



The Golden Sayings of Epictetus

Epictetus (AD c. 55 - 135) Translated by Hastings Crossley

Read by:	Multiple readers	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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The Golden Sayings of Epictetus is a collection of almost 300 aphorisms culled from his *Discourses* and the *Enchiridion*. There are no known written works by Epictetus. His discourses were transcribed by his pupil Arrian, who wrote them down from memory after lessons “to preserve it as a memorial, for my own future use, of his way of thinking and the frankness of his speech.” The compilation of discourses ran to eight books, of which four have survived. The *Enchiridion* is a handbook or digest of the contents of the *Discourses*. One should think of the *Golden Sayings* as a further distillation of the *Discourses*.

Epictetus was a philosopher in the Stoic school. He made a core distinction between things within our power and things over which we have no power. He held that the basis of philosophy is self-knowledge, and that the only things within our power or those we generate from within – impulses, opinions, desires and aversions, which he groups together as “opinions”. Everything else is out of our control and subject to fate. Good and evil rests in the power of choice. Reason alone is good; one should understand not only what to do, but why. Application of reason in the choice of action over things within our power is path to finding peace of mind in all things.

The philosophy of Epictetus as embodied in the *Golden Sayings* has been an influence on and inspiration to leaders in all walks of life, from the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius to James Joyce, J.D. Salinger, Tom Wolfe and David Mamet in more modern times.

Epictetus (AD 55–135) was a Greek sage and Stoic philosopher. He was born a slave at Hierapolis, Phrygia, now Pamukkale, Turkey. His given name is unknown; the name Epictetus means “acquired”. As a youth he served as a slave to a freedman, Epaphroditos, who was a secretary to the Roman emperor Nero. He was disabled from an early age, which may have factored in his being allowed by his master to follow his passion for philosophy. His education gave him respectability. When he was freed in 68 AD after Nero’s death he taught philosophy in Rome. He fled Rome and founded a school of philosophy in Nicopolis in Greece about 93 AD when the emperor banished all philosophers from the city. As befits his philosophy, he lived a solitary, simple and life until his old age, when he adopted and raised a friend’s child otherwise fated to die. He died in or about 135 AD.