

Epistle 308

by George Fox

George Fox's Epistle 308 calls for a return to the true gospel order and fellowship to prevent apostasy and uphold Christ's government in the church.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:10

Topics: "Gospel Order", "Spiritual Unity"

Description

George Fox preaches about the importance of maintaining the gospel order and fellowship of Christ, emphasizing the need to keep away from false orders and fellowships that lead to apostasy. He urges believers to walk in peace, love, and in the worship of Christ in spirit and truth, staying away from the spirit of Cain, Cora, and Balaam that oppose the power of Christ. Fox encourages ministers to be humble examples and not lords over God's inheritance, highlighting the significance of following Christ's government and gospel order to avoid deception and maintain unity in the spirit.

Transcript

My dear friends in England, and all parts of the word; the gospel, which is the power of God [Rom 1:16], which you have received from the beginning, keep in it, and the fellowship of it; in which there is neither sect nor schism, but an everlasting fellowship, and an everlasting order; which gospel brings life and immortality to light [2 Tim 1:10], in every one of your hearts, and lets you see over him, that hath darkened you. Now every man and woman here, will have a testimony in their own hearts, of this order and fellowship, being heirs and inheritors of it; by which you will see over all the false orders and fellowships, that are or may be set up or made. Therefore it is good for every one to keep their habitation. For those that went in Cain's way [Jude 1:11], (as the apostles' speak of,) they envied the apostles that kept the fellowship. And Cora's way, and Balaam's way [2 Pet 2:15]; these were them that had been great professors, that envied the apostles. For mark, it was the way of such as were of Cain, Cora, and Balaam's spirit, to oppose the power, who were against Abel, and Moses, and the apostles; and so there began the apostacy, and there came up the many orders, amongst them in the apostacy. So that at last the gospel order was lost amongst them, and the government of Christ, and his worship; and the beast was then set up. And therefore now the gospel order is to be set up again, and the government of Christ Jesus, by them that be heirs of him, and of his government, who is first and the last, the beginning and the end [Rev 22:13], of the increase of whose government there is no end [Isa 9:7]. Now, I say, you that be heirs of Christ, possess him, and walk in him; and as you have received him [Col 4:6], so walk all in peace, and love [Eph 5:2], and live in his worship in the spirit and truth [John 4:24], which the devil is out of [John

8:44].

And at your general assemblies of the ministry at London, or elsewhere, examine, as it was at the first, whether all the ministers that go forth into the countries, do walk as becomes the gospel [Phil 1:27]. For that you know was one end of that meeting, to prevent and take away scandal. And to examine, whether all do keep in the government of Christ Jesus, that preach him, and in the order of the gospel, and to exhort them that doth not. For the foundation is already laid, which is Christ [1 Cor 3:11], and his government is set up; of the increase of which there is no end. So had all these called christians, kept in his order, and government, they had not troubled themselves, and others, with so many disorders, if he had been head of their church [Col 1:18]; so if you keep in the gospel order, and government of Christ Jesus, you will keep out of the apostacy, which they have been in, and the many false orders, and governments, that they went into, and made one against another, when they went from the true; as you may see in the scriptures of truth, that it was some high Cain and Cora-like spirits that did so; for Cain was able to build a city [Gen 4:17]. And Cora, that opposed the chief leader Moses, was of the princes of the people [Num 16:1f]. And so these opposed (with their many orders,) the true order. And Balaam, that was able to teach a nation, and prophesy before a king, made the children of Israel to stumble by his bad counsel [Num 22 - 24]. These were men of esteem, these are they the world went after, these came to ride upon the people; and such as these opposed Abel, Moses, and Christ, (the leader and governor,) and his apostles, and set up the many orders, and governments, in their churches, and broke all into sects. And therefore, friends, if you keep under Christ, the governor, who governs his church in righteousness, and who is a prophet, and preacher, and keep in his gospel order; none of these can deceive you, let them come with never so fair pretences. For Christ bruises the serpent's head [Gen 3:15], who is the head of all false teachers [2 Pet 2:1], and false orders, that are not in his power, and is the first and last [Rev 22:13]; and therefore, keep in his power, and in the unity of his spirit, which is the bond of peace [Eph 4:3]. Mark, the pure, holy, eternal, invisible spirit of God, is the bond of peace. Therefore, forfeit not your bond of the Prince of princes; for if you do, you lose your life, and go into death, and into an evil spirit, and break the Prince of princes' peace [Dan 8:25], so that you lose your peace with him Christ Jesus. And therefore it concerns all, that profess themselves to be ministers, to be humble, else they are no learners of Christ; not to be harsh nor high minded [Rom 11:20], but walk as examples [1 Tim 4:12] amongst God's flock, and not to be lords over God's inheritance; but let him be Lord whose right it is [Ezek 21:27], &c.

And you have known the manner of my life, the best part of thirty years, since I went forth, and forsook all things; I sought not myself, I sought you and his glory that sent me; and when I turned you to him, that is able to save you, I left you to him: and my travels have been great, in hungers and colds, when there were few, for the first six or seven years, that I often lay in woods and commons in the night; that many times it was as a by-word, that I would not come into houses, and lie in their beds.

And the prisons have been made my home a great part of my time, and in danger of my life, and in jeopardy daily. And amongst you I have made myself of no reputation [Phil 2:7], to keep the truth up in reputation, as you all very well know it, that be in the fear of God. With the low, I made myself low; and with the weak and feeble, I was as one with them, and condescended to all conditions [Rom 12:16], for the Lord had fitted me so before he sent me forth; and so I passed through great sufferings in my body, as you have been sensible.

And few at the first took care for the establishing men and women's meetings, though they were generally owned when they understood them: but the everlasting God, that sent me forth by his everlasting power, first to declare his everlasting gospel [Rev 14:6], and then after people had received the gospel, I was

moved to go through the nation, to advise them to set up the men's meetings, and the women's, many of which were set up; and I was moved to write to other places, for them to do the like, that kept the power.

And this was the end, that all that had received the gospel, might be possessors of it, and of the gospel order, which is heavenly; and that all that had received Christ Jesus, might so walk in him [Col 2:6], and possess his government in the church, who are members of him the heavenly head. And so men and women being heirs of Christ, they are heirs of him, and of his government: so that men and women may be both possessors of this government; and men and women being heirs of this gospel, might inherit it.

Then men and women are heirs of the order of the gospel, which is from heaven, and not by man, nor of man [Gal 1:11f]; which is an everlasting order, which is from the power of God; for the gospel is called, the everlasting gospel. So that all now in the restoration by Christ Jesus, into the image of God [Col 3:10], may be helps-meet [Gen 2:18,20] in holiness and righteousness [Eph 4:24], as Adam and Eve were in, before they fell; for in the church of Christ, where he is head [Col 1:18], there is his gospel, and his order, and his government; there is his power felt in every one's heart, and there are these offices of admonishing, rebuking, exhorting, reproving, amongst them that are convinced, and converted, by them that are in the power; for there are several states.

So they that would not have people to be admonished [Eccl 4:13], that go under the name of truth, and yet go into sin and wickedness, those are out of the gospel order, and government of Christ Jesus, and of a loose mind themselves, and would be up themselves, and lords. But that spirit is for judgment, for it is out of the power of God, and out of the spirit, in which is the fellowship.

G. F.

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