

Epistle 200

by George Fox

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living justly, equal, and righteously in the sight of God and man, and being faithful in the outward treasure and outward mammon.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 25:15, Isaiah 28:17, Micah 6:8, Matthew 5:14, Luke 9:23, Romans 13:8, Romans 14:17, Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10, Hebrews 12:14, James 3:17

Topics: "Business Ethics", "Christian Integrity"

Description

George Fox preaches about the importance of conducting business and trade with righteousness, justice, and honesty in the sight of God and man. He emphasizes the need for using just weights and measures, speaking and doing what is true, just, and right in all dealings, and living in accordance with the wisdom and power of God. Fox urges all individuals, regardless of their profession, to live in the righteousness and holiness of God, to loathe deceit and unrighteousness, and to avoid debts and unjust practices. He highlights the significance of being faithful in outward matters to gain trust in spiritual matters, and stresses the importance of living in holiness, righteousness, and truth to glorify God.

Transcript

The line of righteousness and justice [Isa 28:17] stretched forth over all merchants, &c. And an exhortation unto all Friends and people whatsoever, who are merchants, tradesmen, husbandmen, or seamen, who deal in merchandise, trade in buying and selling by sea or land, or deal in husbandry, that ye all do that which is just, equal, and righteous in the sight of God and man, one to another, and to all men. And that ye use just weights and just measures [Deut 25:15], and speak and do that which is true, just, and right in all things. That so your conversations, lives, practices, and tongues may preach to all people, and answer the good, just, and righteous principle of God in them all. In which ye may be serviceable unto God, and to the creation in your generation, and a blessing both to God and man.

All Friends, every where, live in the seed of God, which is the righteousness itself, and inherits the wisdom and is the wisdom itself; with which wisdom ye may may order, rule, and govern all things which are under your hands (which God hath given you) to his glory. Govern and order with his wisdom all the creatures that ye have under you, and all exchangings, merchandising, husbandry. Do what ye do in the wisdom of God, and with it, which is pure from above, and gentle, and easy to be entreated [James 3:17]. With this wisdom (which is not earthly, sensual, nor devilish [James 3:15]) you do good unto all [Gal 6:10] and hurt no one, nor yourselves; for it is pure and preserves pure. . . .

. . . Then will your words, lives, and conversations preach and manifest, that ye serve God in the new life; and that ye have put off the old man and his deeds, which are unrighteous; and that ye have put on the new man, which is renewed after God in righteousness and holiness, according to his image [Eph 4:24/Col 3:10].

Loathe deceit and all unrighteousness, hard-heartedness, wronging, cozening, cheating, or unjust dealing; but live and reign in the righteous life and power of God, and wisdom, (that presseth all the other down,) and to answer the good and just principle in all people; and that will win people to deal with you, 'doing truth [John 3:21] to all, without respect to persons [James 2:9]; to high or low whatsoever, young or old, rich or poor. And so here your lives and words will preach wherever ye come.

All husbandmen, and dealers about husbandry whatsoever, cattle, or ground, to you all this is the word of the Lord God: do rightly, holily, justly, honestly, plainly, and truly to all men and people, whomsoever ye have to deal withal; wrong not any in any case, though it be never so much to your advantage. Deny yourselves, and live in the cross [Luke 9:23] of Christ, the power of God [1 Cor 1:24], for that destroys injustice; and 'without holiness none can ever see the Lord [Heb 12:14]; and out of righteousness there is no true peace.' Therefore all, of what sort soever, or what calling soever, do justly, (whether ye be masters or servants, fathers or mothers, sons or daughters,) to one another, and to all, do that which is just and righteous, uprightly and holily; in that you will have peace, and see God. . . . For 'the kingdom of God stands in righteousness, peace, and joy in the holy ghost [Rom 14:17].

So speak the truth, whether merchants or tradesmen, and all sorts of people whatsoever, in all your occasions, and in all your tradings, dealings, and doings, speak the truth, act in the truth, and walk in the truth; and this brings righteousness forth. For it answereth the witness of God in every one [Col 4;6/1Jn 5:9]; which lets every one see all the deeds and actions they have done amiss [2 Chr 6:37], and words which they have spoken amiss. So the witness of God within them ariseth a swift witness against them, for their words which they have spoken amiss, and for their actions which they have done amiss, and brings them to the judgment bar, and to condemnation. Here righteousness goes forth, and here the sweet savour to the Lord God [2 Cor 2:15] begins to ascend; and truth and equity arise both to be acted and spoken.

So all Friends, of what calling soever, that dwell in the power of God, and feel the power of God, and the light of Christ Jesus: . . . 'Live in the power of truth, and wisdom of God,' to answer that just principle of God in all people upon the earth; and so ye answering of it, thereby ye come to be as a city set upon a hill [Mat 5:14], which is above that mountain, that is in the whole world, that lies above the just principle of God in every one there, which the power of God goes over. So let your lives preach, let your light shine, that your works may be seen, that your Father may be glorified [Mat 5:16]; that your fruits may be unto holiness [Rom 6:22], and that your end may be everlasting life. . . . And that hath the dominion which doth justly, holily, and righteously speak, act, and think; and this hath the praise of God; and they who do so come to answer that which God requires, 'to love mercy, do justly, and to walk humbly with God [Micah 6:8].' And this is more than all the talkers of justice, righteousness, and holiness, whose life denies what their tongues profess and talk of. By that God and Christ is dishonoured [Rom 2:23]. So these are no good examples, neither serviceable in their generation nor creation, nor any but they who live in the power of God, and in his wisdom; in which they have the righteousness, peace, truth, holiness, justice, and equity. These are comely and savoury both to God and man.

And all, of what trade or calling soever, keep out of debts; owe to no man any thing but love [Rom 13:8]. Go not beyond your estates, lest ye bring yourselves to trouble, and cumber, and a snare; keep low and down in all things ye act. For a man that would be great, and goes beyond his estate, lifts himself up, runs into debt, and lives highly of other men's means; he is a waster of other men's, and a destroyer. He is not serviceable to the creation, but a destroyer of the creation and creatures, and cumbereth himself and troubleth others, and is lifted up, who would appear to be somebody; but being from the honest, the just, and good, falls into the shame. Therefore dwell every one of you under your own vine [Micah 4:4], (that know redemption from the earth [Rev 14:3],) and seek not to be great, but in that, and dwell in the truth, justice, righteousness, and holiness; and there is the blessing enlarged.

And no one, (of what calling soever,) run into debt, usury, and exaction; for many people have been wronged thereby; they that have taken of them, who by it have appeared great, and lived above what they were, and so would seem to be. Therefore be true and honest, holy and righteous, every one, in that which ye have. Owe to none any thing but love [Rom 13:8]; and in that ye will feel the blessing, and come to be serviceable in the creation, serving one another in love [Gal 5:13], and not in oppression and taxation.

The wicked and unrighteous owe envy and hatred, and with that they pay their debt; but the righteous, just, and harmless, who owe nothing to any man but love, with that they pay their debt. But drunkards, adulterers, swearers, rioters, [Rom 13:13/Gal 5:19- 21] who eat and drink, and rise up to play [Exo 32:6], and live in pleasures wantonly upon the earth [Jas 5:5], fighters, quarrellers, envious, malicious, unjust, unrighteous; all such actions and practices are judged out of the power of God, and out of his kingdom [Rom 13:13/1 Cor 6:9f/Gal 5:19-21].

And all Friends every where, that are shopkeepers or merchants, or factors, or any other trades, keep low in the power of God, and do not go beyond your capacity, nor reach after things more than ye can justly perform, and answer all men; but all in your places be just and true, that ye may answer all men within and without, and truth and justice in your returns, that ye may keep your words, so say, and so do; which is the royal law of liberty [James 2:8,12] in all your tradings, else ye are a dishonour to christianity. Therefore see your business, that what ye do, and what ye say, ye may perform [Rom 4:21], that ye may not break your words and promises; for if ye do ye go to loss. Neither are ye masters of what ye take in hand; for a master should be atop of things, and be in that which can command things.

And none be negligent in their business, but give an account by words or writings, how things are with them, when others write to them; so that none may wrong one another in these outward things, nor oppress one another, but be serviceable one to another, keeping their words, (their going into things beyond their ability [2 Cor 10:14], makes them break their words,) keeping within their compass with that which they may answer others, lest any should be lifted up [1 Tim 3:6]. For it is a bad thing to be lifted up, and to make a noise and a show for a time with other people's goods, and cannot keep their word, their promise, their day; such may be lifted up for a time, and break, and fall, and go out as a stink, and bring a great dishonour to Christ and true christians. And therefore, keeping your word, your day, and keeping your just measure, your just weight, that keeps down the oppression. And by keeping to that just measure and weight [Deut 25:15], and to your word and day, by the power of God and his spirit in your own hearts, there the blessing is doubled, there ye come to be rich, and ye are a good savour to God, and in the hearts of all people. . . .

For Friends, if ye be not faithful in the outward treasure, and outward mammon, who will trust you with the true treasure? [Luke 16:11] Or who can believe that ye have the true treasure, but that ye speak by hearsay of it? . . . So let every one's conversation be without covetousness; let not that be once named among saints [Eph 5:3]. And do to all men as ye would have them do to you, that is the law and the prophets [Mat 7:12]; if not, ye are judged by them both. For the kingdom stands in righteousness, (mark, stands in it,) and in peace and joy in the holy ghost [Rom 14:17], (mark, in it.)

For holiness becomes the house of God [Psa 93:5]. Whosoever acts unholily, it is that doth dishonour his house, and doth not become it. Whosoever acts unfaithfully in this outward treasure or mammon, or in the true treasure to God, is not justified in the sight of God nor man; for they are justified by faith, through faithfulness both to God and man. For whosoever doth righteousness, is of God; and he that doth not righteousness, is not of God [1 John 3:10]. For God loveth the righteous, and delighteth in them; but not in them that do unrighteousness. For in the righteousness they have peace; but out of righteousness people have trouble. So all God's people, his children, his saints must be holy, as he is holy [Lev 11:44f]; and therefore do that which is holy and just in all your lives and conversations [1 Pet 1:15]. And whatsoever ye do, let it be done to the praise and glory of God [1 Cor 10:31], (mark that,) have God's praise and glory in your eye in all your speakings and doings, then ye will be preserved to his glory, and then ye will honour him; and them that honour him, he will honour and beautify, and clothe with the fine linen, the righteousness of Christ [Rev 19:8], that men may not see your nakedness [Rev 3:18]. For God will have a holy people, to serve him in holiness; a true people, to serve him in truth, and in his spirit, and in his new and living way [Heb 10:20], above all the dead ways that are come by sin and unrighteousness, and transgression of his spirit, and power, and command. So all ye that know his power and spirit, live in it, that ye may glorify God in all your lives, and conversations and words, that ye may answer that of God in all; that ye may glorify God in your bodies, souls, and spirits, which are his, who hath made them, and gives them to you for that end. To whom be glory and honour for ever, who created all for his glory and for his honour. So the Lord God Almighty keep and preserve you faithful in all things to his glory and honour for ever!

'He that walketh in his integrity, is just; and blessed shall be his children after him.' Prov. xx. 7.

'Unjust weights, and unjust measures, both these are an abomination to the Lord.' [Prov 20:10] Verse 10.

G. F.

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