

SERMONS UPON PSALM XC. 1.

SERMON I.

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.—Ps. xc. 1.

IN a time of danger, we would all be glad if we could get a safe place of retreat or a secure habitation, where the evil might not come nigh us. The text will direct you to one, if you have an heart to make use of it.

This psalm was penned by Moses, the man of God, as the title showeth. Its reflection is mainly upon the state of those times wherein he lived, when the children of God wandered up and down in the wilderness, and were sorely afflicted by sundry plagues, and great multitudes of them cut off by untimely death for their provocations.

The psalm is said to be a 'Prayer of Moses.' He beginneth his prayer with an acknowledgment of God's goodness and gracious protection. In the howling wilderness, and in all former ages, he had been their habitation; and this giveth him confidence to ask and expect other things from God's hand. From hence we may learn to express faith in prayer before we express desire, and give God glory in believing before we lay forth our own wants. So doth Moses, the man of God: 'Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.'

Doct. That God is his people's habitation or dwelling-place.

I shall deliver the sum of this point in these considerations—

First, The first shall be a general truth, that true and lively faith doth apprehend all things as present in God which it wanteth in the creature. When they wandered up and down in the wilderness, God was their habitation. As the life of sense is a flat contradiction to faith, so is the life of faith to the life of sense. Faith is supported by two things—God's all-sufficiency and gracious covenant; the one showeth what may be, the other what shall be. As God hath a double knowledge, *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ et visionis*; by the former he knows all things that may be, in his own all-sufficiency; by the latter he knows all things that shall be, in his own decree; so faith sees all things made up in God. This can be, because God is able to bring it to pass; this shall be, because God hath promised it. His promise is as good as performance; therefore a believer, in the want of all things, doth not only make a shift to live, but groweth rich: 2 Cor. vi. 10, 'As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.' Nothing in the view of sense, but all things in God that are good for him. As God was as a fixed habitation to them that were in the wilderness, so he promiseth, Ezek.

xi. 16, 'Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.' A christian that hath learned to live by faith above sense, he can never want anything; he hath it in God; and can see, not only pardon and righteousness forthcoming out of the covenant, but food and raiment, protection and maintenance, house and home, and all things, even then when they are most destitute. It is not only an act of love that God is instead of all these things, but an act of faith. As to love, 1 Sam. i. 8, 'Am I not better to thee than ten sons?' God is not only better than all to a believer, but he is all.

Secondly, God's people may be reduced to such exigencies that they may have no house nor habitation on this side God; as now the people of God were in a wandering condition: 1 Peter i. 1, Peter directs his epistle, 'To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia;' strangers not only in affection, but condition. Exile and separation from their outward comforts and privileges may be the lot of the people that are dearest to the Lord of any on earth besides: Heb. xi. 37, 'They wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented;' ver. 38, 'They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth.' So 1 Cor. iv. 11, 'We both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place.' This God doth—

1. Partly to correct and humble them for the abuse of their mercies and the dishonours done to him in their dwellings. God hath reserved in the covenant a liberty to correct his wanton children: Ps. lxxxix. 30-33, 'If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes,' &c.; and by Moses' law the rebellious son was to be put out of doors. This kind of correction God himself useth for great sins. Mark the emphatical phrases of scripture. Sometimes our dwellings are said to cast us out, Jer. ix. 19; sometimes he is said to 'sling out the inhabitants of the land out of their dwellings,' Jer. x. 18, as easily, readily, and irresistibly as a stone is cast out of a sling; sometimes God is said to pluck us out: Ps. lii. 5, 'He shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling-place.' We are apt to root there, and to dream of such a fixing as not to be moved. Sometimes to spew us out: Lev. xviii. 28, 'That the land spew not you out also when ye defile it, as it spewed out the nations that were before you.' Surely it is a great offence which provoketh a loving father to turn a child out of doors. God did not turn Adam out of paradise for eating an apple, as ignorant people talk. There is a long bill brought in by divines. Or if not for great sins, yet God thus punishes them, though in some more moderate way, for lesser sins; as for their little sense of God's love, and merciful provision of so great a comfort as an habitation for them. Surely we should show more thankfulness when we enjoy the effects of God's bounty in this kind, that he should give us any repose, or place to rest in, not vouchsafed to Christ: Mat. viii. 20, 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of

the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' He had no certain place of residence, not so much as a fox's hole or a bird's nest. So, considering our condition, God's people are strangers, and so must look to be ill-treated by the men of the world. *Religio scit se peregrinam esse in terris*—Religion is a stranger in the earth: Ruth ii. 10, 'Why have I found grace in thy sight, that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?' a kind word was much. Now, that God should give us a resting-place in our pilgrimage is a great mercy, and if we are not thankful for it, God may make us to wander. Or their little compassion to other exiled and shiftless ones provokes God that he thus corrects them, and maketh their abode more uncertain. Till we have felt misery ourselves we cannot pity others. Israel learned to pity strangers by being a stranger in the land of Egypt: Exod. xxiii. 9, 'Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.' Experience showeth us more than guess and imagination.

2. For their trial; to see how they will bear it for God's sake, and when God's will and pleasure is so; as those in the Hebrews. God trieth the strength of our resignation: Mark x. 29, 30, 'There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel, but he shall receive an hundredfold in this life, houses and brethren,' &c. Not in kind, as Porphyry and Julian scoffed, but in value. The fortitude and courage of God's children is seen upon those occasions when they are shiftless and harbourless, or threatened by men to be cast forth of house and home: 1 Cor. iv. 13, 'We are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things to this day,' *περίψημα και περικαθάρματα*, the sweeping of the city. The apostle saith, Heb. xiii. 13, 'Let us go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.' The good Levites left their possessions: 2 Chron. xi. 14, 'The Levites left their suburbs, and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem; for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the Lord.' When we are thrust forth contemptibly, and rejected of the world, let us bear it with patience. Eudoxia threatened Chrysostom with banishment; he replied, *Nihil timeo nisi peccatum*—I fear nothing but sin. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; God is our habitation. An heathen could say, *Ibi exilium, ubi virtuti non est locus*—There is banishment where there is no place for virtue; where a man hath no service to do, and no opportunity to own or glorify God.

3. Sometimes to show his sovereignty over us, and all our temporal interests and concerns. So by noisome diseases God sees fit to drive us for a while from our dwellings, and we are exposed to sad scatterings; as in the case of the leper: Lev. xiii. 46, 'All the days wherein the plague shall be in him, he shall be defiled; he is unclean, he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.'

4. Sometimes to spread knowledge, to scatter the seeds of the word among those that are strangers to God. The good figs were put into the basket to be carried out of the country for food, Jer. xxiv. 5. The

disciples that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word, Acts viii. 1. God scattereth his enemies as smoke is scattered by the wind, but he scattereth his people as corn is scattered by the hand of the sower: Micah v. 7, 'The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people, as dew from the Lord;' to refresh and make others fruitful towards God. So Zech. x. 9, 'I will sow them among the people, and they shall remember me in far countries.' God would make their scattering to be a means to bring in the fulness of the Gentiles. Well, then, this may be, and often is, the condition of the people of God.

Thirdly, In this appellation and title a metaphor is ascribed to God, and so there is implied, that whatever may be expected from an habitation and dwelling-place, that may be and eminently is found in God. An house serveth for three uses—(1.) For our defence and shelter from the storms; (2.) It is the seat of our blessings, and the storehouse of our comforts; (3.) It is the place of our rest and repose. Now all these a believer findeth in God; protection, provision, and peace, and comfort; yea, whatever a soul can wish for: therefore here a child of God may and must dwell.

1. Here is defence, or the warm and comfortable protection of God Almighty. We have many enemies, spiritual and bodily; we need a defence, and God alone is the only proper object for our trust for this benefit.

[1.] Because he hath undertaken to keep us, and guard us from all evil. See Gen. xv. 1, 'Fear not, Abraham; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward;' Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'The Lord God is a sun and a shield.' The removal of evil belongeth to his covenant, as well as the bestowing of all manner of blessings. The blessings of the covenant are privative and positive. His providence is mainly seen in our pilgrimage in keeping off evils. *Plures sunt gratiæ privatiæ*—There are more privative blessings here, in keeping from sin, temptation, and danger. In the world to come we know more of the positive blessings. See also that promise, Zech. ii. 5, 'I will be unto her a wall of fire round about.' Pray mark the promise, for every word is emphatical. It was spoken when the returning Jews were discouraged with the small number they had wherewith to people their country and man their towns against their enemies. Now, after a promise of future increase, God for the present telleth them that he 'would be to her a wall of fire round about.' The words are so precious, it is a pity a syllable should be lost. There are two promises included in this one promise—

(1.) That God will be a wall. There is a distinct promise for that: Isa. xxvi. 1, 'We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks round about her.' So Ps. cxxv. 2, 'As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.' God will be instead of all guards.

(2.) Then a wall of fire; not of brass or of stone, but of fire. *Qui comminus arceat et eminus terreat*. They made fires about them to keep off the wild beasts. Here is enough for a refuge, and to stay our hearts on the Lord's keeping. Would God speak at this rate, and not be a shelter to us? If we did make use of him, we should find the benefit. These promises show that we have leave to dwell in God as

our fortress, and that we shall not be refused lodging, nor thrust out when we enter into him for that end and purpose. Yea, they give us confidence as well as leave that we shall have the benefits we expect, or a benefit every way as good or better.

[2.] Because he alone will keep us, and every part of us, and all that belongeth to us; our souls, our bodies, our names, and our estates.

(1.) Our souls: Ps. cxxi. 7, 'The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil, he shall preserve thy soul.' If a believer lose anything by trouble, he shall not lose what is most precious, he shall not lose his soul. In a fire, a man careth not so much though his lumber be burnt, if he can preserve his money and his jewels. Our soul is in more danger than the body, and needs more keeping. Our body is in danger of men, but our soul of spiritual and ghostly enemies. If God suspend the keeping of the soul, how soon doth man fall and lose himself! Now God preserveth the souls of the saints: Ps. xxii. 20, 'Deliver my soul from the sword, and my darling from the power of the dog.'

(2.) Our bodies are not left to the wills of men, but are under the special care and protection of God: Ps. xxxiv. 20, 'He keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken.' They are not left to the will of instruments in their trouble. In our Lord Christ was this promise fulfilled. Nay, the excrementitious parts are taken care of: Mat. x. 30, 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered.' He hath a care, not only of the essential parts, body and soul, and of their integral parts, any joint or limb, but of their excrementitious parts, which are the least things about them, and serve for ornament rather than for use.

(3.) So for all their concernments and estates: Job i. 10, 'Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?' Not only about him, but his children, servants, horses, oxen, asses; Satan could not find a gap or breach whereby to enter and work him any annoyance. Such an invisible guard there is upon the saints. It is true there is a difference. God hath absolutely promised to save the souls of his people, but life and the comforts of it, so far as shall be expedient for his glory and our good; upon which terms we must trust all in his hands.

(4.) I had almost forgotten our name: Ps. xxxi. 20, 'Thou shalt keep them secretly, as in a pavilion, from the strife of tongues.' Slander and detraction is an arrow that flieth in secret, and so we are often struck with a blow that smarteth not. Calumnies and false accusations are privily whispered to our wrong and prejudice. Now it is a comfort to remember that God hath the keeping of our credit as well as of other things. He will not only keep us from being smitten, from the fist of wickedness, but from the strife of tongues.

[3.] Because he can shelter us from all sorts of enemies. All our enemies and dangers, they are all under God and at his disposal. Therefore we are said, Ps. xci. 1, to 'dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and to abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' God is most high and almighty, and the enemies of your salvation are something under God, whether men or devils. Men are but poor instruments in God's hands. They can do no more than God pleaseth. When you are in their hands, they are in God's hands: Acts iv. 28, 'To do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be

done.' Devils are not exempted from the dominion and government of his providence; they can do nothing without leave, whether as enemies of your bodies or of your souls. Pests are thought to be an effect of his malice: Ps. xci. 3, 'He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.' See Job's case chap. ii. 7, 'So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown.' The devils are princes of the power of the air, but God is most high. They must have leave; if the devil could not enter into the herd of swine without leave, surely he cannot afflict the bodies of men without leave. Oh! could we dwell above in God, all the frightful things in the world would seem less to us. Though we are in the midst of a thousand dangers, what should we fear, that dwell above in the bosom of the almighty God? Things the more remote, the less they seem, and the nearer they are, the greater. We that inhabit the earth judge the mountains that are before our eyes to be of an unmeasurable bigness, and the stars, that are distant from us, seem but little sparks and spangles; but if we could ascend into heaven, then we should see those globes of light to be of an incredible bigness, and all our Alps and Pyrenees to be but like little spots. Those that converse above, that dwell in the secret place of the Most High, the difficulties and dangers of the world seem as nothing to them. They can despise this anthill of the world, as a poor little sandy heap, that is soon spurned into dust. But God's help seemeth greater, and therefore they are not troubled nor afraid. They can say, Rom. viii. 31, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' Goliath frightened all the hosts of Israel, but David went forth against him in the name of the Lord: 1 Sam. xvii. 45, 'Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.' David could despise the giant, as much as the giant despised David. Compare any of the children of this world with a servant of God, that dwelleth in the shadow of the Almighty, and what a difference will you find! One dismayed with every danger, troubled with every petty loss; why so? Because he dwelleth in the earth, and converseth only with created things, and so small things seem great to him. But now take any of the servants of God, who live in God, as the martyrs; they are not daunted with fires, swords, wheels, gibbets, beasts; they are as a flea-biting. They are acquainted with things truly great; nay, many of the evils we feel come from God himself, from his immediate hand; as pestilence and famine. None are affected with these things more than a child of God, as they are tokens of his Father's displeasure. He is not stupid and foolhardy; none hath such a tender sense of the events and effects of providence as he hath. He looketh upon them with an eye of nature and of grace, and seeth God in them; yet none are less discomposed in such cases. They know none can withdraw himself from God, or lie hid from his eye, when he maketh inquisition for sinners. *Quia te fugit, quo fugiet nisi a te irato, ad te pacatum?*—He that flies from thee, whither shall he fly, but from thee as angry to thee as appeased? There is no way to avoid his justice but by flying to his mercy. Kings and potentates of the earth, their wrath may be escaped; their eyes cannot.

see all, nor their hands reach all ; but none can hide themselves from him that filleth heaven and earth with his presence. There is no hiding from God but in God.

[4.] Because of the manner of his defence and protection. It is everywhere expressed as a secret invisible thing, that cannot be seen with bodily eyes. So Job xxix. 4, 'The secret of the Lord was upon my tabernacle.' Meaning his gracious protection. So Ps. xxxi. 20, 'Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man ; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.' So Ps. xci. 1, 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' This keeping is not liable to the view of sense. A man is kept nobody knoweth how ; abroad, yet hidden in God. Natural men cannot discern the way of it. When to appearance they are laid in common with others, yet they are distinguished from others by the special care of God's providence, God's truth, power, grace, and goodness, whereon faith doth fix itself. It is a riddle and a mystery to the world, which carnal reason knoweth not to improve to any satisfaction and comfort. However it teacheth us to depend upon the providence of God, whether there be any appearance of the benefit we look for, yea or no. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, but it is an invisible tower, only found out by faith, and entered into by faith. Therefore he that would take up his dwelling-place in God must not govern himself by probabilities of sense, but by maxims of faith.

2. An house is the seat of our blessings, and the place where we lay up our comforts ; and so God is our habitation, as we expect all our supplies and provisions from him. So the saints have God for their storehouse, and his all-sufficiency for their portion, out of which they fetch not only peace, and grace, and righteousness, but food and raiment : Ps. xxiii. 1, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want ;' Ps. xxxiv. 1, 'O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him ;' Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'For the Lord God is a sun and a shield ; the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' We must not prescribe at what rate we will be maintained, for that is to ask meat for our lusts, and to set providence a task which it will not comply withal. But that which is good for us he will not deny unto us. He that satisfieth the desire of every living thing cannot be unkind to his people : Ps. cxlv. 16, 'Thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing ;' compared with ver. 18, 19, 'The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth ; he will fulfil the desire of them that fear him ; he also will hear when they cry, and will save them.' He that provideth not for his own is worse than an infidel ; and can unbelief paint out God as so negligent and careless ? Christ taxeth them as of little faith : Mat. vi. 30, 'Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, that to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith ?' Shall we pretend to believe in God for eternal life, and not trust in him for daily bread ?

3. The house is the place of our abode and rest ; so in God we have consolation, as well as protection and provision. It is blustering

weather abroad, but in the bosom of God we may repose ourselves : John xvi. 33, 'These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have rest : in the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' As it is comfortable to be within, and hear the rattling of the storm on the tiles, so it is to have inward peace in outward trouble : 2 Cor. i. 5, 'As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.' Abroad a christian hath his labours and sorrows, but in God is his rest ; when he has recourse thither, he is at ease : 1 Sam. xxx. 6, David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

Well, then, we have the effect of a house in God ; in him we may dwell quietly, as in a secure, safe, and comfortable place, and need not fear any danger whatsoever. Thus much for the metaphorical reflection upon these words, which is the third consideration.

4. I observe, this title hath a special respect to that particular mercy of a dwelling-place, and to God's providence in and about our habitations. And so it is of use to us—(1.) When we want a dwelling-place ; or, (2.) When we have one.

[1.] When we want a dwelling-place, or such an one as may be safe and commodious for us. A child of God should not be dismayed, nor altogether without hope, as if God could not provide a dwelling-place for him. Now, now is the time for God to show himself most eminently to be an habitation. Neither through ignorance and unbelief should we conclude ourselves to be forgotten and forsaken of him. We are very apt to do so ; and it is a great temptation when we are shiftless and harbourless : Isa. xlix. 14, 'Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.' Therefore I shall lay down some considerations.

(1.) Consider God's general providence. The apostle telleth us, that 'he hath determined' concerning all men 'the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation,' Acts xvii. 26 ; when and where men shall live. They do not flit up and down by chance, but by God's providence. They are not born by chance, nor do they die by chance, nor live here and there by chance ; some in this climate, some in that, in Europe, or Asia, or America. That one possesseth so much, another so little ; all is under God's guidance and direction. As God divided the land of Canaan by lot, which is a kind of appeal to God, Josh. xiv. 2, so the whole world is carved out by God's direction. He enlargeth and straiteneth nations and persons according to his own pleasure. The generality of men, indeed, are spilt upon the great common of the earth by a looser providence ; but there is a more especial care about his people. They are 'the salt of the earth,' and 'the light of the world,' Mat. v. 13, 14. God sprinkleth them, and scattereth them here and there, for use and service. They are his jewels ; a man is more careful of them than of ordinary and common utensils : and among them, as any are more useful, so they are more under his special care ; as the journeys of the apostles were guided by the Spirit, as well as their doctrine. The Spirit moved them, or the Spirit suffered them not : Acts xvii. 7, 'They essayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not.' Therefore certainly God taketh notice of their condition ; and in every place where they are scattered he will provide subsistence for them while he hath service

and work for them to do, and will follow them in all the places of their dispersion with the testimonies of his love and respect: Ps. xcix. 14, 'For the Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.' Men often cast them off, as unworthy to be members of the church or any civil corporation, yet God will not cast them off. He may suffer them to be exercised and tried, but, because of his interest in them, he will take care of them.

(2.) Consider his covenant and promise. God offereth to be his people's dwelling-place, and they choose him and use him as such. The covenant is both expressive of God's grace and our duty, what God is, and what the saints should make him to be, how they should use him and employ him. God undertaketh to be our habitation, and we accordingly must address ourselves to him for this benefit. See Ps. xci. 1, 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' The qualification and the privilege are both expressed there, almost in the same terms, implying that if we will take God to be to us what he offereth to be, and what he hath promised to be, we shall find him actually and indeed to be so when need shall require it, and we make use of him for that end. Therefore why should a believer doubt of safety, comfort, and rest? It is not any other privilege that is promised, viz., that he that dwelleth in God shall have more grace, or heaven at last. No; but he shall dwell in God. Nor is it any other qualification that is required, whether love, or fear, or exact obedience, but he that dwelleth in God. Now when this duty and this privilege are suited, use God as an habitation, and he becometh so. As delight is rewarded with delight: Isa. lviii. 13, 14, 'If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, &c., then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord;' and courage or strength of heart is rewarded with strength of heart: Ps. xxvii. 14, 'Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart;' Ps. xxxi. 24, 'Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord;' so dwelling in God is rewarded with dwelling in God; for God loveth to make good the undertaking of faith, and will every way answer his people's expectation. Surely this should encourage us that our privilege and our duty are so near of kin, and that God promiseth much and requireth little, only that we should own him by faith to be what he is, and what he hath promised to be. Dwell in God, and you shall dwell in God; in all dangers and distresses you shall have a safe and comfortable lodging in him. Our dangers that compass us about are great, and every day grow more and greater, and therefore will easily invite us to seek a safe refuge. God Almighty only requireth that he may be this refuge; trust him, and you shall have all that trust can expect from him. Among men, protection costs dear; every private man, that he may be protected by the government he liveth under, is willing to support it with a good part of his estate. God, that protects our soul and body, desireth only that he may be trusted with the keeping of both; and then he will be to us whatsoever faith will have him to be. Use God as your habitation, and he becometh so.

(3.) Consider the constant experience of the saints; in the text, 'Thou

hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.' He hath been so to his people living in every place and in every age. When their fathers were travellers in a strange country, God was a dwelling-place to them; to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when they were in Egypt, when in Gerar, and when in Padan-aram. By one means or other they were still driven up and down in the world; sometimes by special command, sometimes by some judgment, as by famine; but still God provided a place of shelter for them. So for themselves, in all their troubles and travels; in Egypt there was a Goshen provided for them there; in the wilderness they had tents, and quails, and manna, that fell round about them; God kept a market for them in the wilderness, and sent in provisions from heaven. Now they gather confidence in their remaining troubles, and that God's people cannot be houseless and harbourless: *Exod. xxxiii. 14*, 'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.' Under his defence they dwell safe and sound in the wilderness. The *Shekinah*, or God's majestic presence, went along with them, though they had not an opportunity to build an house; therefore God supposed they would not forget this, even when they had built to themselves goodly houses, *Deut. viii. 12-16*. Now God once gracious is ever gracious, for God is always like himself. If he was so to former saints, or his people living in former ages, he will ever be so; we may lay claim to the same privileges, the same mediator, the same covenant, the same terms of grace. The Lord's kindness to his people is alike in all ages.

[2.] It is of use to us when we have an house; God is still to be owned as our habitation. A christian should always make use of God, and look beyond the creature, whatever his condition be. There are two notions—of a refuge and of an habitation: *Ps. xci. 9*, 'Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation.' A refuge is the place of our retreat in a time of danger; an habitation is the place of our residence in a time of peace. Most men make use of God in their straits and the time of adversity, when they are beaten to him, and have no other place of retreat. God is their refuge, but he is not their habitation. They are frightened into a little religiousness when they are in trouble, and their life and temporal comforts are in hazard. They use God as men in a city do a porch or penthouse, or as men in a journey do a broad and well-spread tree; they run to it in a storm, but do not fix their residence there. The psalmist speaketh of dwelling and abiding: *Ps. xci. 1*, 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' He doth not say, he that hopeth or trusteth in the Most High; but 'he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High.' We must not run to God's help, as we run to a tree or penthouse, to use it only for a time, or for a turn, and by compulsion, against our wills. Many seem to beg God's help in prayer, but are not protected by him; they seek it only in a storm, and when all other means and refuges fail them. But a christian must maintain constant communion with God; must dwell in God, not run to him now and then. It is an everlasting truth, 'Thou art our habitation.' In this respect a snail may be an emblem of a christian; they carry their houses about with them; and though they wander here and there, yet still they are at

home. God is not to be used for a turn, but for every good thing his people need, and he is to be acknowledged in all things which we have ; not for one day only, but there must be a constant recourse to him : Ps. lxxi. 3, 'Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort.'

SERMON II.

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.—Ps. xc. 1.

WE must make use of God daily, owning him in all things that we have. Therefore, whether we have or want an house, he is still our habitation. How when we have an house ?

1. Whatsoever comfort and safety we have in an outward dwelling must be owned as the effect of his bounty, who ruleth in all our affairs, and giveth and taketh these things at his own pleasure. So it is said, Exod. i. 21, 'Because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses.' It is the Lord's providence that we enjoy anything in this kind, an house, health, peace, and safety therein : Ps. iii. 5, 'I laid me down and slept ; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.' So Ps. iv. 8, 'I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep ; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.' So that the habitation of our habitation is God himself. Alas ! without him the noblest dwelling will be but a comfortless place. All the world are but tenants-at-will to God, who is our great landlord, and putteth into possession, and turneth out of possession, as he pleaseth : 'I gave thee thy master's house,' saith God to David, 2 Sam. xii. 8. God is called 'the possessor of heaven and earth,' Gen. xiv. 19. Not only the creator, but the possessor ; because he still disposeth of all things here below. We are but his tenants-at-will, received by him into those places he seeth convenient for us, and entertained by him during our abode there. He is the preserver of us and our dwellings against what evil might otherwise befall us by men or devils, or any kind of accident. He keepeth off the violence of men. When the males go up to worship at Jerusalem, the enemy shall not desire their land. He keepeth off diseases. When dangers are near, 'A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousands at thy right hand ; it shall not come nigh thee,' Ps. xci. 7, and ver. 10, 'The plague shall not come nigh thy dwelling.' This must be acknowledged then when we dwell in safety.

2. God must not be displeased or dishonoured in our houses, but glorified, served, and obeyed. A practical acknowledgment giveth God more glory than a verbal acknowledgment ; and we destroy our own happiness, and cannot depend upon him with that comfort for the continuance of our mercies, if we do not honour, and love him, and serve him. We saw before how sin maketh men's dwellings to spew them out and cast them out ; they will soon grow weary of us if we do not pay our great landlord the constant rent of duty, service, and worship. Surely if we would comfortably enjoy God there, we must walk uprightly and glorify God there : Ps. ci. 2, 'I will walk in my house with

a perfect heart.' There his domestical carriage is described, and how he would purge his house from all impurity: Ps. xxx, the title, 'A psalm of David at the dedication of his house.' We should enter upon our houses in a religious manner, and consecrate ourselves and houses to him. It is good to observe the different carriage of men in their houses. Nebuchadnezzar, when he walked in the palace of Babylon, Dan. iv. 30, 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?' Pride of heart came upon him. Those Jews that dwelt in ceiled houses were well and at ease, therefore neglected God: Hag. i. 2, 'This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.' David: 2 Sam. vii. 2, 'See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.' Nebuchadnezzar was proud, the Jews careless, David zealous. Say then, What have I done for God, who hath done so much for me? It was a saying of Parisiensis, *Qui majores terras possident, minores census tulerunt*—Those that possessed great estates paid the least taxes. In many great houses how little is God owned! God hath many times more prayers from a smoky cottage than from great men's houses. The revenues of heaven do more arise from a few poor broken-hearted christians, that have little in the world, than from great ones, that have altogether broken the yoke.

3. We must inure the soul to the thoughts of a change, and live in the midst of the abundance of worldly comforts with greater weanedness and looseness of heart, as remembering that temporal enjoyments are not our happiness, that here God will exercise us with much uncertainty, and that 'surely every man at his best estate is altogether vanity,' Ps. xxxix. 5. When we seem most settled, to rest secure upon temporal things is but to raise a fabric or structure upon the ice. God can soon remove us, not only by the great remove of death, but by many intervening accidents during life. When we have surest tenures, strongest dwellings, clearest air, best accommodations, how soon can the Lord blast all these things, and break in upon us by his judgments! There were two types, leaven in their thank-offerings, and dwelling in booths at the feast of tabernacles, Deut. xvi. 13, 14, with Lev. xxiii. 42. After they had gathered in their corn and wine, and their houses were full of all the blessings of the earth, then they were to dwell in tents. They that are secure, as if above changes, God will soon show them the vanity of all earthly enjoyments: Ps. xxx. 6, 7, 'In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong; thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled.' No man ever slept well on a carnal pillow, but his rest was disturbed before his night was spent.

4. Be content with God's allowance. God is our habitation, and doth appoint to us how much or how little we shall have of these comforts. He is, as to temporal things, a larger habitation to some than to others. If he be but an hiding-place to us, though not a palace, we must be contented: Ps. cxix. 114, 'Thou art my shield and my hiding-place.' David took notice of that as a great mercy. We are not to seek great things for ourselves. If we have any tolerable safety, or any tolerable condition of life, and opportunity of service, it is

enough. The degree of enjoying these comforts must be left to God himself. Promises were not made to suffice covetousness, but to encourage us in our want: Heb. xiii. 5, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' Purge the soul from worldly desires, and then there will be room and place for the exercise of faith.

5. If God be our habitation, the heart must not be fixed in the creature, nor diverted from the everlasting enjoyment of him. For the present, your dwelling is in God himself. Now God is enjoyed three ways—in the creature, in the ordinances, and in heaven. These three ways of enjoying God must not clash one with another, but be subordinate. To be satisfied in the enjoyment of God, so far as the creature or outward things can let him out to us, is a sign of a carnal heart. David was otherwise minded; his great thing in this world was to enjoy God in his ordinances. See Ps. xxvii. 4, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, 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;' that is, to enjoy God in the ordinances. Now those that desire thus to enjoy God in the ordinances will long to see his face in heaven; for these are but part of his ways, a taste, to make us long for more. Besides, God is never so much, so truly an house to us, as in heaven: 2 Cor. v. 1, 'For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' That house should be mainly desired. Therefore all that we enjoy here should but quicken our desires after more in heaven; for if God be our habitation, he is there all in all: Heb. xi. 14, 'For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country;' and ver. 16, 'Now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.' There is our inheritance, which is immortal, eternal, and undefiled; there is our Father, and the best of our kindred. If the creature were only our habitation, then it were good to be here still; but since God is, we must strive to be there where we shall have most of him. And therefore, as to the creature, and any outward comforts resulting from thence, we must carry ourselves as strangers and pilgrims. The life of faith is heaven anticipated, and heaven is but the life of faith perfected. Here we must be contented to be strangers and pilgrims. So was Abraham, who had the best right: Heb. xi. 9, 'By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country.' So was David, who had most possession: Ps. xxxix. 12, 'I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.' He that had so full a right to an opulent powerful kingdom; not only when he was chased like a flea or partridge on the mountains, but in his full glory and prosperity, when he offered many cart-loads of gold and silver: 1 Chron. xxix. 15, 'For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers.' Jesus Christ, who was Lord paramount, complains, Ps. lxi. 8, 'I am become a stranger to my brethren, and an alien to my mother's children.' He that was Lord of all had neither house nor home. He telleth us, John xvii. 16, 'I am not of this world.' He passed through the world to sanctify it as a place of service, but his heart and constant residence was not here, to

fix in it as a place of rest. All that are Christ's have the spirit of Christ. *Τὴν γῆν οὐ κατοικοῦμεν, ἀλλὰ παροικοῦμεν*, saith Chrysostom—We pass through, but do not inhabit this world. Here we are absent from our own country, yea, from our God, who is our house and home: 2 Cor. v. 6, 'Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.' We are at home there where we may enjoy the full of God. Our hearts should be still homeward, and we should take little and moderate pleasure in the delights that offer themselves in the course of our pilgrimage, and esteem it an honour if we may get a little leave and respite to do any piece of service to God while we are upon our journey.

Use of all. To press us to dwell in God. This is the happiness and honour of the people of God, that they dwell in God, and God dwelleth in them. He holdeth comfortable communion with them by the influences of his grace, and they have free recourse to him upon all occasions. Oh! how sweet and comfortable is it to have a lodging in God's heart, to take up our mansion-house in his all-sufficiency, and to find there protection, provision, and all manner of consolation! I shall—(1.) Press you to it by some motives; (2.) Show you what it is, and in what manner it is done.

1. To press you to it.

[1.] Nothing else will be a sure refuge and dwelling-place for us on this side God.

(1.) Will you dwell in your own wit? How soon can God turn that into folly, and bring you to such exigencies as you know not what to do nor say. Many skilful men have perished: Job v. 13, 'He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.'

(2.) Will you dwell in your own wealth? It is a usual sin. A man is known by his trust; his constitution of mind and heart is according to it: Ps. cxv. 8, 'So is every one that trusts in them.' That this is a usual sin, see Prov. xviii. 10, 11, 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe: the rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.' What the name of the Lord is to the one, that a man's wealth is to the other; by it he thinks to repel all evil and obtain all good. They promise themselves all happiness; they can shift and run from God. This is a great sin: Eph. v. 3, 'But fornication, and all uncleanness and covetousness, let it not be once named among you;' Mark x. 24, 'How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!' Yet hardly avoidable. Therefore that caution given, Ps. lxii. 10, 'If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.' As soon as we have anything in the world, we are apt presently to build our hopes upon it, to the wrong of God and our own souls; but all things on this side God will prove a ruinous habitation, ready to fall on the head of the inhabitant: 1 Tim. vi. 17, 'Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches.' These pass from hand to hand and from house to house; those whom they seem to make happy one day, they leave empty and naked the next. To promise ourselves a long enjoyment of them is to play the fool: Luke xii. 19, 'Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of

thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? 'Riches profit not in the day of wrath,' Prov. xi. 4. They will not allay the displeasure of God, nor keep off a noisome disease; they cannot purchase a pardon, buy health, or prolong life for one day.

(3.) Will you dwell in, or trust in strength of body, good constitution, natural beauty? Ps. xxxix. 5, 'Verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity.' Alas! how soon can God arm the humours of your own body against you; bring on a noisome disease, while you are in your prime, and turn this beautiful body into a loathsome carcase!

(4.) Will you dwell in honour and greatness? A king confuted his flatterers, that told him what a mighty prince he was, what a great command he had by sea and land, by causing his chair to be set near the waves upon the sand. It will not keep off one wave, not a sickness, nor approaches of death. How soon can God lay your honour in the dust! Ps. cxlvi. 4, 'His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish;' Ps. xlix. 20, 'Man, that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish;' a house of clay soon crumbled into dust. How many may stand on their fathers' graves, and say, Where is all the glory and honour they once enjoyed? Now what good have their pleasures and prosperity done them? when he that dwelleth in God is on a sure foundation.

(5.) Will you dwell in friends? This is a great blessing; but if it withdraw the heart from God, it is a great snare. Friends, in many cases, can only do us good by their wishes. God can send noisome diseases, when 'friends and lovers stand afar off, and our kindred stand aloof from us,' Ps. xxxviii. 11. Friends are mutable: 2 Sam. xvi. 4, 'Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth.' A sentence unworthy so just a king towards the son of his dearest Jonathan, to whom he was so strongly engaged for his true worth, incomparable love, singular favours, yea, by oath and covenant, so solemnly made again and again in the presence of God. Reason of state and jealousy are incident to empire. Men are but men; they die: 1 Kings i. 21, 'It shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders.' Those that dwell in God have better protection than the minions of princes: Ps. cxviii. 8, 9, 'It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in men: it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.' In greatest extremities, nothing more frail than an arm of flesh, though now never so rich and powerful.

(6.) Will you dwell in your own righteousness? None trust in their own righteousness so much as they that have least cause. Alas! what will this do, if God enter into judgment with you? Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.'

[2.] You will not be refused lodging, nor thrust out when you come to him, seriously, humbly, and penitently, whatsoever your condition be. *Jure venit cultos ad sibi quisque deos*—All come for relief to their gods: Jonah i. 6, 'Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not;' Ruth ii. 12, 'A full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art

come to trust.' There is no exception against you because of your outward condition : Ps. xci. 1, 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High,' &c. It is spoken indefinitely, whosoever he be, high or low, rich or poor, young or old ; for God is no acceptor of persons, but is rich to all that call upon him. Among men it falleth out otherwise ; the poor, who most need protection and cherishing, have least share of it. Men are obnoxious to many wants and weaknesses, therefore barter with their kindnesses, and give harbour and entertainment where they may receive it again. But this is a general and common promise, that excludeth no sort of men. Here is no distinction of high or low, prince or subject, nobles or common people ; whoso cometh to seek a hiding in God is welcome, if he cometh in faith. The bosom of providence is open to receive persons of all ages, sexes, degrees, and state of life. It is the fashion of the world to respect great ones. If a rich or noble man should invite himself to our houses, we take it for a great favour ; we strain ourselves to give him suitable entertainment ; the more free they are with us, the more we give them thanks ; if they eat heartily of the provisions we have made for them, we take ourselves to be obliged by a new benefit ; which boldness, if a poor man should take, we look upon it as a saucy intrusion, and we rate him away with a frown. They are the rich that are respected, the rich are entertained, their causes and suits are dispatched, when the poor can hardly get access and audience. As all floods run to the sea, so doth the respect of the world to the rich and mighty. Where they expect a return, there they bestow their courtesies. But God respecteth all, for he needeth none ; he is present with all, provideth for all, supplieth all, protecteth all that fly unto him in their tribulation : Ps. xxxiv. 6, 'This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.' Prayers in cottages are as acceptable to him as prayers in palaces.

[3.] When once you are received and admitted into this habitation, you need not fear any calamity in the world, because none can endamage your spiritual interest, nor frustrate your great hopes. Whatever become of the man, the christian is safe. So that you may keep up not only patience and constancy of mind, but joy of heart : Rom. viii. 38, 'Neither height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord.' Nothing shall be able to drive you out of your hiding-place. You lie fairer for temporal safety than others do, and are more likely to have it ; and if anything fall out otherwise than well, it shall be sanctified. You have a God that is fully inclined to do you good ; and he hath all-sufficient power, and hath engaged it by his infallible truth, to set it a-work for you, so far as it shall be for his glory and your good. Why then should you be afraid ? Take up your habitation in God, and you are safe, especially as to your main interest.

2. What it is, and in what manner this is done.

[1.] There must be a solemn reconciliation with God in Christ. For we enter into God as an habitation, to seek our comfort, and safety, and happiness in him, only by Christ ; for till sin be pardoned, and God reconciled to the soul, what blessing or comfort can we expect from him whose nature engageth him to loath us, and justice to punish

us? Man by sin is become an odious creature to the holy God: Hab. i. 13, 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.' And being an unthankful rebel, is liable to the process of his revenging justice and severe punishment. Therefore when wrath maketh inquisition for sinners, there is no hiding-place till found in Christ: Phil. iii. 9, 'And be found in him, not having my own righteousness.' There must be an atonement, not only made, but applied, before we can delight in God, and have comfortable communion with him, or have any right to the blessings of his providence: Rom. v. 11, 'We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have received the atonement.' It is applied on God's part by the Spirit. And 1 John iv. 13, 'Hereby know we that we are in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.' And on our part by broken-hearted, penitent, believing addresses to him, or by breaking off our sins, and giving up ourselves to him in an everlasting covenant not to be forgotten. This must be renewed as often as there is a breach on our part, for all occasions of breach must be removed; or when God is executing judgment on his part, for then he seemeth to put the bond in suit, which we must deprecate by flying humbly to the throne of grace: Ps. lvii. 1, 'In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge;' Ps. lxi. 4, 'I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever; I will trust in the covert of thy wings.' He joineth the wings of God with the tabernacle: Ps. xxxvi. 7, 8, 'How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings; they shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house.' He speaketh of the goodness of God in his house.

[2.] There must be an actual dependence upon God, and trust in him for what he hath provided and we stand in need of, or a firm adherence unto him according to his promise. It is dependence breedeth observance. The soul that doth not trust in God cannot be true to him. Faith and faithfulness are not so near akin in sound as they are in nature. Nothing is more engaging than the great bond and tie of our obedience: Ps. cxxiii. 2, 'Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us;' Phil. ii. 12, 13, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure.' Therefore is trust so often called for: Ps. lxii. 8, 'Trust in him at all times, ye people;' Ps. lxxxvi. 2, 'Save thy servant that trusteth in thee;' Isa. xxvi. 3, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.' We are without distraction of mind and thoughts when we refer all to the all-sufficient God, as being persuaded that he will cast things for the best. See the application David maketh of that great truth: Ps. xci. 1, 2, 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty: I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God; in him will I trust.' You must keep up the thoughts of his goodness and all-sufficiency.

[3.] There must be supplication and earnest fervent prayer for his powerful and gracious protection. This is the acting of our trust, and God

will have all blessings sought out this way, that we may take them immediately out of his hands : Jer. xxix. 11, 'Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you;' Ezek. xxxvi. 37, 'Yet for this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.' There faith is exercised, hope is declared, desires are expressed in a solemn manner : Ps. lxii. 8, 'Trust in him at all times, ye people, pour out your hearts before him; God is a refuge for us, Selah.' It is a means to ease us of our cares and fears, and of laying down our burden at God's feet, and it reviveth the sense of our obligations.

[4.] Holy walking is necessary, because none can make a comfortable claim to this privilege but those that are sincerely God's people. He is their habitation. Others, whatever indulgence they have by God's common providence, can have no certain hope or comfortable claim : Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'For the Lord God is a sun and a shield, the Lord will give grace and glory : no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly;' those that fear him, love him, choose him for their portion. Others build castles in the air. They do not dwell in the secret place of God that live in their sins, and yet lean upon the Lord. By sin you run out of your dwelling-place and weaken your trust : 1 John iii. 21, 'Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.'

[5.] Constant communion with God : Job xxii. 21, 'Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee.' We must not run to God as we run to a shelter, with a mind to depart thence as soon as the storm ceaseth. Our habitation is a place of constant residence. So we must make use of God not when we are in straits only, to serve our turn, but abide and dwell in him as our habitation.
