

Epistle 380

by George Fox

George Fox's sermon emphasizes the critical importance of truthfulness and integrity in the lives of Christians, urging them to honor their words and commitments.

Scripture: Proverbs 23:23, Zechariah 8:16, Matthew 5:33, Luke 16:10, Romans 4:21, 1 Corinthians 6:20, Ephesians 4:15, Philippians 4:8, Hebrews 12:22, James 5:12

Topics: "Faithfulness", "Truthfulness"

Description

George Fox emphasizes the importance of being truthful and faithful in all aspects of life, urging believers to let their 'yea be yea, and nay, nay' as taught by Christ and the apostles, avoiding rash promises and covenant breaking. He highlights the need for Christians to speak the truth in love, work righteousness, and walk uprightly, reflecting God's faithfulness and truthfulness. Fox stresses the significance of being faithful in both small and large matters, as it reflects one's faithfulness to God and opens the way for heavenly riches.

Transcript

All my dearly beloved friends and brethren every where, the Lord God Almighty, with his holy power and spirit, hath gathered, and kept, and preserved you to this day a people to himself. And now, dear friends and brethren, in all your words, in all your business and employments, have a care of breaking your words and promises to any people; but that you may, (before you make any promises to any man or woman,) consider before hand, that you may be able to perform and fulfil both your words and promises [Rom 4:21] to all people, that you make your promises, or give your word unto. And that your yea be yea, and nay, nay, in all things, which Christ hath set up instead of an oath [Mat 5:33-37]; yea, above an oath and swearing, in his new covenant and testament. And the apostle James holds forth the same doctrine [Jas 5:12]. And this yea, yea, and nay, nay, was set up when they forbid all oaths and swearing. And therefore every one's yea should be yea, and every one's nay should be nay, and so to stand. . . .

So that none make any promise, or speak yea, yea, or nay, nay, rashly, which they cannot perform: for such kind of inconsiderate and rash speaking is not in the everlasting covenant of light, life, and grace [Isa 42:6/Mal 2:5]. Take heed, lest you be numbered among the covenant breakers [Rom 1:31], spoken of, Rom. i. 31. and such truce-breakers [2 Tim 3:3], which the apostle speaks of, 2 Tim. iii. 'Which have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof; from such turn away [2 Tim 3:5],' saith the apostle.

And therefore they that deny the power of godliness, will not be faithful to God nor man; and such cannot exercise a good conscience to God [1 Pet 3:21], in obedience to him, nor to man, to perform that which is just, righteous, and honest. Therefore the apostle exhorts the christians in the New Testament, to 'speak the truth in love [Eph 4:15], and to put away lying, and to speak every man the truth to his neighbour [Eph 4:25].' Eph. iv. 15.25. And David saith, 'Who shall abide in thy tabernacle, and who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart [Psa 15:1f] but they that speak vanity, every one to his neighbour, with flattering lips and a double heart, the Lord shall cut off [Psa 12:2f].' And Solomon, speaking of wisdom, says, 'My mouth shall speak truth, and wickedness is an abomination to my lips [Prov 8:7].' And James says, in his general epistle, 'So speak ye, and so do [Jas 2:12],' &c. So see here how certain and steadfast the holy men of God would have God's people to be in their words and doings.

And also James was careful, that the saints in their very outward dealings were to be just, and reprov'd such for saying, 'To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain: whereas they did not know what should be on the morrow. But they ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that [Jas 4:13-15].' Therefore you may see how careful the apostle was, to keep all true christians in the fear of the Lord, and in the sense of his will.

God is true and faithful to his people in all generations; and so he would have his people to be true and faithful to him, and to one another, and to all men in his spirit and truth. And Christ saith, 'He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much [Luke 16:10].' And further he saith, 'If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, or riches, who will commit unto you the true riches? [Luke 16:11]' Therefore there must be a justness and faithfulness in the outward riches between man and man, if you will have a place in your hearts for the true heavenly riches: the inward faithfulness to God bringeth forth faithfulness to men in outward things.

And as the apostle said to the saints, 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things [Phil 4:8]:' which are very good things to be minded, thought upon, and practised by the church of Christ. The Lord saith by Zechariah, 'These are the things that ye shall do: speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour, execute the judgment of truth and peace in the gates [Zech 8:16].'

Again, 'Therefore, saith the Lord, I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, a holy mountain [Zech 8:3].' And if outward Jerusalem was called so in the days of the old testament, surely much more is heavenly Jerusalem, in the new covenant and testament, called 'the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem [Heb 12:22]:' into which nothing that is unclean can enter [Rev 21:27]; but all the believers in the light, and the children of the light [John 12:36], enter into it, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life [Rev 21:27]; and are to walk in truth and righteousness, and speak the truth every man to his neighbour, according to the apostle's doctrine.

And so, as every one hath received Christ Jesus, who is the truth, walk in him the truth, and speak the truth, as it is in Jesus [Eph 4:21]. 'For you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are his [1 Cor 6:20]'. . . .

And do not slight the form of sound words [2 Tim 1:13] in truth: you who have bought the truth, do not sell it [Prov 23:23]. And 'he that orders his conversation aright shall see the salvation of God [Psa 50:23].' And the apostle says to the Phillippians, 'Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ [Phil 1:27]:' for the apostle says, 'our conversation is in heaven [Phil 3:20],' where must be the conversation of all the true followers of Christ, that are built upon him the rock [Mat 7:24f] and foundation, who is from above. And the Lord God establish all his people upon this rock and foundation which standeth sure [2 Tim 2:19], that upon him they may stand fast with the grace and truth that come from him [John 1:17]. Amen.

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