

A SERMON PREACHED AT THE QUAKERS MEETING HOUSE

by William Penn

A sermon by William Penn, the Quaker leader and founder of Pennsylvania, delivered at a Quaker meeting house. Penn was known for his advocacy of religious liberty, his Quaker convictions, and his commitment to the inner light of Christ as the guide for Christian life.

3 Chapters

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A Sermon Preached At The Quakers Meeting House

INTRODUCTION

The perusal of the first numbers of a series of tracts, containing extracts from the writings of "early Friends," and published for the avowed purpose of lowering the estimation in which those writings are held by the Society, and even of proving "that many of them would reflect discredit upon a private library, and ought truly to be accounted dangerous books," has given rise to the present re-publication. As an humble, but sincere admirer of those principles of Gospel Truth, which the early Friends sought to promulgate, as well by their writings as by eminently devoted lives, and a constant and oft proved willingness to suffer for Christ's sake, I must protest (whether to any purpose or not) against the illiberal, and unjust mode of conduct resorted to by the publishers of the "Extracts," in selecting short and partial sentences, and thus, as I conceive, grossly misrepresenting some of the views of those Worthies long since removed from the world on which they walked as strangers and as pilgrims, and long since, I doubt not, permitted, through the mercy of their God and Saviour, to enter into that "better country," where they are no more exposed to the trials of time, no more exposed to the scoffs and persecutions of men, and no more affected by the calumnies of "false Brethren." Whilst, however, expressing a sincere and affectionate regard for the memories of those who have preceded me in religious professions, I would add that I consider them worthy to be followed only as they followed Christ, and that if I go forth by the footsteps of this flock of my Saviour's companions, it is that I may feed beside that good Shepherd's tents, where, I believe, they found plentiful pasture. I would most explicitly state, the present publication is no party act, or an act originating in party feeling, for though I must take a heartfelt interest in the present proceedings in our Society, yet I deeply feel that, even if I see, or think I see, the Ark of the Covenant of our God unsteadily placed as upon a new cart, there is a danger of putting forth, like Uzza of old, uncalled and unprepared hands for its support. To the serious attention of all honest hearted enquirers after truth do I commend this little Pamphlet, believing that the principles set forth in the annexed Sermon, are the principles uniformly avowed and supported by the "early Friends," and that (however their views and writings may be distorted and belied) the whole Gospel of a crucified and risen Saviour, in all its freeness, and in all its fullness, was what they sought to publish, and by their lives to adorn. C. GILPIN. Manchester, 4th Month, 1836.

SERMON.

The great and blessed God that made heaven and earth, the seas and the great fountains of the deep, and rivers of water, the Almighty JEHOVAH, who is from everlasting to everlasting. He also made man and woman; and his design was to make them eternally happy and blessed. And therefore he made man in his own image; "in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them:" He made them after his own likeness holy, wise, merciful, just, patient, and humble, endued them with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. But man and woman through their transgressions lost this image of God, and with it lost their happiness and true blessedness, that God made them in a capacity to enjoy. Now in this state of MISERY into which we are fallen, we are come short of the glory of God; and it is out of this wretched woful state we must be brought, else we shall never see the face of God with comfort. This is an eternal truth of God, and recorded in the Holy Scriptures. John iii.16. That "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." God so loved the world, he gave his Son to be a light unto the world, that all might see their way back to God again: For sin hath darkened the understanding, and clouded the mind of man and woman, and alienated them from the life of God, and their hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. But now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation, the day of God's grace and favourable visitation, wherein he visits men and women, illuminates their minds and spirits with a light from heaven, that they might see the deplorable state and condition wherein they are, and what they are doing: It is in this light, that they have a day of grace vouchsafed to them, that it may be well with them, both here and for ever. They that receive this light, and come out of that which they are called from, which is sin, they may come to enjoy peace with God. It was sin that first separated between God and man; and it is sin now that hinders man from acquaintance with the Lord, who brings peace unto him: It is by this light, that we are to acquaint ourselves with God, that we may be at peace. Thus saith the Lord by the prophet, "It is sin has separated between me and you:" Sin hath made a partition wall between God and us, and God hath sent his Son into the world to break down this partition wall that sin hath made; that so fallen man might return to God, and come into Paradise again, out of which sin hath cast him. Now, none can bring us back to God, and into favour and communion with him, but our Lord Jesus Christ: He is the light and leader of his people. There is no name under heaven by which we can be saved, but the name of JESUS: It is he that saves his people from their sins; and it is in him alone that we are blessed: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered:" And for the sake of Christ alone it is, that the Lord imputeth not iniquity to us. Now pray "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith," 2 Cor. xiii.5. "Prove your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates." Examine yourselves, whether you have chosen the Lord for your God, and Christ for your Redeemer? And whether you have forsaken your sins, and returned from your evil ways, and answered the visitation of the love of God in your souls? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who came to seek and to save them that were lost? He is the Physician of value, that was wounded to heal our wounds: "He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and had the chastisement of our peace upon him; that by

his stripes we might be healed:" It is he alone that could do this. Who is sufficient for these things? The Lord found out one that is sufficient; he hath "laid help upon one that is mighty," that is "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." God hath given him the Spirit without measure, and filled him with grace and truth, that of his fullness we might all receive, and grace for grace: He is mighty to save the sons and daughters of men, and to give them power to become the children of God. This was testified of old, John i.12. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on his name." Men want power over their sins: When sin appears to be exceeding sinful, they would overcome it, and be rid of it, when it is troublesome: And when they are under a deep conviction of the evil of it, and see the woful and miserable state that sin hath brought mankind into how they have lost the image of God and the favour of God; they then desire to be restored, and brought back again into their primitive state. You that know the truth of God, see how the work goes on in your hearts, see how the image of God is carrying on upon you. Consider, that the Lord is a holy God, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with approbation: "There is no peace to the wicked," that walk in the broad way, and grieve the Holy Spirit, and do not answer his divine call. There is a two-fold call concerning man, a call to repentance, and a call to judgment. The call to repentance is in this day of God's visitation; they that receive it now, that are so wise, as to answer God's call, and believe in the Son of God, and in his inward appearance, that obey his voice, when they hear his call, saying, Come away, come out of thy sins, come out of the wickedness, filthiness, and pollution of the world; come into the divine nature of the Son of God; come into his life: Into what life? Into the spiritual life, the divine life? Thou hast been dead to God and alive to the world: Now that thou mayst [sic.] be dead to sin, and alive to God, come unto him that hath all power in heaven and in earth committed to him. O come unto Christ, the dear and blessed Son of God, in this day of grace and salvation, and receive power to overcome thy sins! Then thou wilt be a conqueror, and overcome the Devil. We are of ourselves altogether insufficient for these things, we are weak and impotent; and our Saviour hath told us, "Without me ye can do nothing:" We are justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; not justified by our own works. How great a contradiction is it to charge them with the contrary, that say, They cannot preach nor pray, but as the Spirit of God moveth them. Blessed be God that hath made us sensible of our own weakness, emptiness, and poverty. Our help hath been in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth, who hath given his Son to be an helper, and an all-sufficient Saviour to us; with him he hath given sufficient power and strength, whereby we are enabled to overcome the Devil, the enemy of our souls: So that we may be enabled to stand against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness, and conquer all the powers, of darkness, and fight the good fight of faith, and finish our course with joy, and keep the faith: seeing there is laid up for us a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give us at that day; "and not only to us, (saith the Apostle,) but unto all them that love his appearing." We have not an High-Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin: Christ, our Redeemer, was tempted, that he might succour those that are tempted. When the Devil tempted our Saviour in the wilderness, and could not prevail, he went away and left him: The prince of this world found nothing in him, upon which he could fasten his temptation. Christ will enable those that believe in him to overcome the Devil, and to be more than conquerors, through him that loved them: He came into the world to purge and purify his people, and to be the author of eternal salvation to all them that believe in him, and obey him. But it is said, "He did not many

mighty works" among some to whom he preached the everlasting Gospel, because of their unbelief: Many will not believe in the inward and spiritual appearance of Jesus Christ the Son of God, who is the light of the world; they will neither believe in the light, nor walk in the light, which will enable them to conquer the evil one, who is the prince of darkness: It is only through Christ Jesus, the great captain of our salvation, that we are victorious. Therefore, my friends, open your hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ, receive this blessed gift of God which he offers to you: And can God give you a greater gift than the Son of his Love? And will not you gladly receive him, and that great salvation which he hath purchased for you with his own blood! But, say some people, we have received Christ, and believe in him, and believe the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. But let me ask you, Who keeps house all this while? What have you done for Christ? Christ hath died for you; but hast thou lived to him? And hast thou died to the world, and died to thy sins and lusts? Consider with yourselves, It is both your great duty and interest to die to sin, and live to Christ that died for you. And we must stand at Christ's tribunal, and give an account to him, of whatsoever we have done, whether good or bad; and he will judge us at the great day of his appearing. Blessed are you, that receive the blessed Son of God, that now stands in Spirit at the door, and knocks: Open your heart, and make room for him, and let not the world keep him out, and he will come in, and sup with you, and you with him: And he will do that for you, which you cannot do for yourselves. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak:" He will give thee power over sin, and over the world, and over the Devil: Whenever he shall assault thee with his temptations, say, "Get thee behind me Satan, thou savourest not the things that be of God." When people come to be spiritually minded they will taste and savour the things that are spiritual and heavenly: if they be not things of God, do not touch with them, have nothing to do with them; but walk in the Spirit, and savour the things of the Spirit. And hearken to the counsel of Christ, who speaks to you in the name of Wisdom; "O ye simple ones understand wisdom, and ye fools be of an understanding heart; hear, for I will speak of excellent things, and the opening of my lips shall be right things: Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors: For whoso findeth me findeth life." Hearken to the blessed counsel of Christ, hear his voice and obey it: They that do his will, shall know his doctrine: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant." They that have the saving knowledge of God, and Christ Jesus, which is life eternal, they will walk in a correspondent and suitable manner to that knowledge, and be holy in all manner of conversation: They will not be only nominal Christians, but true Christians, Israelites indeed in whom there is no guile; They will receive Christ Jesus who is God's gift, and knows [sic.] the operation of his power in their souls. These persons are fit to live and prepared to die; when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, they shall appear with him in glory. When the sound of the last trumpet shall be heard at the end of the world, Time shall be no more; Come away! that day shall not be terrible to them that have put off the old man, and put on the new man; and have begun to live a new life, and to have new affections, new thoughts and resolutions, and have laid up their treasure in heaven, where their hearts are also: They have that peace, which the world cannot give, and which death cannot take away. Blessed are they that take sanctuary in the name of Jesus, as in a strong tower; they shall get power over their sins, and over the vanity of their minds, that die to sin and live to God, and feel the constraining power and efficacy of the love of Christ, "who hath loved them, and washed them from their sins, in his own blood, and made them kings and priests to God." My friends, hear the voice of Wisdom, who hath said, "Whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord: but he that sinneth

against me, wrongeth his own soul." Be you early seekers: seek the kingdom of God in the first place. The Lord calls from heaven; "My son, give me thine heart:" Let thy answer be, Lord, take my heart, purify and cleanse it; break it, and make it new, make it fit for thy acceptance, that I may find favour in thy sight. "Without me (saith our Saviour) ye can do nothing:" Therefore desire him to do it for thee, and to work in thee both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. How dreadful is it to appear at the bar of God's justice as miserable sinners! Those that have not Christ, the great Mediator, to plead for them, are miserable indeed: Therefore lay hold on Christ now; believe in him, lay hold on his power and Spirit in this day of your visitation. If thou art under the power of sin and Satan, thou mayst [sic.] receive power from Christ, to overcome all the power of darkness: If the strong man armed hath got possession of thy heart, Christ will lay siege to it; and if thou be willing to open the door, Christ will come in and cast out the strong man, and spoil him of all his goods. He will cast out the grand enemy of thy soul, and take possession for himself; that thou mayest be delivered from the power of Satan, and from the bondage of corruption, and brought into the glorious liberty of the Sons of God: And if the Son of God make thee free, thou shalt be free indeed. For this end Christ came into the world, "for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil:" And he will not lose the design of his coming, but will "finish transgression, and make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness." Let us all come to Christ, and let none deceive themselves, and live in their sins, and yet think to come to heaven: "Be not deceived, (saith the Apostle,) God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap: He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap everlasting life." Labour for a sure grounded hope, a just hope in the mercy of God for pardon and salvation; then you must know a work of Christ upon you, and the power of the Spirit of Christ within you, subduing your will to a holy subjection to the Divine will; that you may say with the Apostle; "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Then the call to judgment will be joyful to you; for you shall then be justified and acquitted before the whole world, at that great and general judgment, and have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and it shall be well with you for ever. Now, "say to the righteous, it shall be well with him;" not that it doth so appear at present; for through many tribulations we must expect to enter into the kingdom of heaven; And many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord will deliver them out of them all. So that "if in this life only (saith the apostle) we have hope, we are of all men most miserable". Yet "say to the righteous, it shall be well with him;" Whatsoever their trials, troubles, and tribulations are, the Lord will deliver them in the best time; they have heaven in their eye and they look to the recompense of reward. Now what hast thou in thine eye? Is it the high calling in Christ? Is this the mark thou aimest at, and which thou hast in view? Is this the port and haven, that thou art sailing to, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame?" Heb. xii 2. The apostle, after he had been speaking of the suffering and martyrdom of those great saints, of whom the world was not worthy; Heb. xi. How that "through faith they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopt the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the Aliens; of women, that received their dead to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting of deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." Then he

comes to speak of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, and bids us "Look unto him." Heb. xii. 1, 2, 3. Wherefore, "seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith: Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross and despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God: For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Blessed are they that can endure all these things, shame, reproach, contumely, and disdain, persecutions and afflictions that attend the testimony of Jesus! Blessed are they that can endure the cross, and despise the shame! It is an internal cross, which thou must endure for Christ, or thy own heart will reprove thee, check thee and condemn thee for it: But if thou comest to know a being crucified with Christ, thou shalt reign with him, and be raised up to eternal glory with him. Unless thou knowest a dying to the world, and a being crucified with Christ, thou canst not have a well grounded hope of everlasting happiness. Therefore now, friends, examine yourselves about your title to heaven. It is the wisdom and practice of the world, to examine their titles and settlements, and to see, they be sure, and firm, and stable beforehand: So we should make sure for heaven and eternal glory, and of "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," before this earthly tabernacle be dissolved; then for us to live will be Christ, and to die will be eternal gain. Blessed are they that bear record of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus, that bear his name, and testify and join with him against the spirit of the world, and the prince of the power of the air. It is within that thou must join with Christ's appearance, that so thou mayest be christianized, and thy mind made truly christian: Thou must be purified in thy spirit, and baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire, and know the powerful operation of the Lord: They that have not experience of the new birth, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God. O my friends, set before you the example of Christ, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled; his life was glorious in holiness: And as it becomes you, so it highly concerns you, to be holy in all manner of conversation. For if you imitate not the life of Christ, you cannot be saved by his death: He came into the world, to redeem you from all iniquity, and to save you from sin and hell; Labour to answer the dignity of your high and holy calling, with a conversation becoming the gospel of Christ: For you are called to glory and virtue. Whatsoever troubles, temptations and tribulations may attend you in your pilgrimage here below, if you be faithful and sincere, you will have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. In all your labours and travels on this earth, you may look up with joy for you have a serene heaven over your heads; let Christ be precious to you; open the door of your hearts to him, who is the King of glory: He is oppressed in the hearts of the unclean, but he is exalted and lifted up in the hearts of the faithful: Blessed are they that set him upon his throne in their hearts! O learn of Christ to be meek and lowly: Your humility will exalt Him, and will also exalt you at the last: "Be faithful to the death and you shall receive a crown of life:" Those that have eternal life in their eye, and depend upon Christ alone for salvation, they have laid a sure foundation. All other foundations will come to nothing; they are founded in time, and in time they will come to moulder away: But that city that God is the builder and maker of, that Abraham had in his eye, will never decay, nor moulder away: Let us have this always in our eye, that nothing may intercept our view. "We have here (saith the Apostle) no continuing city; we seek one that is to come." In this world we are as sheep among wolves: "Fear not, little flock, (saith our Saviour,) it is your Father's good pleasure to give you a kingdom." If we be the sheep of Christ, we shall follow him: "For his sheep follow him, and know

his voice, and a stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they know not the voice of a stranger." "My sheep (saith Christ) hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands." Here is encouragement for us to labour abundantly in the work of the Lord; "for our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." Let us, with Moses, "choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;" and "esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; and have respect to the recompense of reward." Friends, I beseech you, in the fear of God, "look up unto Jesus, the GREAT MEDIATOR of the new covenant, the author and finisher of your faith; that by patient continuance in well doing, you may seek for glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life:" Which you shall obtain, if you persevere to the end: "For he that endureth unto the end shall be saved." "Be not weary of well doing; for in due time you shall reap if you faint not." He that hath appeared, as a God of salvation, and a mighty preserver of his people in all ages of the world, and hath been so both to the primitive christians, and to all our christian friends, that are gone before us to an eternal rest, if you faint not, but follow them, who through faith and patience do inherit the promises, you shall lay down your heads in peace in him, when you come to die; And when time shall be no more, you shall be for ever with the Lord. To God be praise, honour, and glory, who hath stretched forth his mighty arm to save: Who is the arm of the Lord but Christ Jesus, the redeemer of souls? When we had undone ourselves, and lost ourselves, in wandering and departing from the Lord, the true and living God, into darkness and the shadow of death, He stretched forth his almighty arm, to gather us, and to bring us into the paradise of God again, when we were driven out by our own sin, from the face and presence of the Lord. Christ Jesus, the great and good shepherd of his sheep, came to seek and to save them that were lost: The lost sheep that have wandered from him, he will take them on his shoulder, and bring them to his fold: and he will make them lie down in green pastures, and lead them by the still waters, and satisfy them with the rivers of pleasure that are at God's right hand for evermore. He hath promised, "That he will feed his flock like a shepherd, and gather his lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom:" I hope CHRIST JESUS, the GREAT SHEPHERD, will find some here this day, that have gone astray, and gather them with his divine arm, and keep them by his mighty power, through faith unto salvation. To him be all praise, honour, glory, dominion, and thanksgiving: For He alone is worthy, who is GOD over all, blessed for ever and ever. -- Amen. BANCKS AND CO., PRINTERS, MANCHESTER.

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