

# Epistle 29

by George Fox

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of discerning true ministers from false ones, and supporting those who preach spiritual things and follow Christ's doctrine.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 24:1, Malachi 3:10, Matthew 10:8, Matthew 10:10, Luke 10:7, Romans 15:27, 2 Corinthians 11:13, Philippians 3:19, Hebrews 7:24, 1 John 4:2

**Topics:** "Discernment", "True Ministry"

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## Description

George Fox emphasizes the distinction between true ministers of Christ and those who misuse scripture for personal gain. He warns against supporting those who demand tithes without providing spiritual nourishment, arguing that such practices contradict Christ's teachings. Fox highlights the importance of recognizing the unchangeable priesthood of Christ and the new covenant, which frees believers from the obligations of the old priesthood. He encourages believers to support genuine ministers who preach the gospel freely, while rejecting those who exploit their positions for financial gain. Ultimately, Fox calls for discernment in spiritual matters and a commitment to Christ's doctrine.

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## Transcript

Friends,--The counsel of the living God to you all is, that ye may come to discern the ministers of God and Christ from the ministers of the world, that have gotten the scriptures for their cloak, and with them make a colour to deceive, and tell you, 'that they are the ministers of Jesus Christ, and Christ hath sent them;' [2 Cor 11:13] who sue you at the law, and hale you before magistrates for tithes and maintenance, when they do you no work, nor have ye hired them. Yet they come and tell you, 'the workman is worthy of his meat [Mat 10:10], and the labourer is worthy of his hire. [Luke 10:7].'

Here the custom of sin hath taken away the sense; they are so accustomed to it. But praised be the Lord God, who hath given us his light, and with it all such are seen, comprehended, and judged; and to such we cannot give tithes, nor hire, who do us no work, whom we have not hired; for it is contrary to scripture and Christ's doctrine, and to that of God in our consciences. It is not for the saving of the earth (for it is the Lord's, and the fulness of it) [Psa 24:1] that we do not pay the priests' tithes; for if we should, we should uphold the first priesthood, and its office, who had their storehouses, to put the tithes into that were given them; and then all the widows, fatherless, and strangers came, and were to be filled in the priest's gate, and the priests were to minister it out of the storehouse; as ye may read in Malachi [Mal 3:10] and the book of Moses [Deut 14:28], who received a law from God, and gave it forth to the priests to receive tithes.

So with the light, which Christ Jesus hath given us, with it we come to witness him, the unchangeable priest [Heb 7:24], and see the change of the first priesthood, and the change of the law also [Heb 7:12], by which the priest received the tithes; as ye may read Heb. vii. So we do witness the new testament, and the new covenant, and the everlasting priest [Heb 7:21], (praised be God!) and do confess Christ Jesus come in the flesh [1 Jn 4:2]. And all ye that would have us to give priests' tithes, and would compel us so to do, ye are they that do oppose Christ's doctrine and commands to his disciples, 'Freely ye have received, freely give' [Mat 10:8]; and do not own the unchangeable priest's being come to teach his people: ye are against the unchangeable priest's office; ye are against the new covenant, and new testament.

And so we cannot uphold tithes, and such as take tithes, who act against Christ Jesus' commands, and deny him to be come in the flesh, in life, doctrine, and power. So, we that suffer our goods to be spoiled joyfully, it is for Christ's sake, the unchangeable priest, and for the new covenant's sake, and the new testament's sake. As the Hebrews did, who suffered their goods to be spoiled joyfully [Heb 10:34], and were a gazing-stock [Heb 10:33]; and so we suffer now by the changeable priesthood, which takes tithes, as the people of God did then.

But if we hire any man, and set him at work, we will give him his wages and his meat; but such dissemblers, as say, the scripture is their rule for it, and we neither hired nor set them at work, all such deceivers are denied, who take the scripture words, and make a cloak of them for their covetous practices [2 Pet 2:14]. Nevertheless, if any minister of Jesus Christ, or son, or daughter, or servant, which Jesus Christ sends forth, (who said, 'Freely ye have received, freely give,') comes to our houses, and ministers unto us spiritual things, we will set before him our carnal things; and he that soweth unto us spiritual things, it is the least, that we minister unto him of our carnal things [Rom 15:27].

But he that sueth us at the law for means, and calleth me before courts and sessions, and telleth me, he is a minister of Christ, and Christ sent him, all such evil beasts [Tit 1:12] (as the apostle speaks of) we deny, who mind earthly things, whose god is their belly [Phil 3:19], who serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies [Rom 16:18]. But if any one come into our houses, (as afore-said,) to preach the gospel to us, we shall set before them, and they shall eat freely, as Christ saith, 'Whatsoever they set before you, that eat.' [Luke 10:8; 1 Cor 10:27] But to give tithes to such as do not preach to us spiritual things, but deny Christ come in the flesh [1 Jn 4:3, 2 Jn 1:7], and hold up things in the figure, all such we deny; and for the truth's sake do we suffer by such.

And ye that have bought tithes to get gain thereby, to you we cannot pay tithes; ye are as bad as the priests to hold up such things, as were acted in the figure, and deny Christ come in the flesh. And though ye may say, give Caesar his due, for a cloak, that cloak we deny. Nevertheless, if we be owing any thing to Caesar, or to any ruler, or magistrate, or minister, he shall have his due. So, Caesar shall have his due in his place; and the figure we own in its place, and Christ in his place [Mat 22:21].

G. F.

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