

Epistle 360

by George Fox

George Fox's sermon emphasizes the vital roles of faithful men and women in nurturing faith and teaching the next generation within the church and families.

Scripture: Galatians 3:29

Topics: "Discipleship Ministry", "Spiritual Leadership"

Description

George Fox preaches about the importance of faithful men and women embodying the characteristics of biblical figures like Abraham, Sarah, Adam, Eve, Dorcas, Phebe, Aquilla, Priscilla, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, Miriam, Huldah, Anna, Hannah, and Deborah, emphasizing the roles of discipleship, ministry, teaching, and prophesying. He highlights the need for elders to be blameless and for all individuals to fulfill their roles in the family and church, following the guidance of the apostles and Christ's teachings. Fox encourages impartial judgment, reconciliation, and the exercise of spiritual gifts in the light of Christ, emphasizing the importance of being faithful stewards of God's grace and preaching the everlasting gospel to all. He concludes with exhortations for believers to stand firm in the image of God, offering spiritual sacrifices, and reigning over darkness in the power of God.

Transcript

All the faithful men and women are to be as Abraham and Sarah; Abraham, the father of the faithful; and Sarah, a mother in Israel [Judg 5:7/2 Sam 20:19], to give suck, and to nourish up the seed, the heir of the promise [Gal 3:29]. Likewise, to be as Adam and Eve, before they fell, meet-helps [Gen 2:18], in the image of God [Gen 1:27], and in the power of God, with which they were to subdue the earth: [Gen 1:28] in which power and image of God, they were not only to subdue the earth, but subdue unrighteousness and all ungodliness [Rom 1:18], and that which they know doth dishonour God [Rom2:23].

And likewise all the faithful women are to be as Dorcas, a disciple of Christ Jesus, that their good works of the spirit and faith may follow them [Acts 9:36-41]: and also they are to be as Phebe, who was a minister of the church at Cencrea; and she was such a faithful trusty minister, that the apostle sent his epistle by her to Rome, from Corinth, with a recommendation of her [Rom 16:1]. And also all the faithful men and women are to be as Aquilla and Priscilla, who were the apostles' fellow-helpers in Christ Jesus [Rom 16:3], and had a church in their house [1 Cor 16:19], and were instructors concerning the things of God, and Christ Jesus, (in his new testament and new covenant,) and of his kingdom: and likewise to be as Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, and other women that were with those

women, who first preached and declared to the apostles the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And Christ said unto those women, 'Go and tell my disciples that I am risen from the dead [Mat 28:5-7];' so these women were the first messengers of the glad tidings. Matt. xxviii. Luke xxiv. Mark xvi. And these tidings did astonish the apostles at first; for they said, 'Certain women of our company, (which were of the disciples,) made us astonished, saying, that Jesus was risen from the dead [Luke 24:22-24];' this two of his disciples said when they were talking with Christ, but they did not perceive it till he opened their eyes [Luke 24:30f], as in Luke xxiv.

So the women continued in their firm belief; and then afterwards the apostles came to believe also. And therefore it is good for every one to have a sense of the resurrection of Christ, and not seek him below [Luke 24:5f]; but seek him above, for he is risen from the dead, and lives, and sits at the right hand of the living God. And also all the faithful are to be as Miriam the prophetess, to encourage the church, and praise God [Exo 15:20f]. And also to be as Huldah the prophetess, who instructed the king, his princes, and priests, in the law of God, and the old covenant [2 Ki 22:14-20].

So they should be much more diligent to teach and instruct in the new covenant, and testament, which doth exceed the old in its glory [2 Cor 3:9]. And also to be as Anna the prophetess, an ancient woman of eighty-four years old; and she gave thanks, and spake of Christ to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem [Luke 2:36-38]; and so here was a general and a public preaching of Christ Jesus. And also to be as Hannah, in the Old Testament, who consecrated her son Samuel unto the Lord; and the Lord accepted her prayers, tears, and offerings [1 Sam 1:9-28].

So she had not a mind to let him run wild. And likewise as Deborah, who was a prophetess in the old covenant, and a judge in Israel. What victories, with outward weapons, the Lord did give her, and how she praised the Lord [Judg 4 - 5], which was by faith, in the time of the old covenant. But in the time of the new covenant the true believers wrestle not with flesh and blood, but are all to be diligent in the spiritual judgment and warfare in the spiritual Israel [Eph 6:12].

And the apostle writes to Titus, how he had left him in Crete, that 'he should set in order the things that were wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as he had appointed him [Tit 1:5].' And after he had spoken many things to Titus concerning overseers and teachers, that they must be blameless [Tit 1:7]; he saith, that the aged men must be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, and in patience [Tit 2:2]. And the aged women likewise, that 'they be in behaviour, as becomes holiness, not false accusers, &c. but to be teachers of good things; and that they teach the younger women to be sober, to love their husbands, and to love their children, and to be chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient, &c. that the word of God be not blasphemed [Tit 2:3-5].'

And likewise Titus was to exhort the young men to be sober-minded [Tit 2:6]. And here you may see the apostle, who did forbid one sort of women to be teachers, who were usurpers of authority [1 Tim 2:12], which both the law and the gospel forbids; yet the law, and Christ, and the apostles in the gospel, encouraged the honourable women to preach and to teach. For Christ sent the faithful women to declare and preach his resurrection to his disciples [Mat 28:4-8]; and likewise the apostle encouraged the aged, and honourable, and faithful women to prophesy and teach, and to be teachers of good things, as before.

That is his charge to them in general. Then he comes to particulars, charging them, that 'they should teach the young women to be sober and discreet, chaste, and good, to love their husbands, and their children, that the word of God be not blasphemed.' So these were to be as mothers to the younger women, and

were public women in their public services, and charge that was committed to them. And a bishop, and an elder, or a deacon, was to order and rule well his own house, and to have his children in subjection, with all gravity.

For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? [1 Tim 3:4f] So every man and woman is to teach, instruct, and order their own children and families, as the Jews did in the old covenant [Gen 18:19]; then much more they should train them up in the new covenant, which exceeds the old; so that in all things they might give thanks and praises to God, that in all things the Lord might be glorified in all their families. So all christian families are concerned in these particular services, before they come to the general service, (to wit,) to be overseers and ministers, faithful men as fathers, and faithful women as mothers, and teachers of good things; and the young men and women as brethren and sisters in purity [1 Tim 5:2].

And so let none spoil their families with bad lives, and unruly tongues [Jas 3:8], with letting the poison of asp's be under their tongue [Rom 3:13], by which they spoil and corrupt their families; which begets into a loose and bad language; but that is to be bridled by the word of God: for 'a soft tongue breaketh the bone [Prov 25:15],' 'the tongue of the just is as choice silver [Prov 10:20], and the tongue of the just is health [Prov 12:18], and useth knowledge aright [Prov 15:2], and a wholesome tongue is a tree of life [Prov 15:4]; and who keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from trouble [Prov 21:23].'

And after that Solomon had spoken of a virtuous woman, he saith, 'In her tongue is the law of kindness, and her children rise up, and call her blessed; and her husband also praises her [Prov 31:26,28].' He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear. And therefore all are to keep in this law of kindness, and there your candle doth not go out by night [Prov 31:18], and your virtue will flow; for 'the hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness [Prov 16:31];' and, 'better is he that rules over his own spirit, than he that takes a city [Prov 16:32]; for he that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, without walls [Prov 25:28];' then the security and strength are gone.

And therefore let every one keep his own little city with the spirit and power of God, by which you have power over your own spirits; and then the power of God is your strength, and keeps you safe in it, that be led by the spirit of God [Rom 8:14].

And so that all men and women may exercise their talent [Mat 25:14-30], their gift that God hath given them, in the 'true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world [John 1:9];' that is the light in Christ, that they may become children of the light [John 12:36], and grafted into Christ [Rom 11:17], and walk as children of the light and of the day [Eph 5:8/1 Th 5:5]. And that all may profit in the manifestation of the spirit that God hath given them [1 Cor 12:7]; and be led by the spirit, that you all may be the sons and daughters of God [Rom 8:14] in this day of his new covenant, and new testament, wherein God poureth forth of his spirit upon all flesh [Joel 2:28], which none are to grieve, vex, nor quench, nor rebel against [Eph 4:30/1 Th 5:19/Isa 63:10], but obey it. And 'the grace of God that brings salvation hath appeared unto all men,' to teach them to live godly, righteously, and soberly, and to deny ungodliness and unrighteousness [Tit 2:11f]. And therefore all are to be faithful stewards of this grace of God, which teaches them, and brings them their salvation. For the apostle saith, 'As every one hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God [1 Pet 4:10], that the God of all grace [1 Pet 5:10], and Christ by whom it comes, may be glorified in all his people, who gives unto them freely the spiritual and heavenly gifts.' And the gospel of peace and glad tidings, [Rom 10:15] God and Christ hath sent to be preached to every creature under heaven [Col 1:23]. And all you

that have received it, by which life and immortality are brought to light [2 Tim 1:10] in you, by which you see over him that hath darkened you; by the everlasting gospel [Rev 14:6], the power of God [Rom 1:16], and are come to be heirs of this everlasting gospel, the power of God, so you are heirs of the everlasting order of the gospel; for the power of God is the order and authority of all your meetings. This everlasting gospel, the power of God, is an unlimited order; and this glorious order of the gospel, the power of God, is beyond the order of Aaron [Heb 7:11], and beyond all the orders of the heathen. And the power of God cannot be limited, though it may limit that which is contrary to it, and out of the truth. So our order and government are of Christ, and his gospel, and in his light, and holy spirit, and we are heirs of it, being heirs of Christ, and grafted into him by belief; and all his sons and daughters do know his glorious liberty [Rom 8:21], and their rest in him. For we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we can cry Abba, Father; for the spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ [Rom 8:15-17].

And now, friends, (as I said before,) train up all your children in the fear of God [Prov 22:6/Psa 34:11], in this new covenant of light and grace, that they may know Christ, who is their baptizer and circumciser; and he sprinkles your consciences and hearts with his blood to cleanse you from all sin [Heb 10:22/1Jn 1:7], and the Lord writes his heavenly law in their hearts [Jer 31:33], that they may obey it and do it. And cannot you train up all your children in the fear of God, and tell them from whence you have all these good things, that they may come to receive of all these good things which you receive from the good God, and Christ the treasure of wisdom and knowledge [Col 2:3], that you may say, the children of your children are the crown of your old men in the truth, and the glory of their fathers in God [Prov 17:6]; and that you may say, your wives are as fruitful vines by the sides of your house, and your children like olive plants round about your table [Psa 128:3]. Thus shall they be blessed, that fear the Lord; that you may say, your sons are plants of God, growing up in their youth, and that your daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace; and that your garners are full, and afford all manner of store, so that there is no complaining in your streets: and 'happy is that people whose God is the Lord [Psa 144:12-15].'

And now, my friends, if there happen any difference among Friends, either with Friends or the world, let it be put to reference, if it cannot be ended between themselves: and all that are concerned to end any difference, let them have but one ear to one party, and let them reserve the other ear to hear the other party; so that they may judge impartially of matters, without affection or favour, or respect of persons. For you may see how the Jews in the old covenant did judge of things among themselves, as long as they kept the law of God, and did not go to other nations, or to the heathens, for them to judge of their matters; and therefore the apostle reproves the Corinthians for that fault, 'for going to law one with another before unbelievers [1 Cor 6:6],' and told them, that 'the saints should judge the word,' yea, angels; and then how much more might they judge of things appertaining to this life?

And therefore the apostle exhorted, 'If then ye have judgment of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge that are least esteemed in the church [1 Cor 6:2-4]:' and Christ saith, 'If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone; if he should hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother: but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established: and if he neglect to hear them, tell it to the church; and if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen and a publican.

Verily I say unto you, whatsoever is bound on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven [Mat 18:15-18]. And farther Christ said, 'If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in

heaven: for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them [Mat 18:19f].’ Matt. xviii. And Christ saith, ‘If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him: and if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times, if he turn again, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him [Luke 18:3f].’

Luke xvii. Here you may see what instructions Christ, (who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords [Rev 19:16],) gives to his church, and much more, which is too large to write. And they had elders in the old covenant then; much more ought there to be elders in the new covenant, which are grown in the truth. And they had the assemblies of the women in the law [Exo 38:8], who were concerned in the things about the figures and shadows, and they wrought about the holy things, and they brought of their clean things to be offered [Exo 35:25f]; all which Christ, the Holy One, hath abolished, and put an end to in the old covenant.

So, much more the believers in Christ, in the new testament, in the time of the gospel, are to have their assemblies and meetings; besides their instructing and looking into their own families, whether they walk in the fear of God. And then after, in the general service of the church of God, the aged men, and aged women in the truth, are to be teachers of good things [Tit 2:3], as the Lord shall order them with his spirit, to teach and instruct [Neh 9:20], exhort, admonish, reprove, rebuke [2 Tim 4:2], with the holy spirit; for the least member hath an office [Rom 12:4], and every believer in the light, (which is the life in Christ,) is a member of Christ’s church, and grafted into him [Rom 11:17]; and so he is the holy head of the church [Col 1:18], and they are heirs of his order, and of his government, of the increase of which there is no end [Isa 9:7], in his eternal power and spirit.

For the faithful men and women that are restored into the image of God [Col 3:10], by Christ Jesus, as Adam and Eve were in before they fell, they were meet-helps in righteousness, and in the image of God, and in Christ Jesus; yea, they were meet-helps [Gen 2:18] one to another; and Christ makes them as kings and priests [Rev 1:7] to reign upon the earth, over the serpent and the devil, the destroyer, in the power of God, which was before he was, in which is the holy order. And they that offer the spiritual sacrifices [1 Pet 2:5] to God, and are his heavenly witnesses, stand for God and Christ, and his righteousness, in his light and life, by which they are grafted into Christ; and so by and in his power, light, and life stand over death, and darkness, and the prince and power of it [Col 1:13/Heb 2:14/Eph 2:2], and in it reign over him. And so do praise God, and his son that liveth for ever, and sing Hallelujah.

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