

Epistle 249

by George Fox

The word of God is the source of perfect peace and the original source of language, and it brings us into the divine nature and mind.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 30:12, Job 1:21, Isaiah 26:3, John 1:3, Romans 16:20, Philippians 4:11, 1 Timothy 6:17, Hebrews 2:14, 1 John 2:16, Revelation 19:13

Topics: "Peace Of God", "Faith And Trust"

Description

George Fox preaches about the importance of keeping our minds stayed upon the Lord to experience perfect peace that comes from God. He emphasizes that imperfect peace comes from focusing on worldly things rather than on the Creator. Using examples from Job's life, Fox illustrates the significance of retaining peace by keeping our minds on the Lord even in times of trials and loss. He urges people to learn from Christ, the light and truth, to find contentment in all circumstances and not to trust in temporary riches but in the living God for an everlasting inheritance.

Transcript

Blessed are all those whose minds are stayed upon the Lord, for they shall be kept in perfect peace [Isa 26:3]; so where the mind is stayed upon the Lord, there is a perfect peace; for it is a whole peace, which cannot be broken. So here is not only a perfect peace, but a blessing; a perfect peace which comes from the God of all peace, (that bruise the serpent's head under your feet [Rom 16:20/Gen 3:15], the troubler,) and the blessings which come from the blessed God. So all imperfect peace may be broken, that is when the mind is stayed upon the creature, or in any creature, and not upon the Creator; or in any outward things, goods, houses, lands, or inventions of vanities, in the foolish vain fashions; which the lust of the eye and the pride of life [1 Jn 2:16] go into, which will defile and corrupt it. . . .

And this is below Job, to have the mind in the creatures and visible things; for when you are tried, and creatures fail you, you are crossed and troubled; that shows an imperfect state; for God said, that Job was a perfect man [Job 1:8]. And when the Lord suffered him to be tried, and when his goods and houses were thrown down, and driven away, and servants killed, he said, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord; for the Lord gave, and the Lord taketh [Job 1:21].' Here his mind was stayed upon the Lord, and he retained his peace.

And when that his children were destroyed, and his wife said to him, 'What! dost thou still retain thy integrity? Curse God and die;' he rebukes her and calls her a foolish woman; and said unto her, 'Shall I receive good of the Lord, and not evil? [Job 2:9f] Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked I

must return [Job 1:21]. Here Job kept his integrity still, and did not all this while offend with his lips. Now many of you, who think yourselves high, and above Job, if your goods and children should be after the same manner taken away, (whose minds are in them,) you would be found in a troubled brittle state, far below Job.

And when Job's friends came to reason with him, who kept his integrity, and would no way yield to them, they counted him an hypocrite, and said, 'he restrained prayer [Job 15:4], and filled his belly with east wind [Job 15:2];' and said, 'What! shall mortal man be more pure than his maker? [Job 4:17] Shall man that is born of a woman be just? [Job 4:17/15:14] God chargeth his angels with folly [Job 4:18], and the heavens are not clear in his sight [Job 15:15]. And these are the scriptures the priests use to bring against Friends, (who keep their integrity,) as Job's friends did against him.

But at the last the Lord commanded Job to offer a sacrifice for his friends, because they had sinned, and spoken not right, as Job had [Job 42:7-10], who was perfect and kept his integrity. And the apostle said to the saints, 'that he had learned in all conditions to be content [Phil 4:11].' (Mark,) in all conditions; but this was when he was Paul, not when he was Saul, running up and down with his packet of letters, haling the saints before the rulers [Acts 9:2] like a parater; then he was not content, neither with his own condition, nor others; but when he came to learn Christ, who destroys the devil and his works [Heb 2:14, 1 Jn 3:8], who teacheth to know all things [John 14:26, 1 Jn 2:27], then in all things he learned to be content.

So that you know that there is learning, and learned; as a child when he is learning, and become learned, is witness of two states. So Paul, he had learned in all conditions to be content; and who was his schoolmaster, but Christ, by whom all things were made [John 1:3], not of man, nor by man, (out of the truth,) so while he learned of men, and by men, he was not content, neither are any others.

Therefore all are to learn of Christ, the light, the life, and the truth, that you may come to that condition, to have learned in all conditions to be content, and not to trust in uncertain riches [1 Tim 6:17], for they have wings and will flee away [Prov 23:5]. And so he is never counted a wise man, that will put any confidence in that which will flee away from him; for those are the heirs of the earth and the world, that load themselves with thick clay [Hab 2:6], that they may set their nests on high [Hab 2:9]; but they that be heirs with Christ [Rom 8:17], and of the power of an endless life [Heb 7:16], trust in the living God [1 Tim 4:10, 6:17], and come to possess and everlasting inheritance of the power of an endless life, and come to increase in the riches of the everlasting inheritance, and there lay up riches that are everlasting, which will abide for ever. And mind every one God's word in your hearts, and in your mouths, and obey it and do it; and be not of them that are saying in their hearts, who shall ascend or descend, to fetch him from above, or from the deep? [Deut 30:12-14] Keep down that sayer under reproof, and then your ear will be open to that which the righteousness of faith saith, the word is nigh thee, in thy heart, and in thy mouth; so thou needest not to say, who shall ascend or descend? And that was the word which the messengers of God preached and do preach [Rom 10:8], and rebukes the gainsayer [Tit 1:9].

And so all people, seeing the devil hath made the world like a wilderness [Isa 14:17], and there are so many ways in it that they do not know which way to come out of it, nor which to follow. Therefore this is my answer to you all, take David's lamp and light [Psa 119:105]. You may say, what is that? and where is it? I say it is with you, the word of God. You may say, people do not use to carry lamps in the day-time, but in the night. I say, you are in the night of darkness, and therefore the word is called a lamp, and a light to you; by which you may see the way of the Lord, which is perfect [2 Sam 22:31, Psa 18:30], from all men's ways, which are imperfect; by which ye may see the path of the just to be a shining light [Prov 4:18], from

all the unjust paths that are in the darkness. For by this word did David come to outstrip his teachers, and was made wiser than them all; so it will you, if you obey it; for by this word he saw Christ, and called him Lord. Therefore he loved the word and hid it in his heart [Psa 119:11]; and by it he spake so many glorious expressions, which the world since hath turned into metre, and made songs of them. And this was the word that came to Abraham, which made him forsake his national religion and worship, and obey the Lord. And this was the word that came to Jacob, the shepherd, by which he saw Christ, and prophesied of him to his sons on his death-bed, when he said to Judah, the sceptre should not depart from Judah; nor a lawgiver from between his feet, till Shiloh came, (meaning Christ,) and the gathering of all nations should be to him [Gen 49:10], as it is at this day; the gathering is to Christ. And this was the word that came to Moses, the shepherd, when he was keeping sheep, which he obeyed and went to Egypt, and brought the children of Israel out of Egypt; by which word he was made a minister; and when that the children of Israel were come out of Egypt into the wilderness, he told them, 'they need not go for the word beyond the seas, &c. for it was nigh them, in their hearts and mouths, to obey it and do it [Deut 30:12-14].' And this was the word that made Moses a prophet, who prophesied of Christ, and said, 'like unto him God would raise up a prophet, him should they hear in all things [Deut 18:15].' Mark! in all things; we are to be ordered both inward and outward, through hearing Christ, by whom all things were made. And every one that would not hear this prophet (Christ) should be cut off [Num 15:31]. For how should they continue or reign that will not hear Christ?

And this was the word that came to Samuel, and made him a prophet, who spake to Eli the priest, and reprov'd his sons, and the children of Israel [1 Sam 3:10-13]. And this was the word that made Saul to prophesy [1 Sam 10:11], and Balaam, though they erred from it [Jude 1:11]. And this was the word that made all the prophets to prophesy, and to reprove the kings of Israel, and their priests, of their superstition and idolatrous ways, in setting groves and images in high places; and reprov'd all their monthly prognostications [Isa 47:13], who spoke and acted from them, and not from the Lord.

And this was the word that came to Isaiah, by which he prophesied of Christ, and of his preaching, and of his sufferings [Isa 53], and by which word he reprov'd the shepherds, which were as greedy dumb dogs, that could never have enough, seeking their gain from their quarter [Isa 56:10f]. And by this word he saw, that all the children of God should be taught of God, and be established in righteousness [Isa 54:13f] and peace; and though many tongues should rise up in judgment against them, yet those that were taught of God should condemn them all; such power should be given to his children. And the many weapons formed against them should not prosper [Isa 54:17], God would restrain them. And also he saw them that were cast out, that trembled at God's word; to whom God would appear to their glory, and to the shame [Isa 66:5] and to the confounding of them that cast them out for his name sake, as it is at this day.

And this was the word of God that made Jeremiah a prophet [Jer 1:4,9], by which he saw the new covenant [Jer 31:31-23]; by which word he was sent to reprove the people and the princes, of the filthy and horrible thing committed in the land, that the priests preached for hire, and the prophets prophesied falsely [Jer 5:30f]. And for reprov'ing them for their superstition and idolatry, they struck him, and put him in the stocks [Jer 20:2f] and prison, and persecuted him in the dungeon, till his persecutors were carried into captivity. And by the word Jeremiah saw the number of seventy years of his persecutors being in Babylon's captivity [Jer 25:11].

Elijah by this word was made a prophet, and by the word reprov'd Abab and Jezebel for their idolatry, and worshipping of images. For which word's sake they persecuted him, and the rest of the prophets; and was not he fed of the ravens by the river [1 Ki 17:4-6]? And did they not seek to take away his life? And did not

he think all the Lord's prophets had been killed, and he left alone [1 Ki 19:14]; yet did not the Lord say to him, he had reserved seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal [1 Ki 19:18]? And Elisha, the ploughman, by this word, was made a prophet, and forsook his plough [1 Ki 19:19-21]; and by the word reprov'd the idolatry in his age of priests and people.

And by this word was Ezekiel made a prophet; by which word he reprov'd the shepherds of Israel, that made a prey upon the people, and taught them for the fleece. And by the word he saw that God would bring the people from under them, that they should be made a prey upon no longer; and would gather them from their mouths, and set one shepherd over them [Ezek 34], even Christ, (who is witnessed.) And by the word he reprov'd the false prophets, that taught for handfuls of barley, and pieces of bread [Ezek 13:19], and daubed with untemper'd mortar [Ezek 13:10f], and sewed pillows under the arm holes [Ezek 13:18]. And by the word he saw the pattern of the temple [Ezek 40-43], and the return of the Jews.

And by this word Daniel was made a prophet, and saw Christ and his kingdom, and how the saints should take his kingdom [Dan 7:18]. And by the word he saw such that should rise up against the people of God. And by the word he numbered the years of Christ to his time, four hundred ninety-nine years [Dan 9:24 Geneva Margin], and of his death, and how he should end the sacrifices [Dan 9:27]; and how that Christ should bring up everlasting righteousness, and put an end to sin, and end their prophets, and seal up their visions [Dan 9:24].

And by the word was Micah made a prophet, by which he cried against the priests that preached for hire, and the prophets that prophesied for money, and the judges that judg'd for rewards [Micah 3:11], and such as preach'd peace to the people that put in their mouths, (like the priests in these times,) and when they did not, they prepar'd war against them [Micah 3:5], and chop'd their flesh, and brok their bones [Micah 3:3]. But Micah saw by the word that the sun was gone down upon such prophets and priests, and they should have no vision nor answer from God [Micah 3:6f]. Therefore such as are against revelations and visions, on them the sun is set, and gone down and the night comes upon them.

And by the word was Amos the herdsman made a prophet, who was a gatherer of fruits [Amos 7:14-16]; and likewise all the rest of the prophets, who spok forth divine things, and reprov'd the superstition and idolatry in their time and day. And by the word did the prophets speak forth divine things; which word brought them into the divine nature and mind; which word hammer'd [Jer 23:29] and cut down that which corrupted their natures. And this was the word that made so many fishermen preachers [Mat 4:18f] of the gospel, which is the power of God [Rom 1:16].

And this was the word which made Matthew the toll gatherer [Mat 9:9, 10:3], Luke the physician [Col 4:14], and Paul the tent maker [Acts 18:3], ministers and preachers of the gospel, and power of God. And this was the word which made Peter to see Joel's prophecy, how that God would pour out of his spirit upon all flesh, and sons and daughters should prophesy, and young men should see visions, and old men dream dreams; and the pouring forth of the spirit upon servants and handmaids [Joel 2:28f, Acts 2:17f], that every one should have something to speak to the glory of God. And now priests, and proud prelates, and bishops, and popes, though you have made a trade of the saints' words, and apostles' and prophets' words, and gotten a great deal of money by them, (which were fishermen and shepherds' words from the word,) yet nevertheless, if a company of shepherds, herdsmen, fishermen, tent makers and toll gatherers should come amongst you to preach, you would say, Away with these mechanic fellows, they have not served seven years apprenticeship at the colleges, which were set up to make ministers; therefore they are not to set up, because they have not served their apprenticeship. . . . Away with you to work, and away

with your colleges; for our brother Paul the tent maker said, he that will not work must not eat [2 Th 3:10]. For, would you own Christ if he had come in your day, who was called, a carpenter's son [Mat 13:55]? You popes, with your triple crowns, and you lord bishops, with your coaches and pampered horses, and gorgeous apparel, with your black coats, and white coats, and silk girdles: are you like to entertain him who was called a carpenter's son? Or to cast him and his mother into the manger in your stables [Luke 2:7].

This was the word by which John the evangelist saw Christ, who doth enlighten every man that cometh into the world, and saw how he became flesh, and came to his own, and that his own did not receive him; but to as many as received Christ the light, to them he gave power to become the sons of God [John 1:9,14,11f]; which all they that are ministers of the letter, made by their seven years learning in their colleges, and not by the word, (hating the light [John 3:20],) cannot know.

And by this word, the minister of the word preaches Christ's word, life, death and resurrection. And therefore, as John saith in his epistle, 'That which our eyes have seen, our hands have handled, and our ears have heard of the word of life, do we preach unto you; that which was from the beginning [1 Jn 1:1].' In the beginning was the word [John 1:1]; though since the beginning were the words and letters; for the scriptures of truth [Dan 10:21] are the words of God, and the words of Christ; and he that adds to these words, (saith John in the revelations,) God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book [Rev 22:18], &c.

So the word was in the beginning, and Christ's name is called, the word of God [Rev 19:13]; but Christ is neither called scriptures nor writings, for scriptures signify writings. So, in the beginning was the word; since the beginning were all false ways, false churches, false teachers; and in the word ye comprehend them all. The priests say, that Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, are the original; but the many languages began at Babel, which Nimrod, the hunter before the Lord [Gen 10:8f], began to build, after God had destroyed the old world with water; then would he go build a tower, which should reach to heaven; then God came down and confounded them into many languages [Gen 11:1-9].

So he hunted before the Lord, but the Lord followed him, and confounded him in all his work, as he will all the builders that run before him. And all the priests that have gotten the many languages, which began at Babel, they tell simple ignorant people that they have the original, and are the orthodox men, and get into a different habit from them, and say, the Quakers are a simple people, and despise the learned orthodox men, who have the original. Give ear O people! If these languages, which came up at the confounding of Babel, are the priests' original that makes them orthodox and divine, then Pilate, that crucified Christ, was as good an orthodox divine as they; for when he crucified Christ, he wrote a paper in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and set atop of him [Luke 23:38]; he was as ignorant of scripture, and of orthodox and divine matters as you, and you as he.

And the apostle saith, 'that tongues must cease [1 Cor 13:8];' then that which makes orthodox men and divines, as you say, must cease, according to the apostles' doctrine; and so then tongues neither are the original, nor make orthodox nor divine. And John, that gave forth the revelations, saith, 'that the whore and beast set upon tongues [Rev 17:15];' &c. 'and the everlasting gospel must be preached again to all kindreds and tongues [Rev 14:6];' which was before Babel was, where was the beginning of tongues.

Now it is clear that the gospel must be preached to all nations and tongues; and that tongues are not the original, neither do they make divines, or orthodox men; but it is clear that it is the word which was in the

beginning which makes a divine; yea, of tradesmen, who are base and contemptible in the eyes of the proud, and them that have gotten Babel's tongues, who are confounded by the ministers of the word which was in the beginning [John 1:1], before Babel was; for all the earth was of one language and speech before Babel [Gen 11:1].

And you that call yourselves orthodox men made by tongues, and say, that is your original, you are so blind, that you cannot see that there was an original before Babel was; for, did not Enoch the prophet, the seventh from Adam, who prophesied in the old world before it was destroyed, and long before Babel was, speak concerning the coming of Christ in ten thousand of his saints [Jude 1:14], as in Jude? And Lamech prophesied, in the old world, concerning Noah and Adam [Gen 5:29], and others might be instanced, who were before your tongues (which you call your original) were.

And so we say, that the word of God is the original, which doth fulfil the scriptures; and the word is it which makes a divine, which is called a hammer, but it is a living hammer; and is called a sword and fire [Jer 23:29], but it is a living sword [Heb 4:12], and a living fire, to hammer, and cut down, and burn up that which separated and kept man from God; by which word man is reconciled again to God, which is called the word of reconciliation [2 Cor 5:19]; by this word are men and women sanctified and made clean.

And this is the word that makes both men and women divine, and brings them into the divine nature, which hammers and cuts down that which corrupted their nature; and by this word are they brought into a divine wisdom, understanding, knowledge [1 Cor 12:8], spirit, and power. And this is the word that lives, and abides, and endures for ever, by which the saints are born again of the immortal seed [1 Pet 1:23] and word of God, (who feed upon the milk of the word [1 Pet 2:2],) up into a divine life, wisdom, and understanding, and divine nature.

And by this word they do see all flesh to be as grass, and as the flower of the field that fadeth [Isa 40:6-8]; and the word of God that lives, and abides, and endures for ever, is Christ, whose name is called the word of God.

And so keep the word of patience [1 Cor 3:10], which is over all the impatient spirits, and then you will know that the word of life [1 Jn 1:1], the word of patience, and word of wisdom, is everlasting, and abides and endures forever. All they that are in the letter, out of the life and word, have neither patience to themselves nor others; for the word of patience, and the word of life, which is to be kept in all tribulations, was before death and impatient spirits were.

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