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GOD THE HOME OF THE SOUL.

A SERMON DELIVERED IN CALVARY CHURCH, SAN FRANCISCO, SABBATH EVENING, JULY 31ST., 1859, BY REV. GEORGE BURROWES, D. D., OF SACRAMENTO.

PSALM 90:1-2.—Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.

APART from the important truth it contains, this psalm has claims on our attention as the oldest lyric production on record. It is the oldest of the whole collection of psalms, and the model on which the psalmody of the Jewish, and consequently of the Christian Church, is formed. As a literary production, this psalm is altogether worthy of its origin and its aim. The man who has the head and the heart necessary for constituting a capable judge, will feel that the best lyric poetry of antiquity, the odes of Pindar and Horace, the most exalted strains of Homer, the noblest choral songs of the Greek tragedians, are transcended in simplicity, pathos, sublimity, and grandeur, by the lyric songs of the Scriptures, of which this psalm is the key-note, more than Mount Olympus with its solitary summit of snow pure and cold, is transcended by Sinai crowned with darkness, and tempest, and the sound of the trumpet, and the consuming fire burning to the midst of heaven, in which dwelt the presence of Jehovah.

The first verse sets forth a fundamental truth for man—a truth which philosophy, which reason could never discover. It tells us that the restlessness of the human heart can be allayed, that its desires for peace can

be gratified, that the repose for which all are sighing is found, in God alone; that He has ever been the only home of the soul, our dwelling-place, our home, in all generations. Written in the wilderness when the Jews were wandering without a home and falling by thousands in consequence of their sin, this psalm shows the sad condition of our perishing race by stating in the third verse that the power which turns man to destruction, is the power of Him who is our natural home,—that our wretchedness is complete in receiving from the lips of Him who is the eternal dwelling-place of the soul, the sentence which returns man to dust. The word Lord here used in the Hebrew is not the word Jehovah; it is another derived from the word for base, and expresses one who is the base and prop of his family. And as the Latin word for Lord is derived from the word for house, because he presides over it; this Hebrew word is so called because God presides over the whole universe as a house of his own construction. “Of him the whole family in heaven and earth is named.”—*Eph.* 3:15. As though the psalmist would say,—Thou who dost preside over the universe as thine own house, thyself being its maker, and head, around whom all the innumerable family in heaven and earth gather as the centre and head. Thou hast been in all ages our home; the home of those who like the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have made a covenant with thee by sacrifice, the home of all who stand in covenant relation to God by trust in the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is the truth taught when God is thus called the home of the soul? The union of husband and wife teaches us the tenderness existing between Jesus and his people. *Eph.*—5:22-23. The Church is the bride, the wife of the Lamb. Shall this be so, and shall there be no spiritual truths shadowed forth by all that is included in the word home? There is no sweeter, more precious word than the word home. There is no earthly happiness without a home. The efforts and sacrifices made in the drudgery of business are endured, not for pleasure found in the toil, but for enjoying without interruption at some future day the retirement of a well appointed home. For this repose in advanced age, the seaman braves the dangers of tempestuous oceans and pestilential climes; the soldier endures the exhaustion of the march, the discomforts of the bivouac, the perils of the deadly breach; by thought of this the weary swain recruits his strength, as tracing with lagging step the tedious furrow and swinging his scythe beneath the summer's sun; the toil of the counting-house becomes a work of love, when the thought of evening and home breaks in on the tide of anxious calculations, and hope points

to a happy home in old age. Home is the place where those objects are gathered on which the warmest, the primary affections of the heart are centred. It is our natural place of repose for both the wearied body and the loving heart. Around it gather those attachments of the heart which were intended to have the supremacy of all other attachments, the confiding love of infancy, the hearty happiness of childhood, the buoyant hopes of youth, the sober pleasures of manhood, the melting remembrances of hearts separated by distance or by death, the tender sympathies deepened by common sufferings and by common joys, the autumnal peace of age.

Yet it is not the scenes alone of early childhood, the spreading trees, the winding brook, the shady grove, the sheet of water fringed with willows and wild flowers, the cooling spring where childhood wearied with its gambols sunk to sleep on the luxuriant grass, the porch with trailing honey-suckles where we sat beneath the summer-moon and talked of heaven with those who have long since made heaven their home; these, these alone do not constitute what is meant by home. The central attraction of every home is found in the living affections, the loving hearts there finding undisturbed repose. Withdraw these by death, and the most beautiful dwelling-place becomes a wilderness of painful recollections, a place of loneliness and exile. No; it is the living hearts linked with these scenes; the friends there beloved and with whom every tree and every shrub every flower, every trifling thing is identified;—these constitute the life of home; when they are gone, the brightest home becomes the lifeless body from which has been withdrawn its powerful attraction, the living soul and loving heart. In this world however nothing is perfect; everything is unsettled and in a state of unrest. From man with whom the evil begins, the discord extends through all the ramifications of society, no less than through all the domains of this surrounding world. Here there is no perfect knowledge, no perfect mind, no perfect person, no perfect society, no perfect heart. Is there on earth any perfect home? In every household, whatever the comforts springing from wealth, whatever the happiness secured by religion, there is ever something found to unsettle in a measure their peace and to keep them in mind earth is not their rest. An invisible hand, like that at Belshazzar's feast, writes on the most cherished objects of earthly love, in emblematic characters of paleness and decay which the aching heart can interpret, alas, too well, "Arise, depart ye, for earth is not your rest." Every home has in it some wreck of by-gone joy, some remnant of blasted hopes, which makes them feel that

whatever the sum of their blessings, one thing is wanting to make those blessings complete.

“There is no flock however closely tended,
But one dead lamb is there;
There is no fireside howsoe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair.”

Wordly prosperity is no sure evidence of domestic happiness. Wealth, position, and fashion stand around many families as the white marble stands around the grave, entombing within corruption, misery and death. Even where there is not the difficulty of struggling with poverty; where there is no toil for the comforts of life; where religion abides and the Holy Spirit dwells; where the world can trace no disturbing influence and might suppose the happiness complete;—even there, could the whole truth be revealed, the heart knows its own bitterness; some break is traced in the circle of the affections; some canker, like a worm hid amid the leaves of the rose, preying in secret on the heart; some unhappiness covered from the eye of the world, but hourly felt by the bleeding spirit and going down with it in silence and agony to the grave; tears shed where none but the eye of Jesus can see, and ceasing only by those fountains of living waters where God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

But wherefore is this? Why is it that in every age God has kept his people in an unsettled state? The palaces and costly homes of earth have not been theirs. They have been generally homeless, often houseless; they have “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”—*Heb.* 11:13. Like the father of the faithful, there has been given them no inheritance in this world, “no, not so much as to set the foot on.”—*Acts* 7:5. He who had been caught up into paradise, had no certain dwelling-place.—*1 Cor.* 4:11. They of whom the world was not worthy, “wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth.”—*Heb.* 11:38. And when he was on earth, who is now exalted above all principality and power, and who has left us an example that we should follow in his steps,—He was so destitute, that while the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, he had not where to lay his head,—so destitute as to depend on the sisters of Lazarus for a shelter, and on the kindness of Joseph of Arimathea for a grave.

These facts are but the harmony of nature and providence with the yearnings of the human heart. Even with the happiest home, the soul has a craving for something higher and better than this. It is pain-

fully sensible that although its desires may be fulfilled with this idea of home developed into the perfection of heaven, and rendered permanent as God and heaven must be, it can certainly be satisfied with nothing short of such a goal. These yearnings the Scriptures assure us shall be gratified. The blight resting on every earthly happiness, on every earthly home, on every earthly heart; the instability of all things here; the certain disappointment in which every earthly hope terminates; the certain separation in which every earthly love ends; all are means combined by divine wisdom and fatherly love for keeping us in mind that earth is not our home; for raising our love to "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and forever;" for leading us to God who has been our dwelling-place in all generations.

1. As such, God is our only rest. Hence Jesus says, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In God, through Jesus Christ, above and beyond the limits of earth and earthly things, the affections of the soul find their home. This, this is the rest that remaineth for the people of God. Home is the place of rest. While other spots may have much that is attractive, we never feel a settled repose till reaching home. This is the place of ultimate repose. We look for no rest beyond it on earth. God is the home of the soul, the place of its final rest. The bird finds its home in the leafy shelter of its nest on some wind-rocked bough; the bee rests amid the leaves of full-blown flowers; the gazelle reposes in the meadows of grass and lilies; the ambitious man tries to make a home for his restless spirit on the unstable waves of popular applause; the miser drags out life amid his bags of gold; the wearied peasant seeks his home in the lowly woodland cottage; the infant finds its home on the bosom of the parent; the soul has its home on the bosom of its God. There, with its loftiest affections reposing on God who is love, and infolded deep in the manifold love of God, the heart sinks down in the deliciousness of an enjoyment for which our whole existence on earth has been one long-drawn sigh and agony, and which constitutes the bliss of heaven. And those who have been harassed with the consciousness of guilt, with a certain fearful looking-for of judgment:—those who have been friendless, homeless, houseless; those who have never had their affection properly requited, who have received from those on whom their love has been lavished, only a wounded and bleeding heart; all have here found, at the foot of the cross, on the bosom of Jesus, a deep, delicious, heavenly rest. "There the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." The heavy laden of earth,—the laborer who

has morning after morning through an anxious life dragged his exhausted body from his couch of straw to a day of weariness and toil; the sons of misfortune and poverty finding a pitiable shelter in the lonely alley and dreary garret; the widow whose utmost exertions could barely satisfy the craving hunger of her children, and scrape together enough to meet the landlord's claims; the needy emigrant with a dependent family in a foreign land and a strange language; all have there passed forever beyond the reach of toil, and penury, and care, and found a home in the bosom of their sympathizing God.

2. In God as our home, we have security from all evil. "There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."—*Rom.* 8:1; 1 *Jno.* 5:20. Over every home, however humble, the law throws its powerful shield. Nothing but the demands of justice for some crime, can intrude with impunity on the sanctity of the domestic hearth. The object of every good government is to make every man's home his castle. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower—a castle—the righteous runneth into it and is safe." "And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain."—*Isa.* 4:5. This is the strong-hold to which ye prisoners of hope, souls burdened with sin, are exhorted to turn. "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her."—*Zech.* 2:5. In the sacred verse of this psalm God is spoken of as eternal and almighty. This refuge of the sinner is fortified with the battlements of eternity and almighty power. This home of the soul is found in him who is eternal, who is the Creator of the earth, the world, the everlasting hills. Shall the believer dwell on high? his place of defence be the munitions of rocks? Nay; his place of defence is the Creator of the munitions of rocks, is more enduring than the everlasting hills, rests on, is the rock of ages. In the midst of the righteousness of Christ, as in an impregnable fortress, does the believing soul dwell. There do we find our home,—such a home as the man-slayer had in the city of refuge, such a home as the fugitive had among the munitions of rocks, such a home as Israel had beneath the pillar of cloud and of fire, such a home as the sinner has beneath the shadow of the cross, such a home as the beloved disciple had when his head

rested on the bosom of Jesus, such a home as he has who dwells in the secret place of the Most High and abides under the shadow of the Almighty.

3. In God, as our home, we find the strongest and sweetest manifestations of love towards us. Who on earth loves us with such an affection as those in our own house? Through the deceitfulness of sin, the heart may sometimes waver as the tempter tries to persuade that others have a love well nigh as strong; but experience awakens the conviction that whatever promises others may make, when the hour of trial comes no other love can be put in comparison with that of the hearts around our own domestic hearth. The prodigal awakens to this truth, when after being reduced to wretchedness by those who took the name of friend, he still finds a shelter open for him beneath the father's roof he had wilfully forsaken, and more than a welcome in the mother's heart he had wrung with the bitterness of woe.

Who loves us as God loves us? Who can love us as he loves us? Who can give us such evidences of love? Every thing belonging to man in his best estate is, in comparison with God, less than nothing and vanity. His love like his other attributes, is infinite. Human love at best only is very faint in age.

“Thine is an unchanging love,
Higher than the heights above:
Deeper than the depths beneath,
Free and faithful, strong as death.”

“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.”—*Jno.* 3:16. Like the wayward child, we are prone to believe that others love us better than He; but when, after wandering from our father's house and spending our substance in riotous living of sin, we find ourselves in want; when sorrow distresses; when sickness pains; when friends forsake; when guilt agonizes; when death approaches; when the judgment is at hand; then we are aroused to his tenderness, and find he so loves us, that though our sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool;—so loves us that when father and mother forsake us, then He takes us up; loves us with the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. That were a home indeed in which we thus rest in the love of God through Jesus Christ. And “God is love: he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him,”—1 *Jno.* 1:16.

4. In God, as our home, we have the object of our fondest and most delightful affections. Every other joy is a cold and empty thing compared with the pleasure springing from the proper exercise of the domestic affections. When putting away the wife who devotedly loved him, that Jupiter tonans of mortals the emperor of the French, who had drunk of every pleasure earth can give, who had crowns at his disposal and more than half a million bayonets at his command, made to her the confession that all the true happiness he had ever known, had been in the enjoyment of her society, her love, and her home. This is the natural feeling of every human heart. Home is the pole-star of the heart in its wanderings. The remembrance of those who love us there, lightens the gloom of separation, and brightens the future by the hope of again resting amid their loves in peace. The record of a young officer of ardent piety, lately slain,—whose praise is in all the churches,—is that the love that he fostered towards her whom he was hoping to make his bride, animated him through the sufferings of a Crimean winter, cheered him during dreadful nights spent in the trenches, and gave vigor to his arm as he struck for victory and his country's glory. How many a way-worn soldier of Jesus Christ has been out of weakness made strong, waxed valiant in fight with the powers of darkness, and at the midnight cry has rushed with more than cheerfulness to grapple with the king of terrors, forgetting pain, sorrow, and death, under the elevating joy of love to Jesus Christ; and, as in Jacob's service for Rachel, the years of a life of toil and suffering have seemed but a few days for the love borne by the believer to his Lord. Who but the child of God can tell with what joy unspeakable and full of glory, the saint now rejoices in the love of Jesus, and looks forward to the day of our espousals, the day of the gladness of our heart, of which Christ himself says, "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."—*Isa.* 62:5. In that home of all other homes, in heaven, Jesus is all in all. As Andromache said to Hector, after mentioning the loss of parents and brothers,—

My mother, father, brother, husband dear,
My all art thou; all love I find in thee;—

so may the Church say to Jesus, the heavenly bridegroom, Thou art to me father, mother, brother,—thou art my home. And true to the fundamental principles of the heart is it, when one of the greatest masters of human nature makes the wretched beggar-boy Smike say to the only friend he has ever found, and who though anxious to help him, was as poor and houseless as himself,—I will not, I cannot leave you; you

are my all ; you are my home. The same feeling which prompted this, operating in the soul of the saint, and reaching forth with intense yearning to Him who though now crowned with glory, is still the same as when on earth he had not where to lay his head, makes us say to Him, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee ; for whither thou goest, I will go ; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge ; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried ; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."—*Ruth*. 1:16-17. The idea of heaven is but the idea of home carried out to perfection,—with its central attraction, Jesus. St. Chrysostom says, "Where Christ is, there is heaven." We say, where Christ is, there is home.

Where'er thou art, blessed Jesus, is my home,
Nor earth, nor heaven has home apart from thee.

Thus God has been our dwelling-place in all generations ; we find in him the same blessedness and peace enjoyed by our fathers. An ancestral home is ever most fondly loved ; around it cluster the most endearing associations. God is our ancestral home. He will be to us all that he has been to our fathers. And when one and another of the patriarchs is said at death to be gathered to his people, to sleep with his fathers, they are represented as coming together by family re-union in their common ancestral home, in Him who has been their dwelling-place in all generations. "Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not."—*Pro*. 27:10.

From this home we were driven, and against us the door was closed, when the Lord God drove out man from the garden and placed at the east of Eden, Cherubim and a flaming sword. But there has been opened "a new and living way." From the lips of Jesus expiring on the cross, the glad tidings were published to our doomed world, "It is finished !" Jesus, the eternal Son of God, says. "I am the way. I am the door ; by me if any man enter in he shall be saved."—*Jno*. 10:9. "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth ; behold I have set before thee an open door."—*Rev*. 3:7. Jesus came from heaven to seek and to save those that are lost, by leading them back to the ancestral home of their eternal God. We are now like the prodigal, when in a far country his substance had been spent by a life of sin, and in rags and misery he was feeling himself in want. When with repentance and tears we return to our Father, from heaven the habitation of his holiness he sees us with his watchful eye of love, and through his

Holy Spirit runs, and falls on our neck, and kisses us ; and puts on us the best robe heaven can furnish, even the righteousness of Christ ; and puts a ring on our hand, even the seal of the Holy Spirit ; and puts shoes on our feet, the preparation of the Gospel of peace ; and spreads for us a banquet of the hidden manna ; and gathers angels to rejoice over us as sons of God who were dead and are alive again ; who were lost and are found. An angry, tumultuous sea, dark as the waves of death, shuts in our horizon and rolls between us and our eternal home. But He who walked the waters with Peter sinking, and hushed the surges threatening to swallow up the disciples on the sea of Galilee, is walking with us, and will bring us safe to the heavenly haven, and to our fathers' God, our ancestral home.

Then what is death ? What was death to Jesus when here on earth in the likeness of sinful flesh, but a return to his home in heaven, the bosom of the Father, the glory he had with the Father before the world was ? What was death to Enoch and Elijah, who appeared with this same Jesus in glory ? What was death to the martyr Stephen, when he saw the heavens opened and the Son of Man at the right hand of God, waiting to receive his spirit ? What but an entrance through the gates into the heavenly city, where Jesus has prepared a home for us, there ever to abide under the glory of the glorified Redeemer, in the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty.

No, not the streets of gold,
Nor gates of pearl, nor Salem's silvery dome,
Nor scenes on Zion's heavenly field unrolled,—
These, these are not my home.

My disembodied soul,
Ye kindred angels take to Jesus' breast ;
There dove-like seeks my heart its final goal,
There only longs to rest,

THE TROUBLE you dread may never come ; and if it does, its character may be so changed by the time it reaches you, that you may not dread it ; or you may be raised above it, so that it may pass away without much affecting you. Small troubles are frequently the greatest trials, because we endeavor to bear them alone.