

Epistle 267

by George Fox

Ministers should exercise patience, humility, and love when dealing with disagreements and should strive to maintain unity and fellowship with others.

Scripture: Matthew 18:15, John 12:36, 1 Corinthians 13:7, 1 Corinthians 14:32, 2 Corinthians 5:18, Galatians 4:28, Ephesians 4:16, Colossians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:5, 1 Peter 4:10

Topics: "Unity in the Church", "Love and Grace in Ministry"

Description

George Fox emphasizes the importance of unity and love among believers who are children of the light. He urges ministers not to judge one another in public meetings, as this creates confusion and harms the congregation. Instead, he advocates for patience and private communication to resolve issues, reflecting the spirit of order and humility. Fox highlights that true ministry should be rooted in grace and love, edifying the body of Christ and maintaining unity. He calls on all to recognize the divine presence in each other and to minister accordingly, fostering a spirit of fellowship and truth.

Transcript

Friends,--All ye that believe in the light [John 12:36], as Christ hath commanded, that are become children of the light, and of the day [1 Th 5:5], and of the promise [Gal 4:28], and do minister therein, do not judge one another in public meetings, you that do minister, as you have received the grace, and have the word of the Lord God committed to you, that minister abroad [2 Cor 5:18f], or go abroad in cities, towns, countries, or nations, do not judge one another, nor reflect one upon another in public meetings; for that hurts the hearers, and you do more hurt than you do good, and that makes confusion.

If you have any thing to say, have patience, let that gift be exercised, and speak to one another by yourselves alone [Mat 18:15]; for that was the way before any thing was spoken against any of the church, and that will show the spirit of order and government, and the spirit of love, and of patience and humility.

And keep down passion, and that part in yourselves that cannot bear all things, nor endure all things, whereby the love comes up that will endure all things, and bear all things [1 Cor 13:7], which edifies the body [Eph 4:16], and by which the body is edified; for 'the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets [1 Cor 14:32].' This shows the true spirit, for that which cannot bear all things, many times, is forward in judging, that cannot bear all things, nor endure all things, and so goeth out of the true love and edification; which breeds confusion and distraction, and destroys more than ever it will beget to God. And also goes out of the church order, 'first speak to him alone;' for by that he may win his brother [Mat 18:15].

Speaking publicly makes strife, some owning and some disowning, and that spirit must be shut out by the true spirit, that keeps order, and unity, and fellowship, and the true love which edifies the body.

And so all who feel the power stirring in them to minister, when they have done, let them live in the power, and in the truth, and in the grace, that keeps in the seasoned words [Col 4:6], and that keeps in a stablished and seasoned life: and so all may minister as they have received the grace; so every one is a steward of the grace of God [1 Pet 4:10], if he do not turn the grace of God into wantonness [Heb 12:15f?]; and so to minister in that love, and grace, and power, that keeps all things in subjection and order, and in unity in the life and in the power, and light, by which you may see that of God in every man, and answer to that which God hath showed unto people: for the true labourers in the vineyard do answer that of God, the true ministers bring people to that which is to instruct them, viz. the spirit of God [Neh 9:20], and so are ministers of the spirit [2 Cor 3:6], and ministers of the grace [Eph 4:29]; they answer the spirit, and the grace, and truth in all, in which all that do minister have unity, and through which they have fellowship with God and Christ.

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