

THE DUTY OF MEN'S SERVING THEIR GENERATION.

*P. Tipton. Presented  
her by Mr. Upham*

S E R M O N

PREACHED

IN

BROOKFIELD, SOUTH PARISH,

ON LORD'S DAY,

JULY 1st, 1810:

BEING THE SABBATH AFTER THE INTERMENT OF

PHINEHAS UPHAM, Esq.

—\*—\*—\*—\*—  
BY MICAH STONE,

MINISTER OF THE THIRD SOCIETY IN BROOKFIELD.

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TO THE FAMILY of the  
late PHINEHAS UPHAM, ESQ. this  
discourse, composed on the occa-  
sion of his death, and now made  
public at their request, is respect-  
fully inscribed, with affectionate  
regards to the living and to the  
dead,

By their obliged friend,  
THE AUTHOR.



A

S E R M O N.



THE ACTS, xiii<sup>th</sup> CHAP. 36<sup>th</sup> VERSE.

*For David, after he had Served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep and was laid to his fathers.*

THE mention, which is here made of king David, is merely incidental, and may be treated as an independent sentence. I shall thus consider it at this time; and without attending to the connection, which the passage holds with the apostle's discourse, shall proceed to illustrate and improve several important truths, which it offers to our consideration.

FIRST, It teaches us, that, while men live, it is the will of God, that they should serve their generation. David thus did in obedience to God, and, in so doing, received the divine approbation.

The Supreme Parent and Governor of the world is perfect in benevolence, and, by the instrumentality of his creatures, as well as by his own immediate agency, is constantly doing good to all. In the enduing and disposing of our race, God hath shewn not only that he designed them to be happy, but he hath plainly intimated the method, in which they ought to seek and expect happiness. By forming them for society, and

so placing them in it, that a large portion of their enjoyments must arise from social affections and from an active upright discharge of the relative duties, he hath clearly made known his will, that by love they should serve one another. God, however, hath not left this to be discovered merely by the light of nature. It is expressly enjoined in the sacred volume. An apostle directs, "Do all things to edification." And, "To do good and communicate" is urged upon us by this consideration, that "with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

Although the grand design of men's being placed in this world is to purify their hearts in obeying the truth, and thus to become qualified for the service and enjoyment of God in a more perfect state of existence; yet this is no ways diverse from his scheme of social enjoyment and general good, which he is carrying on in this world. For the present performance of social offices constitutes a great part of probationary duty; and is not only a test of men's obedience, but a means of preparing them for future happiness. Although promoting the good of men's souls is by far the noblest object of pursuit; yet he views with approbation the smallest attempt in any to advance their temporal welfare. Christ, while upon earth, did good both to the bodies, and to the souls of men, and sought their present comfort, as well as their future salvation. Although a divine person, whose great errand into the world was to save souls from spiritual death, yet he encouraged industry, the most fruitful source of earthly enjoyment, by laboring himself at a useful occupation. He particularly



inculcated sobriety, frugality, and prudent attention to one's own concerns, although he condemned anxiety ; as he well knew how much men's comfort and usefulness, as well as security from temptation, depended upon these. In the account of the unjust steward, though he reprobated his dishonesty, he commended his provident care. And to guard his disciples against heedless waste, he gave direction, " To gather up the " fragments, that nothing be lost." So minutely attentive was our Lord to whatever contributes to the well being of our race ; and thus manifestly is it the divine pleasure, that all should concur in his benevolent designs. Although few, like David, are called to fill a throne and by such brilliant exploits, as he achieved, to serve their country and mankind ; yet this alters not the nature of the obligation, nor the encouragement to exertion. Whatever service, in their more humble capacities, any can render to their fellow men, that it is the will of God they should contribute : And for this, however small, they shall not fail of a recompense.—I pass,

SECONDLY, To illustrate the duty of men's serving their generation by the will of God.

THIS naturally supposes, that a person possesses some just apprehensions of the divine character, and feels a sense of religious obligation. It takes for granted that he regards the Supreme Being, as the Governor of the world, and that the rules of temperance, sobriety, justice and righteousness are the laws of his government. He, therefore, who religiously serves his generation, will be strict in the observance of these rules ;

not simply, because they contribute to his health, to his interest, or to his reputation ; but, chiefly, because they are the will of God. To render service to others from the former considerations, would be mere selfishness. Such a principle would afford no security to virtue, and would deserve no confidence from men : For it would lead one to do wrong to his neighbors, as often as he might do it with safety to himself. But if a man uniformly acts with uprightness, as well in his secret, as in his public transactions ; if he appears uniformly to speak the truth in his heart ; and to do always what he judges to be right and honest ; this is a fair evidence that he has an abiding sense of religious and moral obligation.

The duty under consideration, further, implies benevolent regard to mankind. For it is God's will, not solely, that men should serve their generation, but render this service from real affection. He has commanded them to love their neighbors as themselves. Without this benevolent disposition, they would be exceedingly prone to forget and neglect all, to whom they were not bound by ties of self interest. Merely a cool sense of obligation to God would lead them, but imperfectly to discharge their social duties, or leave them to decline the service, whenever they might do it, without absolutely forfeiting the divine favor. But by cultivating friendly sentiments, and being possessed of real regard for the welfare of others, the service, which men owe one to another, will be cheerfully performed and thus pleasing to God.



AGAIN, Men's serving their generation by God's will supposes that this is not merely an occasional inclination, but their habitual bent and aim. The welfare of mankind is at all times an object of the divine care, and it is his pleasure, whenever there is any occasion, that they should assist one another. If then they have not this disposition uniformly prevailing in their hearts, many important opportunities of rendering service will be suffered to pass unregarded. But, if it be fixed and habitual, it will make them attentive to every occasion, the small as well as the great; and incline them to do always, as they would others should do to them.

THE service, which God requires men to perform for one another and the community is very various and different according to their several abilities and situations. It is not to be thought, that then only a person serves his generation, when he sways a sceptre, or discharges the duties of some public station. He is performing this service, whenever, in his proper capacity, in any ways, he contributes to lessen the evils, or improve the condition of mankind.

A few only are allowed to take conspicuous and leading parts on the stage of human action: As to preside in Senates, to direct the public counsels, to frame salutary institutions, and to stand forth the intrepid and able guardians of their Country's liberties and rights. Such however are not the only ones deserving of esteem and gratitude; although they alone may receive the public applause, and be the only ones celebrated in history. The subordinate parts in

society, though less honorable, are scarcely less essential to its existence and welfare. A great proportion of the service, by which good counsels and laws are carried into effect and by which the sober, industrious, virtuous habits of a community are formed, is rendered by men too humble and recluse to be generally known; who yet may be, and often are actuated by as pure regard to the public good, as those who fill the most elevated stations. These, however, although they pass their lives unknown to fame, are yet perfectly known to him who sees in secret and judges without respect of persons. And notwithstanding, they shine not here with the splendors of worldly greatness, they shall hereafter shine forth as the Sun in the kingdom of their Father.

I will mention some of the more usual ways in which it is the will of God, that men should serve their generation.

FIRST, By a regular and diligent attention to some useful occupation. Says an inspired apostle, "Let every man," after embracing christianity, "abide in the same calling, wherein he is called." The active pursuit of some honest business is requisite, that a person may honorably provide for himself and those dependent upon him. Our first object, in serving others, should be to keep ourselves and connections from being burdensome to them. A neglect to do this is inconsistent with the christian character. "For, if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." Such



employment, likewise, is friendly to health and vigor, to cheerfulness and enjoyment. It directly leads to wealth, independence, and respectability : All which contribute to qualify and enable a person more effectually to serve the community.

A SECOND way, in which men are greatly beneficial, is by encouraging in others a spirit of enterprise economy, and prudent attention to their own affairs. This is highly necessary to their own happiness, and to the good of society. " For he becometh poor, that deal-  
 " eth with a slack hand. And drowsiness shall cover  
 " a man with rags." Idleness is an inlet to every vice, especially to that low and ruinous dissipation, which not solely unfits men for any regular business, but most commonly deprives them of their domestic comforts, inclines them to dishonest practices, or throws them a burden on society. He, therefore, who by his example and counsels endeavors to dissuade the inconsiderate from such pernicious courses, and to excite in them a spirit of industry, frugality, and laudable independence, performs a beneficial, though often an ungrateful service.

THIRDLY, A person renders very important service to society, whose influence and example are enlisted on the side of regularity and virtue ; and who by these and all other means in his power, endeavors to promote uprightness, fidelity, punctuality, fairness and accuracy in all the transactions of life. The peace and

well being of any community are essentially connected with these excellent dispositions and habits ; and there is no counting the evils, that would be prevented, were they generally prevalent. He, then, is certainly a benefactor to his generation, who, in any degree, contributes to the diffusion of such a spirit : Who in all his dealings with men is true and punctual to his engagements, who sacredly regards whatsoever things are just, and promptly renders to all their dues ; who shews his scorn at mean actions, and frowns indignant upon dishonorable practices.

AGAIN, He, in an important respect serves his generation, who so educates and brings up his children, as that they may live comfortably and respectably in the world and be useful members of the community. So, also, is he performing this duty, when he qualifies others, in any ways, to be serviceable in life ; when he assists them in their business, or furnishes them with employment, by which they may acquire an honest livelihood.

But the ways, in which men may be beneficial to others, are very numerous, and I shall only observe summarily, that then a person acceptably serves his generation, when he shews himself humane and obliging to his fellow men ; when he does what is in his power to preserve peace and harmony among neighbors ; when he conducts himself peaceably and orderly as a citizen, and exerts himself to maintain order and government in the State ; when he faithfully dis-



charges the duties of those public offices, to which he is called by his fellow citizens ; in fine, when he aids in promoting the improvement, the good morals, the prosperity and happiness of society.

HAVING considered the duty of serving our generation, I proceed to a *third* consideration suggested by my text, and which it becomes us often to contemplate, namely, That every man, however good and great, however distinguished for his services, is destined to the grave. For David, after he had served his generation by the will of God, fell on sleep and was laid to his fathers.

THERE is as surely a time to die, as there is a time to be born. Scripture assures us, " There is no man hath power over the spirit, to retain the spirit ; neither hath he power in the day of death : And there is no discharge in that war." Daily observation also teaches us, that the antient and honorable, the rich and powerful, the wise and virtuous, equally as the vile and worthless, must pay this debt of nature. The most distinguished talents, and useful services, and exalted piety procure no release from the original sentence : " Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." If any might have pleaded exemption, we should have presumed, that David might : For he was a man after God's own heart. Endowed with the choicest talents, which he diligently improved and faithfully employed, he early commenced his career of activity, usefulness and glory. Forty years he reigned as king ; and spent his long life in vigorous efforts to

subdue the enemies, to raise the condition, and promote the prosperity, of his country. But all these talents and services, although they procured him glory and satisfaction in the close of life, procured him no freedom from the common lot of mortals. For David, excellent and renowned as he was, after he had religiously served his generation, fell on sleep.

Is Death, then, without any distinction, such a leveller of our race ! Is it certain that all must submit to his power ? how solicitous should this make us to be in constant readiness for his summons ; especially, when we consider, that the time of his coming is so very uncertain. Few, comparatively, arrive with David to the period of seventy years. Many are cut down in the bloom and vigor of life, and often without any warning. Will any then presume to live unmindful of an event, so sure to happen ; so uncertain when ; and so decisive of their future everlasting condition of happiness or woe ! For after death is the judgment ; when shall be rendered to every man according to his deeds.

LET us all, my Friends, keep ever in mind, that we must, some time, fall asleep ; and let it be our great concern that it may be in JESUS. Let us frequently meditate upon the solemn, interesting subject, and make it our steady aim and fervent prayer, that every instance of mortality, especially from the circle of our dear relatives, may serve to prepare us for our own dissolution ; that, at last, we may be found of our God in peace, without spot, and blameless.



Some improvement of the subject will now be attempted.

FIRST, We may properly remark upon the kindness and beneficence of our heavenly Father. Not satisfied with pouring forth a profusion of natural bounties, filling the whole earth with the riches of his liberality, he has implanted in the human breast many benevolent instincts and affections ; setting before men many personal considerations as motives to do good to others, and in his holy word assuring them that with such sacrifices he is well pleased. How emphatically is he styled THE FATHER OF MERCIES. How much is goodness and the happiness of his creatures his delight ! And what infinite obligations are we under to him !

SECONDLY, We should particularly notice the wide field there is in which men may perform beneficial service for their fellow creatures ; and that worth of character, though it may differ in degree, is confined to no situation. It is not solely in the deliberative assembly, at the council board, or at the head of an army or nation, that a man may worthily serve his generation, but also in the humblest station. It is really of little importance, in the view of heaven, what part a man performs in the drama of life, provided only, he does it faithfully and to his Lord. The Poet hath justly said,

“ ACT well your part, there all the honor lies.”

The industrious honest mechanic, farmer, or merchant ; the peaceable, sober, upright citizen, who fills his lot in society, whatever it be, does as really serve his gener-

ation, and is as justly entitled to a share of commendation and honor, as though he were invested with the ensigns of supreme authority. We should however, never forget, that merely being useful, from *any considerations*, will not entitle us to just estimation. It is doing good to men upon *principle, in obedience to the will of God*, which only can truly designate us virtuous and worthy characters.

THIRDLY, We may observe from our subject, that after men, in any situation, have well and faithfully served their generation, according to their abilities, they are deserving of respectful notice and grateful remembrance. The community is under obligation to them and owes them a tribute of honor and respect. And will you hesitate, my hearers, to say that such an one was our neighbor and fellow towns man,\* whose remains, the last week, we attended to the grave. I am sensible it is a delicate office to speak of the dead from the sacred desk ; and therefore seldom do it. But on the present occasion should I wholly omit it, I feel that I should disappoint your expectations, as well as go contrary to my own inclinations. I honor the deceased as a worthy neighbor and friend, with whom for nearly ten years I have lived in habits of great intimacy, freedom and ease, and in a very agreeable interchange of friendly offices. Of such an one, it is a pleasure to declare, what I am confident you will approve as just.

\* PHINEHAS UPHAM, ESQ. deceased Sunday, June 24th and was interred the Tuesday following, after a gradual decline of many months, in the 71st year of age. His former wife, Mrs. SUSANNAH UPHAM died March 23, 1802, Aged 60 years.



PHINEHAS UPHAM, Esq. was a native of this town, descended of one of its most respectable families.\* Always living in the place, and from early life engaged in active pursuits and public concerns, he has had more dealings with the inhabitants, than, perhaps, any other individual now living among you. He has been among your most influential citizens and one of the fathers of the town. You have, therefore, had fair opportunity of knowing him well. You are acquainted with the simplicity of his character, his plainness of manners, and sobriety of life. You have known his industry and enterprise, his prudence and carefulness, his correctness and uprightness in the transaction of business, the interest which he took in public concerns, and the various services, which he rendered to the community. Will you hesitate to acknowledge, then, that he hath usefully and honorably served his generation?

IMPELLED by a love of independence, he made it his first object to provide for himself and family. As the direct and only sure method of doing this, he chose a reputable calling, which he pursued with assiduity, care and frugality. Nothing he considered more absurd than the expectation of becoming wealthy and respectable by other means than industry, and a life of usefulness. He could not endure the person, who was disposed to waste his time in idleness, or dissipate that

\* Dr. JABEZ UPHAM, the father of the deceased, was a gentleman of distinguished abilities and eminent as a physician: He was sometime a member of the General Court. He died, in the midst of his usefulness, Nov. 4. 1760; Aged, 44. His wife, Mrs. CATHERINE UPHAM, died March 12, 1774; Aged 60 years.

property in profuseness, which was necessary to the comfort of his family. He often lamented the inconsiderate indulgence, by which many greatly embarrass their affairs ; and seldom spake with more severity, than of those, who through remissness and dissipation, impoverish their families and become a cumbrance to society. Impressed with the importance of early industry and a knowledge of business, he was careful so to train up his family, that they might reputably provide for themselves and be useful in the world. Nor was his attention, in these respects, confined to his family. He encouraged industry and economy in others, and frequently recommended to the less opulent, that sobriety and thriftiness in living, which are highly requisite to their worldly comfort and independence. No one spake with more freedom and disapprobation of the hurtful extravagance of present times, than he did. And no one with more plainness admonished people of their imprudence in this respect. So much did he dislike to see persons exceed in expense their means of living, that he would often caution them against purchasing of his own goods, what he thought they could ill afford. In the line of his business, as in all his transactions, he has sustained a uniform character of being strictly honest and a fair dealer. He was prompt and punctual in rendering to all their dues, but was not rigorous in exacting his own. He was ever indulgent to his debtors. Few, who have been so long and done so much in his line of business, have had so little recourse to the law. Those of you who knew him intimately, knew him to be a social trusty companion ; a



prudent judicious adviser ; a peaceable obliging neighbor ; hospitable in his house ; cautious in speaking ill of others ; compassionate to the distressed ; and a well wisher to all men.

Not only as a private citizen, but for his various public services, does he deserve respectful mention. Possessing naturally a vigorous mind, and talents, which gained him the notice and confidence of his fellow citizens, he early received preferment. For nearly fifty years he was employed by the town in some of their most important offices. In these he acted with independence and fidelity ; and to general satisfaction. A few years before his death he was commissioned a Justice of the peace.

I SHALL close this sketch of his life, by observing that he was a public professor of the Christian religion ; that he honored its institutions by a general attendance ; and appeared to make it his aim to keep a conscience void of offence. Having filled up his life with usefulness, he has fallen a sleep and is laid to his fathers. He has closed this earthly scene with reputation ; we hope he has made a happy change and is introduced to never ending felicity and glory.

MAY the afflicted widow and family be consoled under their loss by all those considerations, which such a life, as he hath led, is calculated to give. May the consolations of religion be theirs : And may they have grace so to improve this, and their other recent affliction,\* as to find, that though no chastening for the pres-

\* The death of Mrs. SUKEY BANISTER, wife of W. B. BANISTER, Esq. and daughter of the deceased. She died June the 9th, 1810, in her 40th year.

ent is joyous, but grievous ; yet all is designed in love and productive of the peaceable fruits of righteousness. May they be excited to new diligence in the christian life, and new ardor in serving their generation by the will of God, that when they fall asleep, they may sleep in Jesus ; and when they awake, they may awake to everlasting life.

LET us all, my friends, duly notice the deaths of others, that we may be reminded of our own frailty and mortality, and be quickened in preparing for our exit. In this discourse we have been reminded, that all men must fall on sleep ; and that while they live, it is God's will that they should serve their generation. While, therefore, we are grateful to God, that we may be acceptable to him, in a way the most conducive to our own and the advantage of our fellow men, let us diligently study to acquaint ourselves with his blessed will, and, in every possible way, aim to do good. In the intercourse of society innumerable opportunities are presented of rendering important services. Let us think none of these unworthy of us to perform, which are consistent with the appropriate duties of our stations. Let us not be so ambitious of external greatness conferred by elevated situation, as of that real greatness, which proceeds from internal worth and beneficial services ; always remembering the words of our Lord to his disciples : " He that is greatest among you let him be as the younger ; and he that is chief as he that doth serve."

To conclude, Let us always be followers of that which is good ; and let the honorable and worthy manner in



which any of our acquaintance finish their work in this world, stimulate us to like diligence, fidelity, zeal and perseverance, that at the last we may receive from our Judge the joyful sentence, " Well done good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord,"

**T H E E N D.**