

Our Home

by J.C. Ryle

The sermon emphasizes that the world is not a permanent home, but Christ is a constant and unchanging home for the soul.

Scripture: Matthew 13:20, Acts 14:21, Romans 8:35, 2 Corinthians 1:3, 2 Corinthians 4:17, Ephesians 3:13, Colossians 1:24, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 2 Thessalonians 1:6

Topics: "Tribulation", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Greek Word Studies delves into the concept of tribulation (thlipsis), emphasizing that it signifies real hardships and great difficulties, not just minor inconveniences. The preacher highlights that tribulations are meant to be overcome, leading to new possibilities and the development of virtues. Through various Bible verses, the preacher explains that tribulation is a common experience for Christians, serving to refine and strengthen their faith, ultimately producing endurance, proven character, and hope. Believers are encouraged to view tribulations as opportunities for growth and purification, knowing that God uses them to shape their character and draw them closer to Him.

Transcript

"Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations." [Psalm 90:1]

There are two reasons why the text which heads this paper should ring in our hearts with special power. It is the first verse of a deeply solemn Psalm--the first bar of a wondrous piece of spiritual music. I cannot tell how others feel when they read the ninetieth Psalm. It always makes me lean back in my chair and think.

For one thing, this ninetieth Psalm is the only Psalm composed by "Moses, the man of God." It expresses that holy man's feelings, as he saw the whole generation whom he had led out of Egypt, dying in the wilderness. Year after year he saw that fearful judgment being fulfilled, which Israel brought on itself by unbelief : "In this desert your bodies will fall--every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against Me. Not one of you will enter the land." [Numbers 14:29-30]

One after another he saw, laying in the desert, the bones of the heads of the families whom he had led out of Egypt. For forty long years he saw the strong, the swift, the wise, the tender, the beautiful, who had crossed the Red Sea with him in triumph, cut down and withering like grass. For forty years he saw his companions continually changing, becoming weaker and passing away. Who can wonder that he should say, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place." We are all pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and we

have no place to dwell. "Lord, You are our home."

For another thing, the ninetyeth Psalm forms part of the Burial Service of the Church of England. Whatever fault men may find with the Prayer-book, I think no one can deny the singular beauty of the Burial Service. Beautiful are the texts which it puts into the minister's mouth as he meets the coffin at the churchyard gate, and leads the mourners into the church. Beautiful is the chapter from the first Epistle to the Corinthians about the resurrection of the body. Beautiful are the sentences and prayers appointed to be read as the body is laid in its home beneath the earth. But especially beautiful, to my mind, are the Psalms which are selected for reading when the mourners have just taken their places in church. I know of nothing which sounds so soothing, honoring, heart-touching, and moving to man's spirit, at that trying moment, as the wondrous utterance of the old inspired law-giver: "Lord, You have been our dwelling place." "Lord, You are our home."

I want to draw from these words two thoughts that may do the readers of this paper some good. An English home is famous all over the world for its happiness and comfort. It is a little bit of heaven left upon the earth. But even an English home is not forever. The family nest is sure to be taken down, and its residents are sure to be scattered. Bear with me for a few short minutes, while I try to set before you the best, truest, and happiest home.

I. The first thought that I will offer to you is this: I will show you what the world is.

I freely admit that it is a beautiful world in many respects. Its seas and rivers, its sunrises and sunsets, its mountains and valleys, its harvests and its forests, its fruits and its flowers, its days and its nights, all, all are beautiful in their way. Cold and unfeeling must be the heart which never finds a day in the year when it can admire anything in nature! But beautiful as the world is, there are many things in it to remind us that it is not home. It is an inn, a tent, a tabernacle, a lodging, a training school. But it is not home.

(a) It is a changing world.

Everything around us is continually moving, altering, and passing away. Families, properties, landlords, tenants, farmers, laborers, tradesmen, all are continually on the move. To find the same name in the same dwelling, for three generations running is so uncommon, that it is the exception and not the rule. A world so full of change cannot be called home.

(b) It is a trying and disappointing world.

Whoever lives to be fifty years old has paid the cost and knows it to be true. Trials in married life and trials in single life--trials with children and trials with brothers and sisters--trials in money matters and trials in health--how many they are! Their name is legion. And not one-tenth of them ever comes to light. Indeed, there are few families which do not have "a skeleton in the closet." A world so full of trial and disappointment cannot be called home.

(c) It is a dying world.

Death is continually around us and near us, and meets us at every turn. Few are the family gatherings, when Christmas comes around, in which there are not some empty chairs and vacant places. Few are the men and women, nearing middle age, who could not number a long list of names, deeply cut forever in their hearts--names of beloved ones now dead and gone. Where are our fathers and mothers? Where are our ministers and teachers? Where are our brothers and sisters? Where are our husbands and wives?

Where are our neighbors and friends? Where are the old grey-headed worshipers, whose reverent faces we remember so well when we first came to church? Where are the boys and girls we played with when we went to school? How many must reply, "Dead, dead, dead! The daisies are growing over their graves, and we are left alone." Surely a world so full of death can never be called a home.

(d) It is a scattering and dividing world.

Families are continually breaking up, and going in different directions. How rarely do the members of a family ever meet together again, after the surviving parent is laid in the grave! The band of union seems snapped, and nothing welds it again. The cement seems withdrawn from the parts of the building, and the whole principle of cohesion is lost. How often some miserable squabble about trinkets, or some wretched wrangle about money, makes a breach that is never healed, and, like a crack in china, though riveted can never be cured! Indeed, rarely do those who played in the same nursery lie down in graves in the same churchyard, or keep peace with one another till they die. A world so full of division can never be home.

These are ancient things. It is useless to be surprised at them. They are the bitter fruit of sin, and the sorrowful consequence of the fall. Change, trial, death, and division, all entered into the world when Adam and Eve sinned. We must not murmur. We must not fret. We must not complain. We must accept the situation in which we find ourselves. We must each do our best to lighten the sorrows, and increase the comforts of our position. We must steadily resolve to make the best of everybody and everything around us. But we must never, never, never, forget that the world is not home.

Are you young? Does everything around and before you seem bright, and cheerful, and happy? Do you secretly think in your own mind that I take too gloomy a view of the world? Be careful. You will not say that as time goes by. Be wise. Learn to moderate your expectations. Depend on it, the less you expect from people and things here below the happier you will be.

Are you prosperous in the world? Have death, and sickness, and disappointment, and poverty, and family troubles, passed over your door up to this time, and not come in? Are you secretly saying to yourself, "Nothing can hurt me much. I will die quietly in my bed, and see no sorrow." Be careful. You are not yet in the harbor. A sudden storm of unexpected trouble may make you change your tune. Do not set your affection on things below. Hold them with a very loose hand, and be ready to surrender them at a moment's notice. Use your prosperity well while you have it; but do not lean all your weight on it, lest it break suddenly and pierce your hand.

Have you a happy home? Are you going to spend Christmas around a family fireplace, where sickness, and death, and poverty, and partings, and quarrellings, have never yet been seen? Be thankful for it: oh, be thankful for it! A really happy Christian home is the nearest thing to heaven on earth. But be careful. This state of things will not last forever. It must have an end; and if you are wise, you will never forget that! "What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away." [1 Corinthians 7:29-31]

II. The second thought that I offer to you is this: I will show you what Christ is, even in this life, to true Christians.

Heaven, beyond a doubt, is the last home in which a true Christian will finally live. Towards that end he is daily travelling: each day he is coming nearer to that place. "Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands." [2 Corinthians 5:1] Body and soul united once more, renewed, glorified, and perfected, will live, forever in the Father's great house in heaven. To that home we have not yet come. We are not yet in heaven.

But is there in the meantime no home for our souls? Is there no spiritual dwelling place to which we may continually go to in this desolate world, and, going there, find rest and peace? Thank God, there is no difficulty in finding an answer to that question. There is a home provided for all laboring and heavy-laden souls, and that home is Christ. To know Christ by faith, to live the life of faith in Him, to abide in Him daily by faith, to flee to Him in every storm of conscience, to use Him as our refuge in every day of trouble, to employ Him as our Priest, Confessor, Absolver, and spiritual Director, every morning and evening in our lives--this is to be at home spiritually, even before we die. To all sinners of mankind who by faith use Christ in this fashion, Christ is in the highest sense a dwelling place. They can say with truth, "We are all pilgrims and strangers on earth, and yet we have a home."

Of all the emblems and figures under which Christ is set before man, I know few more cheering, and comforting than the one set before us. Home is one of the sweetest, tenderest words in the English language. Home is the place with which our most pleasant thoughts are closely tied to. All that the best and happiest home is to its residents, what Christ is to the soul that believes in Him. In the midst of a dying, changing, disappointing world, a true Christian always has something which no power on earth can take away. Morning, noon, and night, he has near him a living Refuge--a living home for his soul. You may rob him of life, and liberty, and money; you may take from him health, and lands, and house, and friends; but, do what you will, you cannot rob him of his home. Like those humblest of God's creatures which carry their shells on their backs, wherever they are, so the Christian, wherever he goes, carries his home. No wonder that holy preacher Baxter sings,

"What if in prison I must dwell,

May I not then converse with Thee?

Save me from sin, Thy wrath, and hell,--

Call me Thy child, and I am free!"

(a) No home like Christ! In Him there is room for all, and room for all sorts.

None are unwelcome guests and visitors, and none are refused admission. The door is always open, and never locked. The best robe, the fatted calf, the ring, and the shoes are always ready for all comers. What though in time past you have been the vilest of the vile, a servant of sin, an enemy of all righteousness, a Pharisee of Pharisees, a Sadducee of Sadducees, a tax collector of tax collectors? It matters nothing: there is yet hope. All sins may be pardoned, forgiven, and forgotten. There is a home and refuge where your soul may be admitted this very day. That home is Christ. "Come to Me," He cries: "Knock and the door will be opened to you." [Matthew 11:28; 7:7]

(b) No home like Christ! In Him there is boundless and unwearied mercy for all, even after admission.

None are rejected and cast out again after probation, because they are too weak and bad to stay. Oh no! Whom He receives, those He always keeps. Where He begins, there He brings to a good end. Whom He

admits, then He at once fully justifies. Whom He justifies, then He also sanctifies. Whom He sanctifies, then He also glorifies. No hopeless characters are ever sent away from His house. No men or women are ever found to be too bad to heal and renew. Nothing is too hard for Him to do who made the world out of nothing. He who is Himself the Home, has said it, and will guarantee it: "Whoever comes to me I will never drive away." [John 6:37]

(c) No home like Christ! In Him there is unchanging kindness, patience, and gentle dealing for all.

He is not "a harsh man," but "gentle and humble in heart." [Matthew 11:29] None who apply to Him are ever treated roughly, or made to feel that their company is not welcome. A feast of the best foods is always provided for them. The Holy Spirit is placed in their hearts, and dwells in them as in a temple. Leading, guiding, and instruction are daily provided for them. If they sin, they are brought back into the right way, if they fall, they are raised again; if they sin willfully, they are disciplined to make them better. For the rule of the whole house is love.

(d) No home like Christ! In Him there is no change.

From the youngest to the eldest He loves all who come to Him, and is never tired of doing good to them. Earthly homes, I am sorry to say, are full of fickleness and uncertainty. Favor is deceitful. Courtesy and civility are often on men's lips, while inwardly they are weary of your company and wish you were gone. You seldom know how long your presence is welcome, to what extent your friends really care to see you. But it is not so with Christ. "He is the same yesterday and today and forever." [Hebrews 13:8]

(e) No home like Christ! Communion once begun with Him will never be broken off.

Once joined to the Lord by faith, you are joined to Him for an endless eternity. Earthly homes always come to an end sooner or later: the precious old furniture is sold and dispersed; the dear old heads of the family are gathered to their fathers; the dear old nest is pulled to pieces. But it is not so with Christ. Faith will in time be swallowed up in sight: hope will at last be changed into certainty. We will one day see with our eyes, and no longer need to believe. We will be moved from the lower chamber to the upper, and from the outer court to the Holy of Holies. But once in Christ, we will never be out of Christ. Once let our name be placed in the Lamb's book of life, and we belong to a home which will continue forevermore.

(1) And now, before I conclude, let me ask every reader of this paper a simple question. Have you got a home for your soul?

Is it safe? Is it pardoned? Is it justified? Is it prepared to meet God? With all my heart I wish you a happy home. But remember my question. Amidst the greetings and salutations of home, amidst the meetings and partings, amidst the laughter and merriment, amidst the joys and sympathies and affections, think, think of my question--Have you got a home for your soul?

Our earthly homes will soon be closed forever. Time moves on with giant strides. Old age and death will be upon us before many years have passed away. Oh, seek an abiding home for the better part of you--the part that never dies! Before it is too late seek a home for your soul.

Seek Christ, that you may be safe. Woe to the man who is found outside the ark when the flood of God's wrath finally bursts upon a sinful world! Seek Christ, that you may be happy. No one has a real right to be cheerful, merry, light-hearted, and at ease, except those who have got a home for their souls. Once more I say, Seek Christ without delay.

(2) If Christ is the home of your soul, accept a friendly caution. Beware of being ashamed of your home in any place or company.

The man who is ashamed of the home where he was born, ashamed of the parents that brought him up when he was but a baby, ashamed of the brothers and sisters that played with him--that man, as a general rule, may be considered a mean and despicable person. But what will we say of the man who is ashamed of Him who died for him on the cross? What will we say of the man who is ashamed of his religion, ashamed of his Master, ashamed of his home?

Be careful that you are not that man. Whatever others around you think, don't you ever be ashamed of being a Christian. Let them laugh, and mock, and jest, and scoff, if they will. They will not scoff in the hour of death and in the day of judgment. Hoist your flag; show your colors; nail them to the mast. You may certainly be ashamed of drinking, gambling, lying, swearing, idleness, pride, and failing to go to church on the Lord's Day. But of reading the Bible, praying, and belonging to Christ, you have no cause to be ashamed at all. Let those laugh that will. A good soldier is never ashamed of the colors of his nation's flag, and his uniform. Be careful that you are never ashamed of your Master. Never be ashamed of your home.

(3) If Christ is the home of your soul, accept a piece of friendly advice. Let nothing tempt you to stray away from home.

The world and the devil will often try hard to make you drop your religion for a little while, and walk with them. Your own flesh will whisper that there is no danger in going a little way with them, and that it can do you no real harm. Be careful, I say: be careful when you are tempted in this fashion. Be careful of looking back, like Lot's wife. Do not forsake your home.

No doubt there are pleasures in sin, but they are not real and satisfying. There is an excitement and short-lived enjoyment in the world's ways, beyond all question, but it is joy that leaves a bitter taste in the end. Oh, no! only wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and only wisdom's paths are paths of peace. Cleave to them strictly and do not turn aside. Follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Stick close to Christ and His rule, even if people say all kinds of evil about you. The longer you live the happier you will find His service: the more ready will you be to sing, in the highest sense, "There is no place like home,"

(4) If Christ is the home of your soul, accept a hint about your duty.

Be sure that you take every opportunity of telling others about your happiness. Tell them THAT, wherever you are. Tell them that you have a happy home.

Tell them, if they will listen to you, that you find Christ a good Master, and Christ's service a happy service. Tell them that His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. Tell them that, whatever the devil may say, the rules of your home are not harsh, and that your Master pays far better wages than the world does! Try to do a little good wherever you are. Try to enlist more residents for your happy home. Say to your friends and relatives, if they will listen, as one did centuries ago, "Come with us and we will treat you well, for the LORD has promised good things to Israel." [Numbers 10:29]

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