

God's House and the Way Psalm 84

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the desire to dwell in God's house and the reality of dwelling with Him, highlighting the importance of trusting in God's strength and power to overcome difficulties on the way.

Scripture: Psalm 84:1

Topics: "Dwelling in God's Presence", "The Way to God's House"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the profound significance of dwelling in God's house, reflecting on how familiarity can dull our appreciation for spiritual truths. He highlights the longing of the soul for communion with God, as expressed in Psalm 84, and the joy of being in His presence. Darby explains that while God has always been with His people, the ultimate promise is that they will dwell with Him in His holy habitation, a place of perfect rest and blessing. He encourages believers to recognize the way to this dwelling is through Christ, who has prepared a place for them and provides strength for the journey. The sermon concludes with a call to examine our walk and ensure it aligns with the character of the house God has prepared for us.

Transcript

We get ourselves so accustomed to certain things by their constant use that the power of their meaning becomes destroyed. It may be a bad word or a good word, but words that would deeply affect others thus fail to move us. This we find but too true, as regards the scripture-truth itself. What an effect such an announcement as that in John 3 ("God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," etc.), would have upon us, if listened to for the first time, and the value of its meaning entered into! Just the same is it with this scripture before us. "How amiable are thy tabernacles O Jehovah of hosts," etc. Would not such a thought as being in God's court, as men dwelling in God's own house, greatly delight and surprise us, if heard for the first time and its meaning understood? What an effect such a truth as this would have upon us if fully believed - God going to make us dwell with Himself in His own house!

He does dwell with us now, as we know; but we are not yet dwelling in His house. God never dwelt with Adam, nor did Adam dwell with God. He made a suitable dwelling-place for man and put Adam in it. He did come down to visit him, but He did not dwell with him. Indeed the first time we read of God coming down His word is, Adam, where art thou? The paradise on earth was not God's dwelling-place. We read in the Revelation, the tabernacle of God is with men, and the Lamb is the light and the temple of it.

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Jehovah of hosts! my soul longeth, yea fainteth for the courts of Jehovah." The heart that has found God longs for a dwelling-place with Him. It was this desire that moved the disciples on the mount of transfiguration to make a request for three tabernacles. It was Jewish of course; but they could not bear the thought of the Lord Jesus going away. They wished Him to stay with them; they wanted to keep Him down here. He could not remain, but left them and us words of comfort. "Let not your heart be troubled In my Father's house are many mansions," many chambers. "I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." This new thing is brought out here most blessedly - that man shall dwell with God in His own house. The Lord Jesus could not stay with His beloved disciples down here, because it is polluted; but He will have his people with Himself, where there is holiness, and everything suited to meet the need and claims of holiness. His people shall dwell with Him. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am."

46 The first thought in the heart of Moses (Ex. 15), whilst recounting God's acts of power and delivering grace, is the desire to make Him a house: "He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation." But verse 13 gives us a fuller thought of faith: "Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation" - the redemption song of the Lord's strength and power. In verse 17 we get the clear promise of this new thing - a dwelling-place with God, which He Himself has made. That is what He will do for them: not merely a rest in the wilderness, but the blessed purpose of God is to bring His people into His sanctuary which He has made. What! man to dwell with God! Wondrous fact! The thought of this new thing fills my soul with the deepest joy.

The heart that longs for God finds rest in the altar of God. "Thine altars, O Jehovah of hosts," etc. "My heart . . . crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young." How beautifully this parenthesis shews us the tender care God has over all His creatures! He fails not to find a house for the most worthless of birds, and a nest for the most restless. What confidence this should give us! How we should rest! What repose the soul gets that casts itself upon the watchful tender care of Him who provides so fully for the need of all His creatures! We know what the expression of "nest" conveys, just as well as that of "a house." Is it not a place of security - a shelter from storm - a covert to hide oneself in from every evil - a protection from all that can harm - a place to rest in, to nestle in, to joy in? The term is just as familiar in the scripture as that of "the house." The prodigal well understood the comfort and plenty of the Father's house before he turned his face towards it; but it was the Father that knew the claims of the house, and He must clothe him suitably for it before he is admitted into it.

"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee." It is this new thing - that men should dwell in God's own house; not be there merely as a visitor, but a dweller. The visitor does not know all that belongs to the house; but nothing can be kept back from a dweller: he is at home, and must know all the privileges and blessings of the house. Surely there will be perfect blessedness in that house, where Christ has prepared everything - where God is at home and has arranged all according to His own wisdom and power and glory - the Lamb being the light and the temple. Now those who dwell there must have the moral qualities of the house; their tastes, and enjoyments, and nature, must be suited to the house.

47 In time past God did come into the temple after a Jewish order; but the people were shut out from even this glory - the very opposite to dwelling with God. They were a favoured people, it is true - separated from the nations by God's grace; but they knew not the constant increasing blessing of the house.

There is another thing - the way to this house; the road to that place where God and His people shall dwell. He has been dwelling with them, but He will have them to dwell with Him, and His heart has ordered the way. When we were sinners - merely sinners - and could do nothing but sin, He put it all away. "Christ suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." He has given us a new nature, which has the moral capabilities of enjoying a dwelling-place with Him in His own house.

God has dwelt with man; the God-man Christ Jesus has tabernacled down here, and His glory was displayed in grace and truth.

In Exodus 29 we learn a further truth of the tabernacle and the altar; but the grand thought all through is not only God dwelling with His people, but He must have them to dwell with Him.

In Ezekiel we see the glory that had rested on the temple departing gradually, reluctantly, yet really. But this had not been the fulness of His indwelling in the Christian; neither was it His presence in the church which is His body. "Ye are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit."

How this new thing occupies God - the thought of His own house! His word declares it; "prophets tell of it"; grace puts us in possession of it; faith gives us the enjoyment of it; the Lord Jesus is the way to it. The First Epistle of John brings out this truth very fully. (See chaps. 3 and 4.)

48 Now, how is it that we feel ourselves wonderfully more united to a Christian we may only have known for half-an-hour, than to a mere acquaintance we may have known all our lives? Is it not the reality of the truth, God is there? God dwells in us, and we in Him. It is something more than a new nature, for it goes on to say, "We know that he abideth in us by the Spirit he hath given us." In the next chapter we get that wonderful word, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love," etc. Oh, the joy this knowledge gives the heart! What comfort the soul gets in such proximity to God! How the thought of this house delights one! - this house that God is bringing us to, where we shall learn Him most fully, and love Him without hindrance.

How complete, how perfect, is God's work! He gave Jesus to die for us, and He has sent down the Holy Ghost to teach us, to assure our hearts that the Lord Jesus Christ has done everything for us. He has fitted us for this house, and we have in Him all we need. He gives us the moral qualities of the dwellers of the house, the new nature that can enjoy the glory of the house. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee." Nothing but praise becomes those who shall dwell in God's house; it will be their unwearied untiring employ - continual praise. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are the ways." If by faith I am dwelling in God's house, I have perfect rest. If I am counting on His strength, let my difficulty be what it may, I have entire repose. Communion with God always gives confidence in His power. This is the key to the psalm before us. If my heart has learnt the love God has for me, and what His purposes are towards me, I can trust Him to order the way. God's love was displayed in His Son - revealed in the gift of Him; and the Son will give grace and strength for the way. "Of those thou hast given me have I lost none." God has fully provided for our need. He has quickened us - cleansed us - sealed us. If Paul had to say, I am not already perfect, he knew it was the way up, the way to the house, the way home. If my heart is set upon this glorious dwelling-place, I shall not be so much occupied about the ease or comfort of the way, as I shall be to know that it is the way. The glory of the inheritance will be far more to me than the character of the things that are round the pathway to it.

49 Everything may be against me - all may seem united to hinder my progress. Should I be trying to make myself comfortable, desiring to settle down in a place and a world which is striving to keep me from my

house and my home, depriving me of enjoyment and blessing? No; the one thing that should occupy me is the way out. I shall not be distressed much by what is going on down here if I can but learn that it leads up there. Is it the way home? Will it take me to the house? This will be a vast deal more important to me than all else. It may be a dangerous road, a rough road, a difficult road; but is it the way up there? If I do but know that, I shall not care for the difficulties of the hill, nor fear the danger of the descent. Shall I be looking for an easier road, a smoother road? No. Is it the road? Is it the way there? If I am told there is a lion in the way - well, I have no fear: God is my strength - I cannot go without Him. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" were the words of Jesus. He had to suffer, so may we; but is it the way there - the way to the home on which my affections are set - the way to the home of blessing which the Lord has prepared? This settles every question, and delivers from ten thousand sorrows. I do not care for the difficulties nor the dangers: it is the way there. I am kept up in it by the strength of God; I am kept up through it by the love of God.

"Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well" (v. 6). The valley of Baca is a place of sorrow and humiliation, but one of blessing also. To Paul it was the thorn in the flesh - something that made him despicable in his ministry to the Galatians. It was truly humbling, and called forth from him a thrice-repeated prayer. But when he heard the Lord say, "My grace is sufficient for thee," he no longer pleaded for its removal. No; he rather gloried in his infirmity, that the power of Christ might be known. This was the place of blessing to Paul: he found it a well. The valley of Baca was turned into a spot of untold intimacy and nearness to God. With some of us this valley may be the loss of that nearest our hearts, or the thwarting of the will - something that will humble us; but it is a place of blessing. We get far more refreshing from the painful than the pleasant things. The valley of Baca is made a well. Of which of your pleasant things can you say, you make it a well? The refreshment and the blessing come from that which has pained us, humbled us, emptied us of self! This is God's way of shewing us what He is; and so, in passing us through the valley of Baca, He makes it a well.

50 So we read in 1 Thessalonians 5, "In everything give thanks." How is this to be done? Did Paul give thanks for the thorn - the very thing he supposed would hinder his usefulness? Not whilst looking at the thing itself: it was only when his eye was fixed on the heart and the hand that had done it. There are many things in themselves that we cannot give thanks for - the snapping of the cord nearest the heart, or the cutting to pieces of what our affections are set upon. We must see the love that has ordered it, and the hand that has appointed it; and then we can give thanks.

"The rain also filleth the pools." The Lord can make springs in the desert to meet His people's need, or send down rain from heaven to supply their wants. He knows neither difficulties nor impossibilities: to lean upon Him is undisturbed security. He will bring His people safely through every trial; and every fresh victory should increase the strength of their confidence in Him.

"Behold O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed." In every sorrow God is our shield. Oh! but some may say, My sorrow is brought on by my sin. Sad it should be so! But even then we can say, "Look upon the face of thine anointed." God can always look upon His Son with delight; He is ever well pleased in Him: and we can plead what Christ is. There is no position a saint can be in but that he may go to God for help. No; although his very sorrow is the fruit of his sin, and there is no other way of getting rid of your sin and out of your sorrow but by going to God and hiding yourself behind His Anointed. You may not choose to say, Look upon me; but you can ever say, "Look upon the face of thine Anointed." Christ is your only shelter. He is a covert in every storm - ah! even that which your own failure has brought upon you. There is no getting back to God but by hiding yourself in Christ - taking shelter behind Him.

There is just one other word about the way, and I have done. Now, what are your ways? What is your walk in the way to the place you are going to? Is it in keeping with the character of the house? Are your ways suited to the home God has prepared you for? - His own dwelling which He has prepared for you? Are you so behaving yourselves as to rejoice in the thought that this world is crumbling? Is the hope of the Lord's coming your daily delight? Does it influence you in the ten thousand details of your every-day life? Or are you so walking hand in hand with the world that the very thought of His coming fills you with shame? May the Lord grant you grace to take heed to your ways! May you walk well-pleasing in His sight, caring more for His glory than your own ease! "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Jehovah."

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