

“God, Our Dwelling Place”

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All verses NKJV

Although we live in a physical realm, entombed in bodies made of earthen material, we also inhabit a spiritual realm. In both of these realms, our growth and survival depend on appropriate nourishment. The feeding of our physical bodies usually is not an issue; it is in the feeding of our souls that we sometimes encounter 'malnourishment'.

Jeremiah 2:13

“For My people have committed two evils:

They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters,

And hewn themselves cisterns--broken cisterns that can hold no water.”

Many of us assume that we can drink from the presence of the Lord and then do works of ministry, perform job duties, participate in missions, and enjoy a happy family life, ad infinitum. We set up our "tents", or dwelling places, at our jobs, our homes, or our ministries, and believe that when spiritually thirsty, we can simply go to the Fountain of living waters and take a few sips to wet our lips, or maybe even to fill our cups. Then we return to our dwelling places (jobs, family life, or ministries) only to take a few sips of the water now and then to “survive.” And on the cycle goes.

Instead of this way of living, it is God's desire for us to make our dwelling place (singular) *His presence* and stay there, encamped with Him. As we remain with Him, He will irrigate us with His living water. Then from our encampment, His presence, we can engage in our jobs, family life, ministry, or other needed activities. When we begin to get thirsty, God's presence can thoroughly fill us because we are still encamped in Him.

Even though He provides us with the physical necessities that we need to live on this earth, above all else His heart's cry is for us *to be with Him!* He wants to commune with us in a

mutual, loving fellowship, the kind that was lost in the Garden when Adam and Eve sinned. From that place of communal companionship, we will journey on, *with Him* leading us and providing for our every need, just as He did for the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings.

Let us briefly examine a few Psalms that encourage us to make Almighty God our place of habitation.

Psalm 91:1, 9

¹He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

⁹... you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place

In this Psalm, we read about a “secret place” and a “dwelling place.” In verse 1, the Psalmist admonishes us to dwell in the Most High’s secret place, not just to visit there occasionally. The Hebrew word used here for “dwells” is *yashab*, and it means, “to dwell, to sit down, to remain.” In our frantic lives, sitting still is considered unproductive. But in the spiritual life of a Christian, sitting with God in communal fellowship is a treasure nothing on this earth can match.

The Father has a secret place for each of us that He desires to dwell in with us. The great thing is that since neither time nor space restricts God’s presence, the presence-filled secret place that He has for us is accessible anytime and anywhere. It is a place where we can spend quality time with Him even in the midst of the frenzied world around us. We just have to learn how to live there.

Verse 9 informs us that *we are the ones* who make “the LORD... [our] dwelling place.” Many of us may have mistakenly made work, ministry, or family our dwelling places. However, none of these places can match the awesome splendor and majestic presence of our God. In addition, without our abiding in Him as we work, minister, or live with our families, we will

become downtrodden by the responsibilities demanded of us. When the Lord is our dwelling place in the midst of everyday life, we can tap into "His divine power" which gives us everything we need for "life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3).

Psalm 27:4-5

⁴One thing I have desired of the LORD,
That will I seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD
All the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the LORD,
And to inquire in His temple.
⁵For in the time of trouble
He shall hide me in His pavilion;
In the secret place of His tabernacle
He shall hide me;
He shall set me high upon a rock.

How many of us can say with the Psalmist that the *one thing* we desire and seek after in life is to dwell in the place where God is found? The outer realms of life in this hectic world always seem to seize and pull us into pits of unrest. We have to make a conscious effort to refocus our attention away from those earthly things that encircle us and to the Eternal God who indwells us and desires our mutual embrace.

“Pray without ceasing”, was Paul’s admonition to the church (1 Thess 5:17). Unceasing prayer is not just for those who live a monastic life. It is for all those who want to cultivate a lifestyle of walking with God in continuous, conscious apprehension of His presence. He is always with us and we can commune with Him incessantly. What a great life He has made possible for us through the shed blood of our Savior, Jesus Christ!

If we are unsure about how to begin such a routine of living in God's presence, He will teach us how if we ask Him. It will also help to read the Psalms diligently, for in them we find the psalmists writing out of a deep yearning to commune with and hear from God. Reading books such as Brother Lawrence’s *The Practice of the Presence of God*¹ and Dallas Willard’s

Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God, will also provide us with examples of Christians who have found that this lifestyle is possible.

Of this, we must beware: it is easy to criticize ourselves when we struggle to implement a life of dwelling in God's presence. However, our struggle may simply be a result of what we have learned from birth to “behold” more – the things of the visible world. David determined to "behold the beauty of the LORD" above everything else, and he realized that it was from that place of beholding his Lord's beauty that he would be protected in the secret tabernacle where David and God could fellowship alone. No enemy could breach that tabernacle's walls; no forces could tear David from its confines.

David was convinced that Almighty God would set him in an inaccessible place where no enemy could reach, and where he and God could commune unhindered by the universe around them:

Psalm 71:3

³Be my strong refuge,
To which I may resort continually;
You have given the commandment to save me,
For You are my rock and my fortress.

When we seek to live in a secret place with our God, and we desire to dwell in and with Him, even though this world may attempt to disturb our peace, God will cover us with His impenetrable presence. He literally becomes our refuge, our rock, and our fortress.

The Lord knows we have to maintain earthly normality since we have jobs to go to, ministries to engage in, and families to spend time with. And He has made it possible through His universal, indwelling and covering presence for us to engage in each of these areas of life with Him as the Center of all that we do.

Although in this earthly existence, since we inhabit corruptible bodies, we will never achieve complete communion with God, we can dwell in Him more and more throughout our sojourn here. All it takes is a heart that says, "God, I want You alone to be my dwelling place. Help me to always be aware of Your lovely and protecting presence. Help me to want to draw closer to You, just as You want to draw closer to me."

For we have an awesome promise:

James 4

⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

¹ Full text of *The Practice of the Presence of God* can be found at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/lawrence/practice.html>.