DISCOURSE DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE NEW CHAPEL AT THE SAILOR'S SNUG HARBOR

BY

D" PHILLIPS

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Presented by A.G. Cameron, Ph.D.

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NEW CHAPEL

ERECTED FOR THE USE OF THE INMATES OF THE

SAILORS' SNUG HARBOR,

ON

STATEN ISLAND.

W. W. PHILLIPS, D.D.

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DISCOURSE.

PSALM lxxxiv. 1:

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!"

We have here an expression of the strong affection which the Psalmist felt for the sanctuary of God. He was distinguished for his love of devotion; his delight was in the worship of his God. He loved the house of God, and the solemn assembly; and frequented them as the means of holding communion with the Father of his spirit.

To have the light of His countenance lifted up upon him, gave him more joy than the increase of corn and wine could give to the wicked. He valued

one day in the courts of the Lord, more than a thousand elsewhere; and would rather be a doorkeeper there, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

When deprived of the use of his religious privileges, no one ever felt the privation more sensibly, or regretted it more deeply. When away from them, he could say in sincerity: "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God! When shall I come and appear before God?"

Whilst he was thus distinguished, however, he was not alone in his views and feelings with respect to divine ordinances.

The sentiment which he uttered in the text, is that of all the true servants of God. They all desire to honor him in the way of his appointment, to do his will, and to dwell in his presence; they love the Sabbath, and the service of the sanctuary; and when deprived of them, feel like exiles, and find the effects of such privation to be leanness, estrangement from God, and the loss of spiritual peace and joy.

We need spend little time in explaining what is meant by "the tabernacles of the Lord of hosts." It is the figurative language of the Old Testament, and expresses in this connection, the places of religious worship, including the word and ordinances of the Lord, which were there administered as the symbols of the divine presence.

We know that "Jehovah dwelleth not in temples made with hands," neither is worshipped as though he needeth anything. "The heaven of heavens cannot contain him." We know, also, that with him is no respect of persons; "but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him."

He has graciously promised to be "nigh unto all that call upon him, and wherever two or three are met together in his name, to be in the midst of them;" yea, he visits the private abodes of men, and has promised to look to that man who is humble and of a contrite spirit, and who trembleth at his word. Yet he has enjoined it upon us to assemble ourselves together for his public wor-

ship. From necessity and as a matter of convenience, therefore, places must be prepared in which to perform this service.

There must be houses of prayer in which we may meet for his worship, where we may come together in the name of Christ, in the faith that he will record his name there, and manifest his gracious presence in power and glory.

These are his earthly courts, his tabernacles, the gates of Zion, which he loveth more than all the dwellings of Jacob. These are Bethels, meeting-places between God and his people, the birth-place of souls, the nurseries for heaven. Of them it shall be said, this and that man was born in them. The Highest himself shall establish them.

The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that many were born there.

The tabernacles of the Lord are amiable, desirable, and attractive above all other places, on account of the inestimable benefits which are connected with them being proclaimed and offered there, and may be obtained by those who seek them there. These are, pardon, justification in the sight of God, deliverance from the power of sin, and eternal life, without which none can be happy.

Considering our relations to God as his creatures and as sinners, and that we must sooner or later appear before his judgment-seat to give an account of the deeds done in the body, it is evi-

dent that the pardon of our sins, and restoration to his favor, is the first benefit we need and the most important we can receive. It is essential to our happiness, vital to our best interests, and can be obtained nowhere else than of God in Christ. Without it, all our attainments, personal qualities, temporal possessions and enjoyments, can be of no permanent value. With the most amiable disposition—with all the learning, knowledge, and skill in arts that can be acquired—with wealth, with honor from men, and all the pleasures which this world can give—the soul of the unpardoned is lost.

He who is the great proprietor of all—who is almighty, the source of light and life—frowns on the unpardoned,

and will by no means clear the guilty. When the Holy Spirit awakens a sense of guilt in the conscience of the sinner, he is made to realize this, "and has no peace, but is as the troubled sea which cannot rest." Nor can he even obtain peace, until he receives assurance from the throne of God that there is forgiveness for him, and that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.

We need a perfect righteousness, which shall satisfy the law and justice of God, before we can obtain justification and eternal life.

There must be an atonement made for the transgression of the holy law of God, of which we are guilty; and there must be perfect obedience given to all its precepts, or its sentence of condem-

nation against the sinner must be executed. Whilst the promise of life, as the reward of obedience, cannot be received. We have no righteousness, and can never work it out ourselves; for we have a depraved nature, and are without strength. The law is to us a killing letter, and worketh wrath, until we receive the righteousness of God by faith; the perfect and everlasting righteousness which has been wrought out for us by the Lord Jesus Christ, and which is freely offered to us in the Gospel.

We need deliverance from the power and bondage of in-dwelling sin. We have been taken captive by Satan at his will. We have been enslaved by corrupt lusts and affections, and by sinful habits. We are infatuated and fascinated by the deceitfulness of sin, and, under its blinding and hardening influence, are hurried impetuously and heedlessly forward in the broad road which leads to death. We are held in that hard and bitter servitude, until we receive the assurance from the lips of the Saviour: "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

By drawing near to God in Christ, in the sanctuary—by sitting under the preaching of the gospel, we learn the evil nature, the ill desert and tendency of sin, and our ruin by it; at the same time we receive assurance of the love of God, of his gracious purpose to save the chief of sinners, and have offered to us a full and free pardon of all our sins, and a title to eternal life. We have proclaimed to us, in the name of Christ, the absolute promise of the Holy Spirit, to quicken, to enlighten, to renew the soul, and to transform it into the likeness of God. "A new heart will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you." All who believe, who set to their seal that God is true, actually receive the blessing promised. They are inwardly changed, and made to hate sin, to love holiness, to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and to delight in the law of God. They are enabled to put off the old man which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts, and being renewed in the spirit of their minds, to put on the new man. They learn the truth of the promises, also: "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are

not under the law, but under grace."
"My grace is sufficient for you." "As
your day, so shall your strength be."

Our access to God in his tabernacles, is the source of our purest and highest enjoyment. God is apprehended as a God of love and mercy, as reconciled and waiting to be gracious; His voice is heard as the voice of a friend, as the voice of our Father in heaven. We approach Him without slavish fear, with filial reverence, with the affection of children; we feel that we occupy the place where he has promised to meet us as the hearer of prayer, and concerning which he has said, "This is my rest, here will I dwell." Such an apprehension of Jehovah by faith, and the contemplation of the

truths which are here revealed, is the most worthy and appropriate, the most elevating and delightful exercise of the powers of the soul, of which they are capable. It is purifying and perfective of our being. It is refreshing and animating. It fills the vast capacities of the mind; satisfies the desires of the heart, and the longings of the soul; it lifts the true worshipper above the world and its changes, and brings him into the enjoyment "of thefavor of God which is life, and of His loving kindness which is better than life."

Here we learn how to live, how to suffer, how to die. He who attends on the instructions of the word of God, given in the sanctuary, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

He will learn contentment with his lot; resignation to the will of God, and the duty of trusting in Him at all times. We read of one whose feet had well nigh slipped; who was envious at the foolish when he saw the prosperity of the wicked; who had the cause of his envy removed by going into the sanctuary. There he had the mystery of providence explained. He learned that the wicked are not to be envied. Though they may for a time spread themselves in great power, like a green bay tree, and enjoy an outward, flourishing prosperity, they stand in slippery places, and will soon be gone. They shall be driven away in their wickedness, be forgotten in the earth, and shall never see God in peace. Very

different is the state, and very different will be the end of the righteous. Though they may have many afflictions, the Lord will support them, and will deliver them out of them all; their path is that of the just which shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day, and their end shall be peace. Attendance in the sanctuary, with the blessing of God, will keep in exercise faith, repentance, love, gratitude, hope and joy, and will constrain us to live in newness of life as followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises; for it is a place of remembrance, intended to recal to our minds what God is, and what he has done for us; who the Lord Jesus Christ is, and the history of His humili-

ation, sufferings, obedience, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession for us at the right hand of God! Every house of prayer is a memorial of these great truths, and an earnest of our eternal redemption, intended to confirm and strengthen our faith. A visit to the house of God recals his dealings with us personally, and all the way in which we have been led. We here, as it were, live our lives over again, learning wisdom from experience, lamenting our errors, and shortcomings our ingratitude, waywardness, and unfaithfulness, as contrasted with His goodness, mercy, and faithfulness which have followed us continually, causing true and ingenuous repentance.

How many tender and endearing re-

collections are awakened by a review of the gracious dealings of God with us? Throughout our whole course, and in all the changes through which we have passed, of prosperity or of adversity; in all the scenes in which we have been actors; in all our afflictions, domestic, social, or personal; in all our trials, sorrows, or joys, His purpose has been one, and all that He has done has been done with a gracious design, in infinite wisdom, love, and mercy. At different times He has spoken as it were, with a voice from heaven, saying, "Do not this thing which I hate; turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die? This is the way, walk ye in it."

How often has He prevented the mischief we were bringing upon our-

selves? Denied us, or taken from us, that which would have ruined us, and broken in upon our earthly comforts which were drawing us away from Him, and bringing us into a state of carnal security and spiritual sloth. He saw the danger, and provided the remedy. He sent the chastisement, removed from under us the false prop, took away the endearing comfort, the darling idol, and swept away the refuge of lies, teaching us to be still, and to know that he was God, and enabling us to say, "It is well."

We are reminded also, and not without profit, of all those who have gone before us in the same way, of the volume of incense, of the pure offerings which have ascended through successive generations, of the worship, the prayers, tears, holy communion, and happy experience of all the devoted followers of the Lamb, who have preceded us, and whose spirits now rest with God in glory. They met, as we do now, to honor God, and to be honored by him. They sang his praise, called on his name, meditated on the same gospel which is ours now. They all drank of the same spiritual rock which is Christ, and partook of the same spiritual meat. They all felt in some degree, the same desires, hopes, and fears. From time to time they approached the table of the Lord, which is still spread for us, with trembling, and yet with rejoicing; they wept, and prayed, and prevailed; they braced themselves for the warfare with sin, satan, and the world, strengthening themselves in God as their light and their salvation, and for the last conflict with death, and they conquered.

To some of you, the tabernacles of the Lord are amiable, on account of the recollections of your personal experience in them. There first did you feel convictions of your sinfulness and lost state, and there first did you meet the Saviour. You were drawn to him, and made willing to give yourself to him; you have there sat under his shadow with great delight; experienced times of refreshing from his presence in your fellowship with him.

It is said of the Queen of Sheba, that upon beholding the pleasantness of Jerusalem, the splendors of Solomon's court, and, above all, the magnificence of the Temple, with the imposing services therein performed, there was no more spirit in her. How much more affecting to us should be the sight of the reality, and the enjoyment of the substance of what was only shadowed forth at Jerusalem and in the Temple?

Even Balaam, when from the top of Beor, he saw the children of Israel abiding in their tents with a sensible glory in the midst of them, was constrained to exclaim, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel."

How much more amiable must be the assemblies of the saints to him who knows that "the Lord God is a sun and shield; that he will give grace and glory, and will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly." How inconceivably more amiable will be those mansions of which we are here reminded, and for which we may here be in process of preparation; from which sin and sorrow are excluded. And how much more goodly must be that camp of the saints, and that beloved city above, where righteousness and joy reign triumphant, and peace and unity are broken no more.

That which makes the tabernacles of the Lord amiable to every believer, is the revelation of Christ in them, as the only ark of safety, the true city of refuge. He is, to them that believe, set here "for a sanctuary, a refuge, a hidingplace from the wind, a covert from the tempest." In him there is a supply for all our wants, a deliverance from all our fears, a defence against all our dangers, a relief from all our cares, a rest from all our trials, consolation under all our distresses, and hope in death. It is because He in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily—who is Jehovah, and yet our elder brother-"who has been made perfect through suffering as the captain of our salvation, and is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him," has promised to abide in his earthly tabernacles until the end of time, that they are amiable to the Christian.

They are also the means of the great-

est good to the community in which they are located. The Christian Sabbath—the public worship of God—the administrations of his truth and ordinances-the instructions connected with and imparted by his churches, are the bulwarks and glory of the lands in which they are enjoyed. There can be no civil liberty, no protection of personal rights, property, or of life, no wellregulated social intercourse, no domestic happiness without them. All must acknowledge that it is the influence of the Bible which distinguishes Christian from pagan lands. But the Bible would soon be neglected and lost, the Sabbath would soon be universally desecrated and forgotten, the Christian religion would disappear and become unknown,

without the teachings of the house of God. Family religion, personal piety, private virtues, are waters which flow from the sanctuary, and would be dried up were the sanctuary closed. The fire of devotion in the closet, in the family, and in the social circle, must come from the altar in the sanctuary. God has wisely and mercifully adapted his institutions to our necessities, to our constitution and circumstances. We need to meet in holy convocation for public instruction and social worship, and to enter into visible communion with God, that we may be identified with him, and known as his followers. There is no other way in which we can openly express our voluntary subjection to him, nor our approbation and

acceptance of his salvation. Where this is not done, and where these duties are neglected, there is no true religion; children are not trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, families are not well-governed, public sentiment is not enlightened on the most important subjects, public morals are corrupt.

Facts speak louder on this subject than I can speak, and utter a language which cannot be mistaken. We, as a nation, are indebted for our present elevated, prosperous, and happy state, under a kind Providence, to the knowledge of God, and of his laws, which the Bible imparts—to the influence which the church, with its attendant institutions, exerts—to the religious feelings

and habits of our people—to that public virtue which is the fruit of Christian education—to the piety, prayers, and conservative example of those among us who are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. What is it that we need, in the present state of our affairs, that our government, in all its departments, may be wisely and faithfully administered, that our public credit and national honor may be maintained? Is it more infidels? more speculative philosophers? more wily politicians? more Sabbath-breakers? despisers of God and neglecters of his worship? more. practical atheists? Could we trust such? Would they promote public peace, purity, or tranquility? No, my friends; but we need more pure and undefiled

religion, more men of God, more churches filled with devout worshippers, more of the influence of the gospel. Every man who has an understanding of these things, who loves his country, who desires good government and temporal prosperity, who loves liberty, if he be influenced by no higher motive, will love the house of God, as the only means of securing these to him.

Once more, and above all: the tabernacles of the Lord are amiable in the estimation of all the friends of God, because through them He is most honored, and receives the greatest revenue of glory. All his works praise him passively; but he has magnified his word above all his name, above all the ways by which he has made himself known. Here he has revealed his wisdom, power, and goodness, not only, but his justice and his grace—his mercy and truth—as exercised in harmony; and his intelligent creatures are here taught to praise him actively, and to ascribe to him the glory due unto his name from all his works. The public worship of the sanctuary, is an acknowledgment of Jehovah as the Lord, "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth—keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." It is a recognition of all his perfections displayed in the redemption of sinners, and an ascription to him, in the way of his own appointment, of all the praise which belongs to him.

He who would honor God, and give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name, must come to his house, contemplate Jesus Christ as he is here set forth, evidently crucified before our eyes, approach the throne of grace through his mediation, and worship in the beauty of holiness.

It is your privilege this day to enter into one of those earthly tabernacles of the Lord. Here we trust "Jehovah will record his name, and will come unto you and bless you." Here you may assemble to worship Him according to the dictates of your own conscience. Here you have placed before

you an open Bible, containing the word of God's grace, "which is able to make you wise unto salvation, to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified." Here you may solemnly dedicate yourselves "in an everlasting covenant, as living sacrifices holy and acceptable to God;" here you may receive the symbols of the broken body and shed blood of the Lord, and have sealed to you all the benefits of his death and resurrection. Here you may actually enjoy those advantages, and receive those spiritual blessings of which we have spoken as connected with the sanctuary, and thus may have in your own happy experience evidence of the reality of the moral power and hallowed influence of the religion of the Bible.

The Trustées of this institution will feel themselves abundantly compensated for the pains they have taken in planning and erecting this building, if it shall be appreciated, and filled from time to time with humble, devout, and grateful worshippers. If any who may have been ignorant of God, and of Christ, shall be instructed and brought to the saving knowledge of Him; if any who may have wandered from the path of duty, shall be reclaimed; if the afflicted and tossed with the losses, disappointments, and tempests of this world, shall be comforted and find rest, if the tried and grieved, the crushed and broken-hearted, shall be consoled and lightened of their burdens; if the name of God shall be hallowed, and his

kingdom be advanced through the use of it. Could we instrumentally in any other way, exert over you an influence so enlightening, so elevating, so purifying, so salutary, so soothing, consoling, and comforting, as by preparing for you this house of worship, where you may hear the blessed Gospel of the grace of God? Are there any other means than those which God has appointed, and graciously promised to attend with his blessing, efficacious to produce so great and glorious a change in men? Is there any process or known cause under heaven, except the operation of the Holy Spirit on the soul, adequate to produce in man that "charity which suffereth long and is kind, which envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in inquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things!" Is there any other efficacious remedy for the ills of life except that which the Gospel reveals? Are there any other considerations except those revealed in the Gospel by which men can become reconciled to their own dissolution? Is there anything that can deliver us from the fear of death, support us in the hour of it, and make us willing to depart, except. faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world;" as "the way, the truth,

the resurrection, and the life?" Has infidelity a substitute for the Gospel—a substitute for Christ? and for the hope of immortality through him? Can that man be right, safe, and above all cause of fear, who finds it in his heart to oppose, reject, or to neglect this system of truth and righteousness, of godliness, and of good-will to men? who habitually absents himself from the house of God, and stands aloof from doing anything to honor him? who can say, from any cause, I care for none of these things; I care not for pure and undefiled religion which teaches us to visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world? Has he no father, no mother, no brothers, or sisters, no wife,

nor children, nor friends? Has he no natural affection, nor earthly ties? Is he an isolated being? Has he no fear of God, of death, or of judgment? Is he prepared for all the vicissitudes of life—for all that awaits him here and hereafter? Then need he feel no interest in these things. But there is no such being; all have immortal souls, sustain earthly relations, and have duties to perform. All are of few days and full of trouble, are subject to death and are responsible to God. All need the provisions of God's house, and have cause to exclaim, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!"

The present is to you especially, and to us all, my friends, a most solemn.

intensely interesting, and deeply affecting occasion. As a congregation, you are composed "of aged, decrepit, disabled, and worn-out seamen." What memories are yours!! of scenes through which you have passed, from boyhood to the present time. You have had experience of leaving home-of parting from parents, and kindred, and friends, and from your beloved land; of the troubles and perils of the sea; of the toils, privations, hardships, storms, exposures, and sufferings which fall to the lot of weather-beaten mariners. Having escaped them all you have been brought safely into this Snug Harbor, which a kind and beneficent Providence has prepared for you. For you are here not as prisoners, nor as convicts, nor as

paupers, but as proprietors, in so far as your personal use and enjoyment of the abundant, adapted, and comfortable accommodations and privileges of this Institution are concerned. It is held in trust by those who are responsible for its preservation and its faithful management for your use. You are here, however, not to spend your time in idleness, in the mere animal indulgence of eating, and drinking, and sleeping; but you are here to refit. Your voyage has not yet terminated; the most important part of it is yet before you; there are breakers still a-head; there are quicksands, concealed rocks, whirlpools, and yawning gulphs. There may be a darker, severer, and more terrific storm, and a more awful

warring of the elements still in reserve for you, than any through which you have ever passed—you may yet be hopelessly wrecked, and left to sink into the deep and unfathomable abyss. Have you prepared your bark for this last part of your voyage, and are you sure all is right? Are you making daily observations, watching the clouds and the winds, and the tides, and are you habitually ready to launch at any moment? Above all, have you engaged Him who alone can pilot you safely through this dangerous sea into the haven of eternal rest? This is the place, and now is the time in which to attend to this duty. Redeem it for it is short. You are admonished by the removal of some one or more of your

associates from month to month, and by the rapid filling up of yonder cemetery belonging to this Institution, that you cannot remain here. Knowing "that it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment, and that your life is even as a vapor," we do earnestly entreat, and affectionately beseech you to make your peace with God by receiving Christ Jesus the Lord, and abiding in him. "Seek him whilst he may be found; call upon him whilst he is near," and accept his gracious invitations. He assures you "that all things are ready," and that you may come as you are, to be healed, washed, sanctified and saved by him; he who has prepared the feast will provide the wedding garment. "Come into me all ye that

labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink, and whosoever cometh, I will in no wise cast out." "The Spirit and the Bride say come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Call upon him now, and "ask that he may be made unto you of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." He will be to you, instead of home, of kindred, and of friends, to make your bed in your sickness, to smooth your pillow in a dying hour, to wipe from your brow the cold sweat, and to dry your tears. "Having your heart stayed on him," he will keep you in perfect peace, will receive your departing spirit, and present it to the Father—redeemed, regenerated, sanctified, and made meet for the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

ADDENDA.

THE SAILORS' SNUG HARBOR was founded by the late Robert Richard Randall, of the city of New York. He bequeathed the property now belonging to that Institution to the Chancellor of the State of New York, to the Mayor and Recorder of the city of New York, to the President of the Chamber of Commerce, to the President and Vice-President of the Marine Society, to the Rector of Trinity Church, and to the Minister of the First Presbyterian Church in the city of New York, for the time being, and their respective successors in the said offices forever, for the purpose of maintaining and supporting under their supervision aged, decrepid, and worn-out Sailors.

The following persons have been Acting Trustees of the Sailors' Snug Harbor since the incorporation of the Board in Feb., 1806:

- 1. As Chancellor of the State of New York— Reuben H. Walworth.
- 2. As Mayors of the city of New York—Dewitt Clinton, Marinus Willet, John Ferguson, Jacob Radcliff, Cadwallader C. Colden, Stephen Allen, Wm. Paulding, Philip Hone, Walter Bowne, Gideon Lee, Cornelius W. Lawrence, Aaron Clark, Isaac L. Varian, Robert H. Morris, Wm. F. Havemeyer, James Harper, Andrew H. Mickle, Wm. F. Brady, Caleb S. Woodhull, Ambrose C. Kingsland, Jacob A. Westervelt, Fernando Wood.
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