

“Permanent Residence!”—Psalm 90:1-2

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Permanent Residence!”, is Psalm 90:1-2 → *LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

A sense of security can come with longevity. Longevity on the job provides such a confidence that you may take out loans expecting your job to carry you through their terms. Living in the same community your whole life may instill a sense of security with permanent residence, so much so that moving into a care facility with failing health isn't even a consideration. Of course, you find a sense of security and permanence with the numerous insurances policies you've acquired as well. While you may experience a sense of permanence and security in the a career-driven, goal-directed life, such security can also be shaken to pieces within moments. You can be left defenseless, emotionally

paralyzed and searching for direction in life.

Wait . . . this is a New Year's sermon. We approach the new year with joy and anticipation of greater things to come . . . not some pessimistic, fatalistic, doomsday perspective of life. Yet, the realities of life still follow us into the new year with its many changes which challenge our sense of permanence and security. Actually, the new year should remind us that Yahweh is God no matter what the circumstances, dreams, goals and resolutions which accompany the new year for many.

While the idea of permanent residence may have been foremost on the minds of God's people from 1446 to 1406 BC it would have been so only as a regretful thought. Yahweh had led His people to the borders of the Promised Land following His delivering them from some four hundred plus years of slavery in Egypt. As a result of their disobedience, refusing to enter the land at His command, they brought His punishment upon themselves. The LORD decreed that all those who came out of Egypt *from twenty years up and upward* (with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, the two faithful spies) *shall die . . . in the wilderness* where they *shall bear their iniquity forty years* (cf. Numbers 14:26-35).

That experience is the backdrop for this psalm written by Moses, presumably at some point during their wilderness wanderings (cf. Psalm 90:15). He speaks of their being *brought to an end by Yahweh's anger and wrath*. He confesses in Psalm 90:8-9 → *You have set our iniquities*

before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence. For all our days pass away under Your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. He describes the fleetingness of their lives as they watch their family members pass away without getting the blessing of a permanent residence in the Promised Land (cf. Psalm 90:3-6).

The fleetingness of life and the bleak reality that we will have no permanent residence in this earthly life hits us hard as well, even if life is corrupted by sin. We experience life situations constantly changing to the point of having nothing in the end with the basic necessities of life provided until *the years of our life, filled with toil and trouble . . . are soon gone, and we fly away* (cf. Psalm 90:10). Death, no matter what the circumstances, is never a friend. Even on the other side of Jesus' resurrection 1 Corinthians 15:56 still recognizes that *the sting of death is sin*. Yet, we long for a permanent residence, that place where we find shelter, security and refuge in eternal perfection. And rightly so since we were created for such eternal residence with God (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:5)!

Thus, in Moses' desire for the LORD to *return and have pity on His servants* (cf. Psalm 90:13) dying before his eyes everyday, He confessed that their permanent residence is truly a reality. *LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations . . . from everlasting to everlasting You are God.* (Verses 1-2) It is a confession of faith in Yahweh's faithfulness to poor sinners such as you and me. Such a confession

expressing a permanent residence with the LORD is based upon **His taking up permanent residence with us**. Isaiah 57:15 says: *Thus says the One Who is high and lifted up, Who inhabits eternity, Whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, **and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit**, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.* To be contrite is to experience sorrow over your sins in an accountability to your Lord. Through it the Holy Spirit leads you to repentance, trusting in the *steadfast love* of God, Who is *from everlasting to everlasting!*

Notice, the desire for permanent residence is bound up completely in His working in your life. He came into our messed up lives in sin in the Person of Jesus. By His perfect life and death on the cross He experienced the sting of death, both physically and spiritually, **for you**. But He has provided the victory over that sting by His resurrection from the dead, never to die again. Jesus Christ is the ultimate display of God's permanence in your life as He *is the same yesterday and today and forever* (cf. Hebrews 13:8). It is He alone Who brings us together into this spiritual fellowship called His Church, our permanent residence against which *the gates of hell shall not prevail* (cf. Matthew 16:18).

It is in the midst of His gathered where He continues to provide the refuge for sins forgiven, the security of eternal life and the shelter in the

midst of daily temptations to sin. In Christ *you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit* (cf. Ephesians 2:22). He comes to you in His Gospel proclaimed through which the Holy Spirit creates and sustains your faith. He comes to you with His real presence in the Lord's Supper, giving you the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

In the midst of God's presence, *strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being as Christ dwells in your hearts through faith* (cf. Ephesians 3:16-17), you can live in the security of His promises and faithfulness *in all generations*. Those *generations* will bring changes through the developmental stages of your life, all of which challenge your faith. Those stages may lead to your death or to Christ's 2nd Coming to give you your permanent residence in the *new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells* (cf. 2 Peter 3:13). Because Jesus took up residence to deal with your sin completely you can live each day in the security of His victory over the power of sin, death and the devil. Then we confess: *Thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*. (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:57) Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,

keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.