

# Epistle 389

by George Fox

---

*The sermon emphasizes the importance of avoiding evil company, purifying the church, and living a life of diligence in piety, as well as caring for widows and adorning oneself with modest apparel.*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 5:9

**Topics:** "Church Purity", "Separation from Sin"

---

## Description

George Fox emphasizes the necessity of maintaining purity within the church, urging believers to avoid fellowship with those who engage in sinful behaviors, even if they are considered brothers or sisters in Christ. He references various scriptures to illustrate that the church must be kept clean, and that believers should separate themselves from unclean actions and individuals, both within and outside the church. Fox highlights the importance of living a life of sincerity and truth, and the need for diligence in serving God and caring for one another, particularly in the context of family and community. He warns against the dangers of idleness and the influence of worldly behaviors, calling for a commitment to godliness and purity in all aspects of life.

---

## Transcript

The apostle saith to the church of Christ, 'I wrote unto you an epistle, not to keep company with fornicators; yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, nor with the covetous, extortioners, idolaters, &c. For then ye must needs go out of the world [1 Cor 5:9f].' 1 Cor. v. 'But now I have written unto you, not to keep company; if any man that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, &c. with such an one, no not to eat [1 Cor 5:11].' Therefore you see all such are to be avoided, as knowing, 'neither fornicators, adulterers, effeminate, and abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God [1 Cor 6:9f].' So ye may see, all such workers you are not to keep company with, nor so much as to eat with them, though they have gone under the notion of brothers and sisters. So the camp of God must be kept clean of such [Deut 23:14]; for the feast must be kept with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth [1 Cor 5:8]. So the old leaven must be purged out [1 Cor 5:7]; 'For a little leaven leavens the whole lump [1 Cor 5:6].' And therefore ye must be a new lump, as ye are leavened by it; 'For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us [1 Cor 5:7].' Therefore, (as I said before,) let us keep the feast with sincerity and truth.

And the apostle saith, 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? And what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? (mark, part,) and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you, and I will be a father unto you, (that is, take care for you,) and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty [2 Cor 6:14-18].'

And therefore if God's sons and daughters, must be separated from all such things without, and not to touch them, neither to have an agreement of unity with them, nor be yoked with such actions and actors without, and not touch such as act such things. Then, are they not to be separated from all such actions and actors within, and not to touch such as act such things, though he be called a brother or sister, seeing such actions make them infidels, and like Belial, and bring them into darkness? And if there be no fellowship, communion, yoking or agreement with such actions and actors without, then what yoking, communion, or fellowship and agreement, (mark, agreement,) can there be with such as act such things within, that is called a brother or sister, or keep company with such, or eat with such, 'that have a form of godliness, but deny the power [2 Tim 3:5]?'

Therefore such lepers that defy the camp of God ought to be turned out of it [Num 5:2], till they be healed and cleansed from such leprosies [Lev 14]; as knowing that such actions and actors are out of the kingdom of God, and out of the holy city, new and heavenly Jerusalem [Rev 21:2]. And no unclean thing comes into the kingdom of God, nor enters the kingdom, the holy city [Rev 21:27]. And none come into the holy city, but by repentance, and being turned and changed from all manner of evil and uncleanness whatsoever.

The adulterer is brought to a morsel of bread [Prov 6:26], and the slothful goes in rags [Prov 23:21]. But the virtuous are happy, and the diligent are rich [Prov 10:4] that serve the Lord. Therefore have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them [Eph 5:11]. For the church of Christ's fellowship, (that are the believers,) is in the light, which is the life in Christ. And so their fellowship is with the Father and the son [1 Jn 1:3], and their communion is in the holy ghost [2 Cor 13:14], which proceeds from the Father [John 15:26] and the son. And therefore the church of Christ is to abstain from every appearance of evil [1 Th 5:22]. And if they are to abstain from every appearance of evil, then they cannot join or have unity with them, where evil appears.

And again, the apostle saith to the church of the Thessalonians, that they were to 'study to be quiet, and to do their own business, and to work with their own hands, and to walk honestly towards them that are without; and that ye may have lack of nothing [1 Th 4:11f].' So here you may see the diligence in the truth that the apostle exhorted the church to practise. First, they are all to study to be quiet. Secondly, they are all to do their own business, and work with their own hands, that they may lack nothing. And thirdly, to walk honestly towards them that are without. And if they walk honestly towards them that are without, they must walk honestly to them that are within. For the apostle had some occasion to write to the Thessalonians upon the matter. For saith he, 'We hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread [1 Th 3:11f]. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, &c. and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother [1 Th 3:14f].' You may see there were not those gross evils charged upon him as were upon some among the Corinthians. So you may see the apostle's care in the church of Christ was to keep all things clean and pure, and all diligent in their

places, serving the Lord, and not to be busy bodies, and talkers about other men's business; but to be quiet, and not idle, but doing their own business, that they may lack nothing; and so eat their own bread natural and spiritual.

Now the apostle speaks of widows, in his first Epistle to Timothy, chap. v. what sort of widows they were to receive. And ye may see first the decent and lovely practice in the church of Christ: 'Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father, and younger men as brethren; and the elder women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, with all purity [1 Tim 5:1f].' So are these to be entreated; 'and honour widows, that are widows indeed. And if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn, (mark, learn,) first to show piety at home, and requite their parents; for that is good and acceptable before God [1 Tim 5:3f].' So this piety must be learned and showed at home; and these the widows must learn to look to. Here these widow women have a service; and in the first place they must 'learn to show piety at home, and to their parents and nephews, and to show it abroad then in the church of Christ.' So all must learn this lesson, to show piety to their children and nephews, and to requite their parents. For this practice and service is good and acceptable before God.

Now the state of desolate widows, she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. These things give in charge, that they may be blameless. But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel [1 Tim 5:5-8], (mark! that is worse than the world.) For the faith brings every man and every widow to be diligent, and to provide for their own; that is, their children and nephews, or kindred and parents, as before. But the apostle says, especially those of his own house. And so here is piety to be shown still two ways; 'for his own, and especially to those of his own house or family;' and here are nephews and parents, as before mentioned.

Again the apostle saith, 'Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old [1 Tim 5:9],' &c. Mark, here was a number that the widow was to be taken into; and the widow that was to be taken into this number, see her qualifications before she come into the number. She must be well reported of for good works: 'If she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work [1 Tim 5:10],' &c. These are the qualified widows that are to be taken into the number. So here was a great practice, and a diligence in piety for this woman to do, before she was received into the number of the faithful. 'But,' says the apostle, 'the younger refuse; for when they begin to wax wanton against Christ, &c. they cast off their first faith [1 Tim 5:11f], and withal, they learn to be idle;' so they forsake to learn and show piety, and to live in that; and so do not learn to be diligent; and wander about from house to house, and not only idle, but tattlers and busy bodies, speaking things they ought not [1 Tim 5:13]. And therefore such things were, and are to be reprov'd; such as these were not to be received, and taken into the number of the faithful, but to be refused.

And again the apostle saith, 'I will therefore, that ye younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully [1 Tim 5:14].'

And the apostle says, 'If any man or woman that believeth, have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve those that are widows indeed [1 Tim 5:16].' So here you may see the care, piety, and duty; if either man or woman that believes, have widows, they are to relieve them, and not let the church of Christ be charged with them. So let men and women learn to show piety to

widows, to nephews, and to parents.

And the apostle saith to Timothy, 'I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another; do nothing by partiality [1 Tim 5:21], lay hands suddenly on no man [1 Tim 5:22].' So here you may see the apostle's care in the church of Christ, who would have all to be exercised in truth and piety, and be diligent in their service, that truth requireth of them.

And then again, the apostle speaks of such as are lovers of themselves, covetous, proud, boasters, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy [2 Tim 3:2], without natural affections, (to wit, to husband, or wife, children, parents, or others,) and likewise, truce-breakers, which break their covenant or promises in their marriages, with God and with man; and so likewise, break their truce and covenant with men in outward things; and also, such as are false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of them that are good [2 Tim 3:3], such are not like to be subject to the good spirit of God in themselves; and traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God [2 Tim 3:4], having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away [2 Tim 3:5], says the apostle. Now if they were to turn away from them, they were not to be heeded, though they had the form of godliness, and of christianity; if they were to turn away from them, they were not to receive them into the camp; for such are as lepers are to be turned away from. And therefore the camp of God must be kept clean [Num 5:2]. And Christ hath given authority to his church to admonish and exhort, and to reprove and rebuke all such things with authority [2 Tim 4:2/Tit 2:15].

& #160; ; 0; 60;

Now, friends, concerning putting on of apparel. The apostle in the spirit and power of Christ had a care in the church of God, that they should adorn themselves as becomes the gospel, with chaste lives and conversations [1 Pet 3:2], and with the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; which is in the sight of God of a great price [1 Pet 3:4]. This is that which arrays and beautifies God's church; and not the outward adorning and plaiting the hair [1 Pet 3:3], and every new fashion that comes up into the world. 1 Pet. iii. And also the apostle writes to Timothy, and gives him that exhortation to the church, 'That women adorn themselves with modest apparel, (mark, modest,) with shamefacedness and sobriety, (mark, sobriety,) not with brodered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array [1 Tim 2:9]. For that was the practice of the Jew outward, and is to this day; but with that which becomes women professing godliness, with good works [1 Tim 2:10]. So this is the adorning that all that profess godliness must be arrayed withal. 1 Tim. ii. 9. So that all may be in that good behaviour, as becomes godliness and holiness. And likewise chaste and discreet, teachers of good things; that the word of God may not be blasphemed [Tit 2:3/5], which they profess; as in Tit. ii.

And it is desired, that all Friends, that have children, families, and servants, may train them up in the pure and unspotted religion [Jas 1:27], and in the nurture and fear of God; and that frequently they read the holy scriptures, which is much better than to be gadding abroad. And exhort and admonish them; that every family apart may serve and worship the Lord, as well as in public. And that when they go to meetings, they may take their servants and families with them, that they may not go wandering up and down in the fields, or to ale-houses, as many have done, to the dishonour of God [Rom 2:23], and to the dishonour of their masters' and mistresses' families, and to their own ruin and destruction. And therefore, for Christ's sake and his pure religion, let there be care taken, to prevent all these things. For such an one as cannot rule well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity, how can he take care

of the church of God [1 Tim 3:4f]. 1 Tim. iii.

And now, friends, concerning marriages, of which very many things have been written, it is desired that all may be careful in that thing, of running hastily together. And consider it first; that first, as it is God's joining [Mat 19:6], so it is his ordinance, and it is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled [Heb 13:4]. And again, such men as draw out young women's affections, and run from one to another; and leave them, and run to others. And such women as draw out men's affections, and then leave them, and draw out other men's affections: . . . such actions are to be reprov'd, that they may be brought into chastity, virtue, and piety, and to the adorning the hidden man of the heart, which is not corruptible, and the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit [1 Pet 3:4]; which ornament or adorning is acceptable with the Lord. For after this manner, in old time, the holy women, who trusted in God, adorned themselves [1 Pet 3:5].

And likewise such, as after they are married break their covenant in marriage, such go from the spirit of God, and his joining, and from the spiritual society of God's people, and their unity and fellowship. Such are to be reprov'd by the spirit of God. And if they do not return after reproof, Friends cannot have unity or fellowship with them, but turn away from them; though they may have the form of godliness, and have been called a sister or a brother, but have denied the power of godliness [2 Tim 3:5]. Therefore all must abide in Christ the vine, if they bring forth fruit [John 15:4f] to the glory and praise of God. Amen.

The apostle says, 'Now, we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly [2 Th 3:6],' &c. 2 Thess. iii.

Now, dear friends, consider old Eli's case, who did admonish his children [1 Sam 2:22-25]; but because he did not restrain them from the follies and the evils they run into, therefore the Lord brought his judgments upon him, that he lost his children's lives, and his priesthood, and his own life [1 Sam 3:12-14, 4:11-18]. And do you think, that this was not written for an example, that others should be warned, hear, and fear? And was not the gospel and the law given forth to restrain people from sin and evil, and such things as dishonour God?

G. F.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/george-fox/epistle-389/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**