

Epistle 251

by George Fox

George Fox's Epistle 251 calls believers to live righteously, uphold justice, and maintain unity in the spirit as a testimony to their faith.

Scripture: Amos 5:24, Matthew 5:16, Romans 1:16, Romans 8:2, Ephesians 4:1, Philippians 1:27, Titus 2:10, Hebrews 10:25, James 5:6, 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Righteousness", "Community Living"

Description

George Fox emphasizes the importance of living a life that reflects the purity and righteousness of God, urging his friends to walk worthy of their calling in Christ Jesus. He calls for justice and righteousness to flow through their community, warning against the dangers of hypocrisy and unruly behavior that tarnish their witness. Fox encourages believers to assemble together, support one another, and avoid the pitfalls of worldly pleasures and gossip, which corrupt their testimony. He stresses the necessity of adhering to the law of the spirit of life in Christ, which liberates from sin and death, and exhorts all to live in truth and unity. Ultimately, he desires that God's glory be magnified through their lives and actions.

Transcript

My dear friends in the truth and seed of God, in which is purity and life, let that flow from the head to the feet, that righteousness, and judgment may run down our streets as a stream [Amos 5:24]. For now Friends are become a people gathered in the holy name of Jesus. Therefore all are to walk worthy of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus [Eph 4:1/Phil 3:14]; and every one as he hath received him, so walk in him, as becometh the gospel [Phil 1:27], which is the power of God [Rom 1:16], which was before the devil was; that in that your life may shine before men, to answer that of God in all, that they may behold your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven [Mat 5:16]. And so, walk in the light [1 Jn 1:7] as children of the light and of the day [1 Th 5:5]. For you know that formerly we did cry against the powers of the earth, because that judgment, and justice, and righteousness did not run down their streets. And now that Friends are become a great people, shall not judgment, and justice, and righteousness run down our streets as a stream and a flood, to drive away all the filth from amongst us [Isa 4:4].

. Oh! therefore friends, who have purchased this through great sufferings, lose not this great favour which God hath given unto you, but that you may answer the witness of God [1 Jn 5:9] in every man, which witnesseth to your faithfulness, that they may glorify your Father on your behalf [1 Pet 4:16?].

And now, friends, if there be any oppression, exaction, or defrauding by making a prize, through the freedom which God hath given you, the world will see such, and say, the Quakers are not as they were. . . . Therefore such must be exhorted, for such never knew the purchase of the truth, and if they did, they have sold it [Prov 23:23].

And, friends, forget not the assembling of yourselves together [Heb 10:25], as the manner of some is, and was; lest there be an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God [Heb 3:12], but exhort one another daily [Heb 3:13]. . . .

And also, all such unruly spirits that have professed (falsely) and got under the name of Quakers, whose evil words corrupt good manners [1 Cor 15:33], must be exhorted from house to house.

And also such young people, lasses and lads, that go in youthful ways, and take liberty to go into pleasure, and to play, and to alehouses and drunkenness; which corrupt the earth [Rev 19:2], which is one mark that they are dead whilst they live. And these kill the just [James 5:6], and burden the righteous, and cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of. Therefore such must be exhorted to live in the truth, and to come to that which will mortify that which leads to death; so that truth may be adorned [Tit 2:10] by them.

. . . . And better such had never professed the name, nor known the truth, nor come among them who were gathered into the name of Jesus [Mat 18:20], and into the form of sound words [2 Tim 1:13], and into the son of God and godliness, than to have gone into a form of their own, which they have received, yea, even from the worst of men. . . .

And all such as are tattlers, busy-bodies [1 Tim 5:13], backbiters, and gossipers, are to be exhorted to mind their own conditions, that they may live in the truth, and not to draw others out to words, wherein there is no profit [2 Tim 2:14; that truth may flow, and the life may flow, and the unity may increase in the spirit and power; that all may come to live in the gospel order, which was before the devil, or enmity, or adversary was.

And all such as cry, 'Away with your laws, we will have none of your laws.' To such as come to the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which makes free from the law of sin and death [Rom 8:2], and puts down that authority; which life was before death and sin were, and remains when they are gone; and in the life in Christ Jesus, is the saints' fellowship, and unity, and bond of peace [Eph 4:3]. All such as cry against laws so much, are the sons of Belial [Deut 13:13], and would be without the yoke of the law of the son of God [Mat 11:29?]. Such always were the stirrers up of mischief and schism from the body, and they took liberty to say any thing; as ye may read in the book of Kings, in the days of Jezebel [1 Ki 21:25], and in the days of Stephen [Acts 6:12]; and yet these that cry so much against laws, yet they live themselves in the law of sin and death; which they obey when they do evil; who are without the understanding of the righteous law, which the righteous live in and see. Therefore, such must be exhorted and reprov'd, if they go under the name of Quakers, and are not in the life. That justice, judgment, and righteousness may flow as a river, and as a stream [Amos 5:24], and drive away all the filth from among us [Isa 4:4]; that nothing but the power of God, and the life of truth, may rule amongst us; that the living God, which hath blessed you with his heavenly riches and mercies, and largely manifested them among you, may be in all things honoured, magnified, and exalted. To whom all belongs, God over all, blessed for ever. So that every one may adorn the truth, and the gospel [Tit 2:10], and mind the Lord's business above their own. And every one be tender of the glory of God, and be careful, that in nowise his name and truth be dishonoured.

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