in preaching to you!) You have got a hole in your spirit: spiritual intelligence is a great blessing. There is a cavity in your heart: you never thought you would come into it. A time of deep bodily affliction in one so dear is like digging into your heart. That is where it is; where you feel it most. When your friends ask after your health you are perplexed as to how to answer, for the Lord looks at your heart. There is an exclusive blessing for the Lord's people: the rain fills the pools: the Lord sends His blessing, His Spirit, ~~love~~, mercy, grace, and divine, everlasting love fills the pools. I can give you no other exposition. It is opposite to all you anticipated. There is abundant proof in the Scriptures as to how this was the experience of Biblical saints. Jacob had a favourite son, and you may say it was unwise to demonstrate it. This ^{was} where the hole was dug in his heart; through his beloved, cherished Joseph and the beautiful garment made for him. You mothers, fathers, grandparents and others know what it is to have a hole dug in your heart. No doubt you will understand the language,- "Wilt Thou pursue Thy worm to death?" Surely you will never survive. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee." As you come into the valley of Baca the Lord begins to dig a hole; it may be on a number of occasions. You will survive: the rain fills the pools. Rain is a symbol of divine blessing,

favour, mercy, compassion, love. You must prove as to whether one is a true prophet. In the deepest sorrow you have your greatest blessing; the rain fills the pools. I am glad it is in the plural because some of you may say there is more than one hole in your heart. "The rain also filleth the pools," What a blessing. This is a wonderful word to me. "Who passing through," They do not stay there: they pass through it.

Let us refer to the mulberry trees, for the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem to worship found refreshment and shade in the valley of Baca. Although it is a valley of weeping it is blessed evidence of sonship. The mulberry tree is renowned for its fruit, and it is very sensitive. "a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees." You who are interested in trees find it a wonderful word, and it is a symbol. The topmost leaves were moving in the trees, and why would God have them observe it? So they should see and hear the angels of God, and the Lord coming to deliver them. With the blessing of God in His Church and in families the movement is to be observed. You will sense there is a movement from Heaven to deliver you and to hear your prayers. It shows that the most experienced people of God are favoured to see the movement of the leaves, and they say, "Our God is coming. The angels are on their way to deliver us." Have you seen the movement in the leaves of the mulberry trees? The mulberry tree is renowned in medicine for balsam, and it is significant that by piercing the bark the resin or balsam flows out, and there is a healing potion applied to wounded hearts and troubled spirits. This is a sure and blessed evidence and type of the Lord Jesus, for the bark is pierced by a sharp instrument, and out flows the healing balm, pointing to the dear Lord Jesus, and His heart was pierced. The fountain was opened and the balm flows, and it is applied to the wounded hearts and spirits of His dear people. Do you discern the sensitiveness of the leaves moving? The Lord is coming. He is on His way to answer prayer and deliver us. So the mulberry tree is beautiful for shade and fruit, also for the resin that flows.

The valley of Baca is a wonderful place: you were weeping, and the Lord has provided healing balm for all your woes. Don't you feel it is a miracle that you are alive, upheld? The everlasting arms, the shoes of iron and brass, the refuge,- it is all there. The rain filleth the pools. You go forth into your path and prove the truth of the preaching. It is

opposite to all natural sagacity. You pray for the Lord's blessing, and you would have it the easy way. You would never think that digging a hole in your spirit is the way God will use to fill the pools with His blessing. With all God's people, if the Lord did not dig holes there would never be liveliness in prayer. If your lot was easy with no trouble, where would you be? The Lord knows how to do this. He digs a hole in the heart by conviction, but the rain fills it. Sweet mercy, divine consolation, everlasting love fill the pools and you drink the water of life freely: you are refreshed, revived, cheered. So springing from your greatest sorrow you receive your greatest joys according to the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. Think of the wounds of Christ, the agony of the Saviour; the rain fills the pools. See the love of God to sinners in all His agony at Calvary, and look at the rain of divine blessing.

"Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well." You will know when you get there. God makes it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. Has He done it? has He begun to? Jacob found the rain filling the pools when he had the joy of seeing his beloved son and his sons, and he was with him for seventeen years. The rain filleth the pools. My friends, things dig a hole in your heart, but the Lord will fill them with His blessing. The Lord's blessing is not partial or incomplete. He fills the pools.

"They go from strength to strength,"- from one season of refreshment to another. They partake of the blessings and promises of the Covenant of Grace. The Lord comes and favours them and they are strengthened, and they go in the strength of that meat many days. It is the progress of the Christian to the Promised Land. There is a special blessing and you can take courage as Paul did. You get a soft heart, His love in your spirit and you are strengthened and take courage. You believe that all is well and there will be a blessed issue. "They go from strength to strength," There are many dismal stories, and I hope you will not listen to so many of them. "every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." Hannah appeared before God with tears in trouble. The Lord appeared for her and blessed her and delivered her and brought joy to her soul, and her song is immortal. Think of her sorrow and what came out of it. Think of the deep, low, cutting place and the Lord's appearing. "every one of them in Zion appeareth before God," and you will appear ^{before} God. She came with

rejoicing, bringing her little boy to give to the Lord. "For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him." He answered her cry, and she presented him to the Lord: she came before Him in Zion. You who appear before Him in Zion with trouble and distress will come again with the sacrifice of praise, adoration and worship and the paying of vows, to render the glory due to His Name, here and in the consummate glory of Immanuel's Land. Blessed be God.