

Epistle 260

by George Fox

The truth makes a person free, and the way of holiness is Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life.

Scripture: John 4:24, John 8:36, John 14:6, 1 Corinthians 6:19, 1 Corinthians 7:22, Galatians 4:26, Galatians 5:1, Hebrews 1:14, Hebrews 7:16, 2 Peter 1:4

Topics: "Worship in Spirit and Truth", "Truth and Freedom"

Description

George Fox emphasizes that true freedom comes from the truth, which is found in Christ. He explains that those who are made free by the truth are God's freemen, liberated from sin, false worship, and the control of the devil. Fox encourages believers to worship God in spirit and truth, highlighting that the way of holiness is through Christ, who is the ultimate truth. He warns against the dangers of false prophets and the bondage of traditional worship that is not rooted in the truth. Ultimately, he calls for a return to the true worship of God, which is found within each individual through the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

Dear Friends,--If the truth make you free, then are ye free indeed [John 8:36]. So then there are none made freemen, but by truth; and all that are freemen, they are made free by the truth, they are God's freemen [1 Cor 7:22]; they are free citizens, they are freeholders of an everlasting inheritance, and free in an everlasting kingdom; and they are free heirs of salvation [Heb 1:14]; and they are free in the heavenly city Jerusalem [Heb 12:22], which is from above [Gal 4:26]; and they are free in the power of an endless life [Heb 7:16], which was before death was.

So they are not captives, they are not bondmen, they are not servants, nor slaves. But (mark) free men and free women. And what hath made them free men, and free women, but truth? For if the truth hath made you free, then are you free indeed. So, free to worship God in the spirit and in truth [John 4:24], (which the devil is out of [John 8:44],) to serve the Lord God in the spirit and in the new life [Rom 6:4/7:6]. They are above the serpent, and from under his control; and from under the control of old Adam, and his beggarly rudiments [Gal 4:9/Col 2:8], and will-worships [Col 2:23], and false righteousness.

Truth makes free from all these; and makes free to be partakers of Christ Jesus [Heb 3:14], and of his blood, and his spirit [Heb 6:4], and mind [1 Cor 2:16]; who is the prince of peace [Isa 9:6], and prince of life [Acts 3:15]; and makes free to be partakers of the divine nature [2 Pet 1:4] and precious faith [2 Pet 1:1]; and to be members of the true church, and gospel fellowship, and power of God, which was before the devil was. So stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free [Gal 5:1], free from the devil,

dragon, and serpent, and all slavery and servitude.

For free men do walk in their freedom; for it is the truth makes them free, and so to triumph in glory. And so, if the truth have made you free, then are you free indeed; free from all the will-worships [Col 2:23], and from all the windy doctrines [Eph 4:14]; from all the evil inventions, traditions, imaginations, and notions, and rudiments of Adam in the fall, who are from truth; and free from the devil, who is out of truth. So it is plain, none are free but by the truth, and all in the truth are free men.

And all out of the truth, are slaves in old Adam, and slaves to sin and satan, and to his will-worship, and to their own self-righteousness, and to their rudiments, doctrines, and traditions [Col 2:8]; serving divers lusts, pleasures [Tit 3:3], and corruptions, and serving the creatures more than the Creator, who is God blessed for ever [Rom 1:25], and serving the desires of their own minds; and so as slaves are kept in bondage; all in prison all in the bonds of death and jaws of death; for who are out of truth are no free men.

Though they be high priests, and readers, preachers, and expounders, as the great high priests, and the lofty Pharisees and scribes were, professing the scriptures, yet not in the truth, and so not freemen. For they are in malice and envy, like Cain; oppressors, like Pharaoh; raging persecutors, like Nebuchadnezzar [Dan 3:13] and the Jews; as wild as Ishmael [Gen 16:12], as profane as Esau [Heb 12:16]; out of the truth are all those found, fasting to smite with fists of wickedness [Isa 58:4], lifting up bloody hands, mingling their sacrifices with the blood of the persecuted [Luke 13:1], praying to the magistrates for persecution.

All this is out of truth, and not in the freedom; so not free men, but doing the devil's lusts and service, as the Jews did. And so, if the truth make you free, ye are free indeed; ye are free from all those things above mentioned. The truth makes free from envy, and from profaneness, and from wildness, and from wickedness, and from the bloody hands. Free from the fasts of those that hang down their heads like a bulrush [Isa 58:5], free from the persecuting spirits, free from the false prophets, deceivers, seducers, antichrists [Mat 24:11, 2 Tim 3:13, 2 Jn 1:7]; and all antichristian false prophets, deceivers, and seducers, are satan's bondslaves, vassals and bondmen; and being with his oars chained in his galleys, they carry his wares, and do his work up and down the world; which is the sea.

But truth makes free from all these, free from the hypocrite's hope, which perisheth [Job 8:13]; free from Nebuchadnezzar's fury [Dan 3:13]. And it makes free from the wild heifer's nature [Hos 10:11], and from the dog, swine [2 Pet 2:22?], horse, viper, cockatrice, serpent's nature, and from the spider, and his web [Isa 59:5]; and from the oak and cedar [Isa 2:12f?], and the bramble and briar, and bear, and lion. The truth makes free from all these, and brings man and woman into the image of God [Col 3:10].

And so, if the truth makes you free, then are you free indeed. And the truth is Christ, and Christ is the truth [John 14:6], which makes you free from all falsehood, and makes you free from the world, which lies in wickedness [1 Jn 5:19] and unrighteousness; by which you come to be free men of the world which hath no end.

'And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it [Isa 35:8].' Mark, 'the unclean shall not pass over it.' This way, which is called the way of holiness, was spoken of by prophecy; and this way is Christ, who is the way of holiness, who is above the unclean, and destroys it, and the ground of it, the devil; and so the unclean cannot pass over this way of holiness. This is our way, who are in scorn called Quakers, to wit, Christ.

And this way of holiness shall be for the way-faring men, though fools, yet they shall not err therein; where no lion, nor ravenous beast, nor lion's whelp shall go thereon. All the ravenous beasts are without, in the way of the world, without Christ and God. But the redeemed shall walk in this way of holiness [Isa 35:8f] , Christ Jesus; and the ransomed of the Lord shall walk in this way of holiness; and they that do return from the way of the world to Sion, shall walk in this way of holiness with singing and everlasting joy upon their heads [Isa 51:11].

And they that walk in this way of holiness, Christ Jesus, shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away [Isa 35:10]. And all that walk in this way of holiness, their deaf ear is unstopped, and their blind eye is opened. And the lame man here shall leap as a hart, and the dumb man's tongue shall sing [Isa 35:5f]. And here he shall see waters gush out of the rock [Num 20:7-11], and streams out of the desert [Isa 35:6], in this way of holiness. And here he shall see in this way the parched ground become a pool, and the thirsty land full of springs; and in the habitation, where dragons lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes [Isa 35:7], which begin to spring.

Glory be to the Lord for ever. And this way of holiness, which the prophets prophesied of, is Christ Jesus, the way, who said of himself, I am the way [John 4:6]; and he is over all the fallen ways, and before the way of the serpent; glorified with the Father, before the world began [John 17:3]. And this is the way of the way-faring men, who have been way-faring up and down from religion to religion, from worship to worship, from one people to another, from one minister and teacher to another, and could not sit down in any of their ways, but way-fared, travelled and sought.

And now, glory be to the Lord for ever, thousands of these way-faring men are come to find their way, Christ Jesus, . . . though they be called fools by all the sons of Adam, who are in their own ways and rudiments; yet those fools shall not err in the way, Christ Jesus, though counted fools for Christ's sake [1 Cor 4:10]. And they see how all the wise men in old Adam mixed with the wisdom of the serpent, how they are all in their own ways, worships, and religions; and all the sects in it, how they are like tradesmen, plucking from one church to another, and getting customers, and drawing people from one another's church to their own ways; and tearing one another to pieces, to get people from one another's church to themselves.

And so are like lions, and ravenous beasts one against another, to get from one another's church to maintain themselves; and thus they seek the people's, not the people; and feed themselves, and not the flock [Ezek 34:3]; for they are out of the way Christ, and sit down in their own ways. But, for the way-faring man, the way of holiness is; for him, that is way-faring and seeking up and down for his beloved [Song 5:6]. 'I sought my beloved by night, and the watchmen smote me [Song 5:7].'

Did not the way-faring man go to the Papists and say, 'You watchmen of the night, did you see my beloved? [Isa 21:11?/Song 3:3]' What is thy beloved more than another's beloved [Song 5:9], said they. What is thy religion, more than another's religion? Or thy profession, more than another's profession? So the Papists smote and wounded the way-faring men. The way-faring man did not ask the Papists for their beloved; for the Papists had a beloved, a mass-book; but he asked them for his own beloved, Christ Jesus.

Well, the next watchmen were the Common-prayer-men of every parish. . . .

Well, the next watchmen of the night were the Presbyterians

The next watchmen were the Independents and Baptists. . . .

Then the way-faring men went to the private meetings of the Manifestarians and Seekers; and these watchmen fell a mocking, and scoffing, and railing, and smiting with the tongue [Jer 18:18], and thrust them out of their meetings. . . . And now, glory for ever be to the Lord, thousands of these way-faring men have found their beloved, and have found their way, Christ Jesus, and a fool shall not err therein; for there is no error in Christ Jesus, all the error is out of Christ, who is the way, wherein the way-faring men, though counted fools, yet shall not err. And now my beloved is mine, and I am his [Song 2:16]; we are come to the banquetting house, and his banner over us is love [Song 2:4]. And the watchmen of the night told the way-faring men, that there was not any way, but there was error in it; and that all the religions, and worships, and churches erred. And so the way-faring men way-fared up and down to find the way of holiness. For all the ravenous beasts [Isa 35:9], and the lions' whelps trod in the way of error [Job 28:8?]. . . .

The outward Jew worshipped in his outward temple made with hands [Acts 7:48], at outward Jerusalem, and they came up yearly to worship there; and if they did not come up to worship at outward Jerusalem, and keep the feast of tabernacles in the temple, upon them should be no rain [Zech 14:16f]; and their eyes were to rot out of their heads, and their tongues out of their mouths, that fought against Jerusalem, as in Zechariah xiv. 12. So the outward Jew had but one temple in the whole world, and there they went to worship in it; and the priest had a chamber in the temple [Ezek 40:45f]. And when Christ came, he ended the priesthood, he ended the offerings, and the temple, and the worship therein of the outward Jews [Heb 7, etc]; and set up another worship in the spirit and in the truth [John 4:24]: for when the woman of Samaria, that came to Jacob's well, said unto Christ, how that our fathers worshipped in this mountain, where Jacob's well was, and the well was made before Jerusalem was, or the temple either; for Jacob died in Egypt [Gen 49], and afterward his sons came out of Egypt, and builded a temple in Jerusalem; and so there they set up a place of worship after the well was made: so Christ said unto the woman, 'The hour is coming, and now is, that they that worship the Father must worship him in spirit and truth;' and not at Jerusalem, nor at this mountain is God worshipped; 'For God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in the spirit and in the truth [John 4:21-24]:' and then did Christ set up his worship, which was before the pope's, Turks', Common-prayer, Presbyterian, Independent, and other worships were; and the worship that Christ Jesus set up, was in the spirit and in the truth. Now where is this spirit, and where is this truth? Is it not within people? So, as the Jew outward was to worship in the temple, and there was but that one temple commanded of God to be built, which Christ came to end, who set up his worship in the spirit and in the truth. So seeing the true worship is in the spirit and in the truth, and the truth is within you, in the inward parts [Psa 51:6], the spirit of God is within you, you must not grieve, vex, nor quench it [Eph 4:30, Isa 63:10, 1 Th 5:19]. . . .

. . . And so, the Jew inward can worship no where but in the temple. What temple? It is not a temple that is made with hands [Acts 7:48]. The Jews outward worshipped in the temple that was made with hands; but the Jew inward his worship is to be in the spirit, and in the truth [John 4:24], and in a temple not made with hands. So to worship in the spirit, and in the truth, is to worship in the temple, and no where else. And so, every man and woman in the whole world must worship in the temple.

What temple? The temple that is not made with hands; where the spirit of truth is. 'Know ye not, that your bodies are the temples of the holy ghost [1 Cor 6:19];' that is to say, the holy spirit: and so, every man and woman must be brought to truth in their own hearts, and brought to the spirit of God in their own hearts. This is the standing and perfect worship, and it will stand when all the worships of old Adam are gone, and

when the Jews', and Turks', and Christians' worships, that be not in the truth, are gone: for this is a standing and perfect worship; the spirit of God is perfect.

And this is an universal worship, and brings every individual man and woman to the spirit of God in their own hearts [2 Cor 1:22]. This makes no sect, but every one in the spirit, which is the bond of peace [Eph 4:3], is in the truth, which the enmity is out of: and this spiritual worship is in the spirit and truth, Christ Jesus, the spiritual man, the heavenly man, which the second Adam, the Lord from heaven [1 Cor 15:47] set up above sixteen hundred years since. And so, every one is to be in it, and to walk in the truth [3 Jn 1:3], and in the spirit [Gal 5:16], and to come to the truth in their own particulars.

For that spirit makes sects, which persecutes people for not following them; but they are all to worship in that spiritual worship, which Christ Jesus set up; and every son and daughter of Adam is to come to the truth and spirit in their own hearts; and so in that spirit and truth to worship the God of truth, who is a spirit; for he seeketh such to worship him. And Christ persecuted none for not following his worship; but all are condemned by the spirit in their own selves, who grieve it, and vex and quench it, and all are condemned with the light and truth that hate it, who will not come to it [John 3:19f], but hate it. . . .

And such lead people into sects and heaps, and lead people out of the spirit, and persecute one another about their worships, which is not the way of truth, nor the command of Christ, but on the contrary, 'to love one another [John 15:12].' So all that worship in the spirit and truth, come to the spirit and truth in their own hearts, and love one another, and love enemies. And so, the outward Jews' priests had chambers in the temple [Ezek 40:45f], which priests, chambers, and temple, Christ hath ended, so let Christ Jesus now have a chamber in your temple, to sanctify your temple, and cleanse your temple, that the glory of the Lord may fill your temple.

The Jews' priests were to cleanse the temple, and when they had cast the rubbish out of it [2 Chr 29:16], the glory of the Lord filled their temple [Exo 40:34]: and so Christ, as I said before, hath ended the Jews' priests' chambers and temple.

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