

Epistle 176

by George Fox

Ministers should be examples of wisdom, life, patience, righteousness, holiness, and godliness, and abide in the truth that will never change.

Scripture: Proverbs 24:29, Ezekiel 22:29, Romans 1:16, 2 Corinthians 2:15, Galatians 5:13, 1 Timothy 4:12, James 5:19, 1 Peter 1:23, 1 John 3:8, Revelation 6:13

Topics: "Ministerial Integrity", "Spiritual Leadership"

Description

George Fox emphasizes the importance of ministers being examples in wisdom, patience, righteousness, holiness, and godliness, urging them to avoid vain, youthful ways and quarrels over outward things that lead them away from the truth of God. He warns against ministers changing from the truth they first preached, as it confuses and misleads people, advocating for a steadfast commitment to the unchanging word and gospel of God. Fox encourages ministers to abide in the everlasting word that keeps them humble and free from worldly influences, walking in purity and wisdom to be a good example to others.

Transcript

Friends, that minister up and down among Friends, be examples [1 Tim 4:12] in wisdom, life, patience, righteousness, holiness, and in godliness and soberness, that your lives and conversations may preach. And keep out and over all vain, youthful ways and childishness, and over all those fallen spirits, that quarrel, jangle, and contend about outward things, and have a life in them; through which they are eaten out from the life and truth of God. And such become as the dross [Ezek 22:29], and they come to be as the untimely figs [Rev 6:13], and as the corn and grass on the house-top [Psa 129:6].

And so ye all that minister abroad to others, first see that ye be in the truth that will never change, and in the word and life that will abide [1 Pet 1:23]; and in the gospel, the power of God [Rom 1:16], which was before meats and drinks, and outward apparel were; that ye may abide in that which never changes, that ye may not be confounded. For when they that are ministers change and alter from that which they went forth first in, and brought the people into, it doth show that they are either gone out of the truth [James 5:19, John 8:44], or else they were never in the truth; and this confounds people. They had better never have gone out at all.

Therefore ye that minister abroad, see that ye be in that which will never change, and is over all them that do jangle about changeable things; for that being ministered to people that never changes, and they that minister being in that which never changes, this begets people into an established state. For they are all

fallen spirits, and not ministers of the word [Luke 1:2], nor the gospel, nor of Christ that never fell [1 Pet 2:22], (which destroys the devil and his works [1 Jn 3:8] in the fall,) that are quarrelling, and siding, and disputing, and contending, and striving about outward things. . . . And so, friends, all that minister abroad in the everlasting word, which never changes, and the gospel, in it abide, the first and last.

For the word keeps down the pride of life, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye [1 Jn 2:16]; which is of the world, and not of the Father. And so let your liberty be in the word, and spirit, and the power of God, which keeps you out of the liberty of the world, and its vain fashions; and be not fashioned after them. And so take heed of light words, unseasoned talk, and of taking liberty to the flesh [Gal 5:13]; but walk in that which is pure, and keep in that in which ye may have the wisdom, (which is the beauty of gray hairs,) [Wis 4:9/Prov 24:29] that to the Lord God ye may be a good savour [2 Cor 2:15], and in the hearts of all; walking in all comeliness and decency.

The word of truth [various] makes you to be seasoned and savoury; and this is comely, keeping in the beauty of holiness [Psa 29:2], in which holiness the Lord is seen, over the beauty of the world, that is vain.

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