

18th Century: Revolution and Revival

by Alan Cairns

The 18th century was a time of revolution and revival, marked by the work of key figures such as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and the Wesley brothers, who emphasized the importance of preaching and the power of the gospel.

Duration: 1:05:59

Scripture: Isaiah 51:1, Isaiah 51:9

Topics: "Revival History"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of preaching the word of God. He shares an anecdote about a television producer who was surprised by the length of his sermon, highlighting the prevailing attitude towards preaching in England. The preacher compares the perception of preaching as foolishness in the days of the apostles, Whitfield, Wesley, and Edwards, to the present day. He also mentions the powerful impact of George Whitfield's preaching, describing how he was able to vividly portray heaven, hell, and the day of judgment, leading to filled churches and revival in New England. The sermon encourages a renewed focus on the power and significance of preaching the gospel.

Transcript

Isaiah chapter 51, reading together the first eleven verses of the chapter. We read this because this evening we come to one of the millennial milestone messages I have been doing throughout this year, and as Dr. Barrett intimated, we come to deal tonight with the 18th century. I must confess that it's one that perplexes me greatly to deal with, not because there's too little to deal with, but because there's too much.

When you stop to think of the many things that occurred during that century, when you consider some of the personnel God raised in the church of Christ, some of the names, some of them very well known, some of them not so well known, and that's to our shame and it is our loss, but when you think of these names and think of the works that God did, obviously it is very, very difficult to pick and choose, and therefore the temptation for the preacher is always going to be to try to include as many as possible in the broadest possible sweep, and that has its own peculiar pitfalls, to say nothing about certain parts of your anatomy that may become a little sore than they were from prolonged contact with a but we will do our best to deal adequately and perhaps more suggestively than exhaustively with this millennial milestone as we come to the 18th century.

We're reading in Isaiah 41, the first 11 verses, hearken to me, Isaiah 51 I should say, my apologies, Isaiah 51, the first 11 verses, hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord, look unto the rock whence ye are hewn and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged, look unto Abraham your father and unto Sarah that bear you, for I called him alone and blessed him and increased him, for the Lord shall comfort Zion, he will comfort all her waste places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden and her desert like the garden of the Lord, joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody, hearken unto me, my people and give ear unto me, O my nation, for a law shall proceed from me and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people, my righteousness is near, my salvation has gone forth and mine arms shall judge the people, the eyes shall wait upon me and on mine arms shall they trust, lift up your eyes to the heavens and look upon the earth beneath, for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke and the earth shall wax old like a garment and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner, but my salvation shall be forever and my righteousness shall not be abolished, hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law, fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings, for the moth shall eat them up like a garment and the worm shall eat them like wool, but my righteousness shall be forever and my salvation from generation to generation, awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord, awake as in the ancient days in the generations of old, art thou not it that hath cut Rahab and wounded the dragon, art thou not it which hath dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransom to pass over, therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion and everlasting joy shall be upon their head, they shall obtain gladness and joy and sorrow and mourning shall flee away, amen, the Lord will add his own blessing to the reading of his precious word for his name's sake, if there is one verse that I would use to sum up the message of this evening and all our study of the work of God in the century that we'll be considering tonight, it would be verse 9 of Isaiah 51, awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord, awake as in the ancient days in the generations of old, perhaps the simplest way of summing up the entire 18th century is the surest way after all, it was the century of revolution and revival, in the case of the United States, the revival preceded the revolution and in the view of many, I think correctly, cleared the way for the revolution.

In France, by stark contrast, the revival was conspicuous by its absence and there the revolution dethroned both the Roman Catholic Church and the monarchy and set the nation upon a course of years of bloodshed, war and tyranny.

In the United Kingdom, the revival cleared the way for a revolution of an altogether different kind. When you look at the living conditions of many of the masses in Britain and in France in the 18th century, you'll find that they were very much the same, while there were differences in the actual political and monarchical system, nonetheless the down on the ground living conditions of the people were very very similar and you would have to say that the conditions which led the French to such extremes of bloodshed and the reign of terror etc. existed in England and yet that scenario never took place in England.

It will be my contention, and I am certainly not the first to make it, that the major reason for that difference was the great spiritual awakening, the revival with which God visited England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales in the 18th century. The revivals in America and Britain were very closely linked, they were linked in their doctrine, that may come as a shock because there were both Calvinists and Armenians preaching in this revival. In England, as Whitfield spent more and more of his energies on the American scene, in England the leadership of the great awakening fell into the hands of the Wesley brothers, who were of course evangelical Armenians.

In the United States, most of the preaching and most of the revival work was under the ministry of very strong Calvinists, Jonathan Edwards being the outstanding example and Whitfield of course another outstanding example, and I mention others as we go along this evening. But you would be foolish to emphasize the difference in theological system and be blinded to the basic unity of doctrine. Now, the great doctrines that fired the revival, both in America and in Britain, were the doctrines of vital evangelical religion, that is emphasizing the great fundamentals of the faith, the deity of Christ, the Trinitarian nature of God, the absolute inspiration and authority of scripture, the atoning sacrifice and bodily resurrection of Christ, and then the peculiar tenets of the Protestant Reformation, justification by faith alone, the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit to regenerate a soul.

And while the Arminianism of the Wesleys and the Calvinism of Edwards and Whitfield led them to express the necessity of the work of the Spirit in different terms, you would be amazed at how much common ground there was because even Wesley believed that the prevenient grace, as he would call it, of the Holy Spirit was necessary before a sinner could exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There was a tremendous emphasis upon the necessity of regeneration. The emphasis in the preaching in the great revivals of the 18th century was upon bringing doctrine to the level of real experience.

That was the key to the entire movement. They lived in a day of great spiritual deadness. There was a lot of heresy, but there was also a lot of dead orthodoxy, where people knew how to dot every I and cross every T, and yet they were as cold as ice.

Religion was a matter of the mind. If there was one word that people hated to have applied to them, it was the word enthusiast. That was a word in the 18th century that had the connotation of a wild fanatic.

In fact, it had in it more than fanaticism. To be an enthusiast was to be worse than the worms of the earth. It was to be worse than the dogs outside a camp.

To be an enthusiast was to be practically the mouthpiece of the devil, a delusionist, and a threat to the well-being of both church and state. And yet, if anybody showed any fervor in the things of God, he was an enthusiast. I was rather, and I have to confess I didn't know this before, having lived all the years I did in Britain, where horse racing is a religion.

I didn't know if you knew that. More people go to horse races in one week than go to church in a year in England, but that's by the way. I didn't realize that it was at the beginning of this century that Queen Anne introduced a national lottery.

That Queen Anne introduced two, if my memory is right, of the great horse racing events in England. Events that are still big time sporting events to this day. Now you could be as enthusiastic as you like about somebody beating the hind quarter of a horse to make it get a nose in front of another horse to reach a certain point in a field.

That was intellectually acceptable. But to rejoice that your sins were forgiven. To rejoice that you knew God in Jesus Christ.

That it was well with your soul. That was enthusiasm, delusion, a hateful and despicable thing. That was the mindset that was challenged in both America and Britain by the preachers in the great revivals.

They stormed the ice cold battlements of logic. Not that they were illogical. They were the most logical of men.

If you've ever read any of Wesley's sermons you'll know just how logical. But they stormed those ice cold battlements of dead logic with the fire of the gospel that sets man free. They were united in fundamental doctrine.

They were united in method. The method was preaching. They took very seriously that God has ordained preaching for the furtherance of the gospel.

It pleased God, said the apostle, by the foolishness of preaching to see of them that believe. How little things change. In the days of the apostle, preaching was foolishness.

In the days of Whitefield and Wesley and Edwards and others in that century, preaching was foolishness. In our day, preaching is still foolishness. You've only got to visit most churches to find out that the preaching is a tag on at the end of the service.

I remember years ago one of the big television companies, I can't remember, I think it was Independent Television, one of the two big outfits in the United Kingdom, came to our little country church in Cabra, outside Balamony in Northern Ireland and they wanted to take one of the services. I had to get the whole sermon in. I had to have it way, way cut down.

It was like doing a radio broadcast actually. I was allowed to preach, but if we wanted to get much in, I had about 13 minutes. You know my people couldn't believe it.

They thought something was wrong. I figured it was better for that occasion to look on it like a radio broadcast. What amazed me was that the producer of the World in Action program, as it was called, he was amazed at the length of the sermon, not that it was so short, it was so long, 13 minutes.

He said, how long would you normally preach? I very modestly said, 45 minutes. And don't you snigger. 45 minutes.

He said, my. He said, you know in England, if a preacher goes 8 minutes, that's a long sermon. Of course this is the Church of England, that's not say Brian Greene's church or Peter Master's church, Spurgeon's Tabernacle.

This is the Church of England. If he goes 8 minutes, that would be a very long sermon. So preaching is just a tag-on, but these men believed in preaching.

They believed in it. They did not believe in simply getting people together by means of entertainment. They did not believe in turning the church into a circus or a music hall in order to compete with the attractions of the world.

They believed in the power of preaching, anointed with the Holy Ghost. That was the method. And much more, they took the preaching to where the people would hear it.

The churches were closed against them in England, so they took the preaching into the open air. Now that was a revolutionary step. The first one to do that was George Whitefield.

And there he preached to thousands. He tried to get Wesley to do the same, and Wesley was very much opposed to it as a good Church of England minister. Finally he was prevailed upon.

Charles Wesley was the last of the great trio over there to agree. But finally he did as well. Preaching to the people where they could get them.

When Whitefield came to America, the crowds got so big that there was no church building could hold them. So again, he went out into the meadows and the fields and started preaching. So there were these links.

There were links in personnel. You had Edwards, of course, was the towering figure among the Americans. I don't know if you realized it, just as a century before, England almost lost Oliver Cromwell to America.

Just by a hair's breadth he decided to remain. And I tell you, England would be a very different country today had Oliver Cromwell come to America. But equally, it was just by a hair's breadth that America didn't lose Jonathan Edwards to Scotland.

When he was thrown out of his church in Northampton, there was great opportunity and great pressure on him to go to Scotland where his genius and his ministry would have been appreciated. But he instead remained to be a missionary among the American Indians. And again, who can tell what the difference would have been had we had Edwards in the United Kingdom instead of having an early death here in America.

But the personnel had a lot in common. Edwards was red and loved on the other side of the ocean. The Westleys came for a short time to America.

They never really hit it off. Charles stayed for less than six months, if my memory is right. John stayed for about 22 months.

And really, he summed it up very well in his journal. I was just reading this the other night and he said, I went to America to convert the Indians. But who will convert me.

I learned when I went to convert the Indians that I needed to be converted. So their ministry over here was of no lasting significance at all. But they did a great work in Britain.

And of course, the bridge spanning the two was George Whitefield, who even in those days of difficult travel, made seven transatlantic visits, seven visits to America. In days when it took four months to send a letter from America to Britain and get a reply. That's always hoping that it wasn't somebody like me in the other end making the reply.

Otherwise, you'd still be waiting. But anyway, he was the bridge between so a lot in common. Now, early in the 18th century, in fact, in 1719, the Holy Ghost started working in a way in which he had never done before in the history of the American colonies.

Here to four in the American colonies, every work of the Holy Spirit had started in a major center of population. Now, they were not major by comparison to today, but they were major for the state of affairs in those days. That's where it started.

You read the stories of the New England revivals, they were always in major centers of population. That's where they started and spread out. But in 1719, there was a German-Dutch reformed minister in a rural parish in New Jersey, Theodor Freilinghausen, and he saw God do marvelous things.

Suddenly, as it appeared out of nowhere, God started moving. And in that rural parish, such was the breath of God among the people that there was a quickening, a reviving, a spiritual awakening. That was the first intimation that God had great things to do and that right quickly.

Then there were the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians of whom I made mention this morning, William Tennant and his son Gilbert. You may read their story in a book that's called *The Log Cabin*. Dr. Paisley has a little book available called *Those Flaming Tennants*.

Certainly their story is a story well worth reading. William Tennant was a man of great parts, as they would say in those days. That is a man of many skills, many areas of learning.

He was also a soul on fire with love for Christ. He was an old-lying Scotch-Irish Presbyterian Calvinist. But his Calvinism was on fire for God with the blazing zeal for revival.

He and his son Gilbert became great preachers. They set up, as I mentioned, *The Log Cabin*. That was a place in which they trained, gave people an education, but particularly trained people for the Christian ministry.

That Log Cabin, in due course, became known as the College of New Jersey or as we know it today, Princeton University. That's how it started, with these two revival preachers. Then came the most conspicuous movement of the Holy Spirit to date, and that was under the ministry of Jonathan Edwards in Northampton, Massachusetts.

After seven years of ministry there, Edwards saw God begin to do a great thing. In the year 1734, spilling over into 1735, as he preached, he saw God deal with people. Remember, this was not a major city.

This was not a United Church crusade. This was a faithful minister preaching Christ to his people. And in a six-month period, he talks about 300 of those people coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ and living the Christian life with such fervor and power as showed that the work of grace was real in their hearts.

So, up to the mid-1730s, there was this initial moving, a sort of an awakening, and then there was a little period of dullness and deadness, where it seemed that the light was going out, the fire was burning low, the zeal was beginning to abate. But in 1740, there came the great awakening, and it broke upon America with tremendous power. Again, the ministry of Jonathan Edwards was very much to the fore, but even more to the fore at this time was the ministry of George Whitefield.

Whitefield had visited America back in 1737. He had gone down to Georgia to start his orphan work. You may still visit the building there and see something of the remains of Whitefield's work among the orphans.

He did so because many of the settlers had died, and there were many orphan children in great need, and no one seemed to have any hope or any way, any ideas of dealing with them. It was his burden to set up an orphanage there, which he duly did. Now, he was back.

He'd come in 1739, and on Edwards' invitation, he visited Northampton. Before he went there, as he preached around the Philadelphia area, God was moving. Suddenly, people were interested.

It wasn't because there was some great advertising campaign or some great public relations exercise, but suddenly there was a God-given interest in hearing the gospel. And of course, one has to say that in sending Whitefield, God sent the greatest instrument He had in the world in that day. As I said this

morning, it is the opinion of many, competent to judge in these things.

I think, for instance, of Martin Lloyd-Jones. It was certainly his opinion. It was certainly C.H. Spurgeon's opinion.

That in Whitefield, God raised up the single greatest preacher the world had ever seen since the days of Christ's apostles. A man who had the countenance of a seraph, who had the voice that would not have disgraced an angel, who had the intellect, who had the oratory, but most of all, who had the baptism of the power of the Holy Ghost in a most unusual way. Whitefield had already seen great moves in England.

He was not long saved. He had been, as a boy, reared in an inn. He, early in life, was given an education and then in due time sent to Oxford.

There he joined the Holy Club, the Bible moths, the Bible bigots, with the Westleys, trying to save his soul by holy living, by visiting prisons, by reaching out to the poor and the needy. But in 1735, three years before Wesley was converted, George Whitefield passed from death unto life. He was born again and he was justified by faith in Jesus Christ.

Almost immediately, it was obvious, a great preacher had come. Very early in his ministry, people of all classes were hanging upon every word. The nobility came to hear him.

The common people loved to hear him. He challenged the deadness of the Church of England and he led the foundations in those early years before the Methodist revival. Since 1737, he had been seeing thousands attend his ministry.

As I said, he was the first to go out into the open air and there anything from three to ten to twenty or thirty thousand people would come to hear him preach. He mightily moved in his preaching. People who had never listened to a preacher in their lives listened to Whitefield.

People who felt that the Church was not for them and remember this was an age when people generally believed that religion was a farce. When Queen Caroline was dying, there was a bit of a scandal. Why had she not sent for a minister to pray with her? Mr. Walpole, the Prime Minister of England was there and he said to one of her family, go to the Archbishop, bring him in.

He prays briefly as you tell him. Let's have this farce, and farce was the word that he used, because if people don't think that we are as stupid as they are, they will take it ill. The Archbishop would play the game.

That was the age in which they lived. Ordinary people didn't believe that there was any reality in the Christian religion. It was at the lowest level of society, something that the people were not interested in.

At the highest levels of society, the intellectuals took it to be an exploded myth. And now came Whitefield preaching in the power of the Holy Ghost and suddenly thousands of people of every class are brought in to the company, if not to a church, no church big enough to hold them. And most churches not wanting to be contaminated with enthusiasm, so they wouldn't have them.

Thousands were coming to Christ. Literally thousands of people saved in those early years. When John Wesley was converted in 1738, Whitefield brought him in to the work of evangelism.

They had been friends from their days in Oxford. As I've said, he introduced Wesley to this great idea of preaching in the open air. Whitefield had begun to put his converts into societies.

They didn't form a different church, but they were societies for fellowship and for spiritual growth. And when he returned to America in 1739, he handed the leadership of those societies over to John Wesley. While he went to carry this ministry, first to Philadelphia and then to New England and then through the colonies.

Now the great awakening really began to shake the colonies. When he visited New England, Whitefield saw the fire of God fall. Some ministers in Boston were very antagonistic to all ideas about revival.

They looked on it as a diabolical delusion. Jonathan Edwards combated that very strongly, but nonetheless there were tremendously well positioned ministers in the Boston area who detested the whole idea of revival. And some of them were never moved by the revival.

Others were, but some of them never changed their opinion. But as Whitefield came in there, again the people of every class thronged to hear him preach. The interest was incredible.

The atmosphere was electric. I have no hope in the world of beginning to make you feel anything that those people would have felt when Whitefield preached. Perhaps the simplest way to make you understand just how powerful was his persuasiveness is to remind you of the old story of Benjamin Franklin.

Franklin and Whitefield became very close personal friends. And the family of Benjamin Franklin continued to look upon Whitefield as their friend. Though Franklin says that he, though pressed hard by Whitefield, never made any personal decision for Christ.

He became Whitefield's publisher and certainly held him in high esteem. Now when Whitefield came to Philadelphia, one of his main objectives was to have a big offering. He collected money everywhere he went.

Not for himself, but for his orphanage in Georgia. Franklin didn't believe in Whitefield's plan to build an orphanage. He was not against helping the orphans.

But he figured there isn't much help down there in Georgia. You know these backward southerners. There isn't much help down there in Georgia.

There isn't, there's not a lot of easy material to be got. You're going to have to pay to get people in. You're going to have to pay extra for material.

It would be cheaper to bring the children to Philadelphia and build the orphanage up here than it is to spend all this extra money and build it down there. So he didn't agree with Whitefield's plan at all. And as he went to hear Whitefield preach, he knew that there would be an appeal for an offering.

And he determined, I will not give him anything. He had a few coppers in his pocket. He had a few bits of silver and a few gold coins.

And as he listened to Whitefield preach, he melted a little and he said, well, I'll give him the coppers. And Whitefield preached on. He said, well, it wouldn't do any harm.

Though I don't believe in it, it wouldn't do any harm to give him the silver. And the time for the offering came, he emptied his pockets of gold and everything. It would give you something of an insight.

Even at that level of the tremendous power and pulpit persuasion that Whitefield had. Now you lift that up to a spiritual level. When he started dealing with the gospel, when he described heaven, people could see it.

When he described hell, people could see it. When he spoke of the trumpet blast of God on the day of judgment, people actually jumped, thinking that they could hear that blast. Churches were filled.

Huge open air meetings when the churches couldn't hold the crowds. Ministers long dead awakened. And all across New England, there was the sound of abundance of rain.

Not only in New England, but New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia were touched. Almost over 150 churches were affected and dozens of these religious societies were formed. For you Baptists, you might like to understand this.

The Baptists and Whitefield were very close. The great thing about Whitefield's ministry is that it transcended denominational lines. The Anglicans, if they weren't so chock full of their liturgy that they didn't want to touch anything else, Evangelical Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, Moravians, they all gathered around Whitefield in a tremendous unity.

And it was from the Whitefield preaching in the Great Awakening that the Baptist churches had their first significant growth spurt here in America. Now these movements of God were of lasting value. I know that there is the idea that revivals are really emotional meteors and that at the end of the day they don't have any lasting effect.

There are some Calvinists who write learned papers to that effect. They like to quote people like Charles Hodge about the ephemeral effects of revivals. Well for any American theologian especially to talk like that he has to be off his head.

Because the first Great Awakening, this is the Great Awakening in American history and in Britain it's the same thing only it's called there the Methodist Revival. In both places it had a dramatic effect upon the entire future of the country. In Britain it affected every level of society.

It was noted by politicians and anybody who had an eye on his head to see that it changed the whole moral structure of Britain. Changed not only the manners but the heart of Britain. As I said all the social elements that went into causing such a bloody uprising in France were present in England.

I think those historians have it right who trace the stability of England not to its superior politicians. For you people in America above all people know the stupidity of 18th century English politicians. So it was not the superiority of their politicians it was simply the power of revival and the only revolution that England knew was an industrial revolution that brought its own problems.

But it certainly saved England from the blood bath that was in France. In America the Great Awakening led the foundation upon which the American Revolution was based. I have a book written by an English historian who according to some American historians has written the best modern history of America.

For the simple reason that he not being an American doesn't beat his chest with all sorts of guilt over the development and the coming to greatness of this country. And according to some American historians he'll give you more real history of America without all the side avenues of guilt than you'll get anywhere else in a modern writer. Now be they right or wrong in their assessment of him I was very interested in reading what he a secular historian had to say about the Great Awakening.

Now it's very interesting to me because I have one of the standard works of European history, a large three volume European history and I decided just to check to see what, written by an Englishman by the way, to see what it had to say about Methodism and John Wesley in England during this period. John Wesley got two mentions in passing and he could have been Mickey Mouse for all this historian cared so much for historical objectivity. So I was very interested to see what this fellow had to say about the Great Awakening in America and I must say I was greatly, greatly interested and surprised.

These were his words. Paul Johnson writing in the history of the American people. He says the Great Awakening was the proto-revolutionary event, the formative event in American history preceding the political drive for independence and making it possible.

It crossed all religious and sectarian boundaries, made light of them indeed and turned what had been a series of European style churches into American ones. It began the process which created an ecumenical, not in the fullness of the term that we use today, but crossing denominational lines. It created an ecumenical and American type of religious devotion which affected all groups and gave a distinctive American flavor to a wide range of denominations.

This might be summed up under the following five heads. Evangelical fervor, a tendency to downgrade the clergy, little stress on liturgical correctness, even less on parish boundaries and above all an emphasis on individual experience. And I don't know how much those things resonate with you but as a stranger in America I can see all five of those things very, very clearly in American church life.

And then he goes on. Hitherto each colony had seen its outward links as running chiefly to London. Each tended to be a little self-contained world of its own.

The Great Awakening altered this separateness. It taught different colonies to grasp and appreciate what they had in common which was a very great deal. Now that's the view of a modern historian.

Let me give you the words of the second president of the United States. John Adams said, the revolution was effected before the war commenced. The revolution was in the mind and hearts of the people and in a change in their religious sentiments of their duties and obligation.

With that in mind, Paul Johnson very astutely made this remark. The revolution could not have taken place without this religious background. The essential difference between the American Revolution and the French Revolution.

Let me just back up here a little. There had been for a long time contact between French and American intellectuals. There was a free flow of ideas.

I have deliberately, I was tempted to do a little of this tonight, but I have deliberately stayed away from the philosophical changes that were taking place in Europe. The various schools of thought which have their, if you will excuse my strong language, their bastard offsprings with us to this day, cursing our society. Those ideas were flowing freely and yet he makes this important distinction.

The essential difference between the American Revolution and the French Revolution is that the American Revolution in its origins was a religious event. Whereas the French Revolution was an anti-religious event. That fact was to shape the American Revolution from start to finish and determine the nature of the independent state it brought into being.

Now stand back and look at it. In the providence of God there was revival in Britain and there was revival in America. In the very century that Britain and America would fight to the death.

A war that I don't want to get into, not for the reasons some of you might think, but for the very opposite reasons. A war that Britain need never have fought and should never have fought. A wrong headed war.

A wrong war. A war of ultimate folly. Again you have to stand back and see that there is a greater hand than any mans in this.

King George III hadn't actually had his first documented bout with lunacy till after the American Revolution. I tend to think he had an awful lot of it unrecorded before it. But the sad fact is that Britain's greatest statesman, the Earl of Chatham, William Pitt the Elder, her greatest statesman, the one who more than any English statesman saw that the colonies in America could not be made the servants of little England.

And who wanted to work in the great English speaking harmony of two nations. Pitt was let aside for months on end. My memory is right at the critical stage, about nine months.

Flat out with what we would call today extreme depression, melancholia, unfit for service. But isn't it interesting that the two nations that came to war, that should never have happened, each felt the power of revival to lead it into the kind of revolution it needed. An American revolution that formed this independent nation on the lines it did.

An industrial revolution that took England from the jaws of bloodshed and lifted it ultimately to the heights of prosperity. The revivals of that age of revolution stand out to us as a grand testimony to the power of the gospel preached in the demonstration of the Holy Ghost. These revivals rebuke our coldness and our defeatism and they surely should stir our hearts to pray to God to do the same thing again today.

We read our text awake, we're talking about the great awakening. Awake, awake, put on strength O arm of the Lord. Awake as in the ancient days in the generations of old.

It's a very interesting fact that the state of the church and the nations before the great awakening was very much as it is today. I've referred to the humanist philosophies that were spreading their foul and filthy lies across Europe and indeed getting into America. What is called the enlightenment is not all light.

Now we've got to be careful. There was much to admire in establishing a scientific method of observation, explanation and experimentation. Much to be admired in that.

But that's a very small part of what's called the enlightenment. The enlightenment was really the shutting out of the light of divine revelation and making man and his reason or his experience or his sensation or his desire the ultimate source of knowledge and the ultimate good of the people. These humanist philosophies were widely accepted in both America and Britain among the intelligentsia.

In America while the country wasn't really yet rich, yet the possibilities were becoming very very obvious. And so the pursuit of wealth began to replace the pursuit of God in many churches. And from the old

Puritan Pilgrim beginnings that we discussed in our last time of Millennial Milestone Studies, from those beginnings there now was tremendous coldness and deadness.

Oh orthodoxy yes, but coldness and deadness in American churches as they pursued wealth. They were more this worldly than other worldly. Then certainly in England and in America the evidence of this is I think also very very clear even among some of the most famous names in American history.

Deism. Deism without getting into the details, Deism is the idea of rationalism that wipes out all idea of supernaturalism from the Bible and from Christianity. You had Deists who were anti-Christian and they were the people who had the notion that God was an absentee landlord, that God was the great clockmaker.

He had wound up the clock at the beginning of time and now he was just letting things work themselves out and he had nothing to do with it. So there was no supernatural intervention, no incarnation, no blood atonement, no resurrection, no such thing as praying and getting answers to prayer. There was no vital religion, the only religion was human morality.

Inside the Christian church there were people who said no Christianity, in fact one famous church man wrote a book that Christianity is the ancient religion of nature. Well what do you do with the supernatural in the Bible? You throw it out as priest craft and superstition. Deism had undermined revealed religion.

It called for some of the greatest apologetic works in the history of the Christian church. I am not going to start going through them tonight because they are now somewhat dated. But nonetheless these great apologetic works from Bishop Berkeley, Bishop Butler and a host of others including Isaac Watts, whom we were singing tonight.

For the most part they were as cold as they were correct. They were simply an appeal to the brain, there was nothing of spiritual power. In Britain especially, and America was not free from this, but in Britain especially there was a long period of moral filthiness.

As a result there was drunkenness, there was poverty, there was lawlessness, wretchedness, crowded prisons. The theatre was very active. I believe the greatest curse in any nation is the entertainment industry.

The American entertainment industry is hell resident in America. Same in Britain and there is nothing new about this. The theatre in Britain, John Wesley called it that sink of all corruption.

Openly, flagrantly, immoral, vicious, promoting all sorts of wickedness and ungodliness. Many attempts were made to alleviate these problems and they met with only limited success. This was a time when many hospitals were built in Britain, you have to thank God for that.

Charity schools were built because isn't education the answer to all the needs of the nation? Parliament even passed the gin law, which was the suppression of most liquor sales. The Society for the Reformation of Manners thought that they could persuade people to live better without getting sealed. And on failing to do it, in 40 years they brought just a few hundred cases, less than a hundred thousand prosecutions for debauched living.

That's in London and Westminster alone. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge had a better idea and they started distributing Christian literature. But despite it all, the nation was sinking deeper and

deeper and then God raised up and He shook the nation.

And in America, He raised up a preacher and He shook the nation. And then other preachers who carried on the flame, for example when Whitfield left Boston, he invited Gilbert Tennant to come and keep the fire burning and he did. That's how these two nations were saved and the effects were immense.

I've already mentioned the effect on America and its long term result. Of Britain, one historian has written this, A religious revival burst forth which changed in a few years the whole temper of English society. The church was restored to life and activity.

Religion carried to the hearts of the people a fresh spirit of moral zeal while it purified our literature and our manners. A new philanthropy reformed our prisons, infused clemency and wisdom into our penal laws, abolished the slave trade and gave the first impulse to popular education. That's what was happening in Britain when by every human law it should have been sinking into bloody revolution.

And that wasn't all. One of the chief products of the great awakening was a young man called David Brainerd. He didn't live very long.

I think of him as the American Robert Murray McShane and I think of McShane as the Scottish David Brainerd. Many parallels in their personal godliness and their passion for precious souls. David Brainerd sought to win the American Indians for Christ.

When he died, just a young man, Jonathan Edwards, produced David Brainerd's journal, published it to the world. And wherever it was read it had a tremendous effect. Challenged the church to rise up, to evangelize and the church met the challenge.

People in England, a poor but brilliant Baptist pastor, read Brainerd's journal. God lit a fire in the heart of William Carey, who became the father of the modern missionary movement. And by the time the 18th century ended, William Carey was already in India and had baptized his first converts.

And the modern missionary movement that was soon to encircle the world was launched. And it was the direct offspring of the great revival that revolutionized both Britain and America in the 18th century. That's the kind of revival we need today.

We live in a day of appearances. When people plan revivals, pay for revivals, work up revivals, there is a world of difference between revival and revivalism. I would strongly recommend you to read Iain Murray's book so titled, Revival and Revivalism.

There's a world of difference between them. Revival is God answering the prayer of our text. When we come to him with a prayer to awake and let his arm be stretched forth in power.

Have we the right to pray that prayer? Well, read the portion I read to you tonight, read it again. God says, hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness. Let me tell you, carnal Christians only add to their sin when they pray for revival, for it's hypocrisy.

But he says, if you're following after righteousness, if you're seeking the Lord, or later, as he puts it, verse 7, if you know righteousness, if you're the people in whose heart is my law, then this prayer belongs to you. Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord. This is a prayer that people who are in earnest with God have always the right to pray.

And God has given his promise. We read it tonight, my righteousness shall be forever, my salvation from generation to generation. Revival is not something that's a historical oddity.

Revival is not something that belongs to the past, and we now have to give up all hope. It is one of the curses of Scofield dispensationalism that many, many Christians wrongly believe. We have nothing to look forward to but the secret rapture.

There's nothing to happen before Christ comes. Therefore, if we're looking for the rapture, we can't be looking for revival. And that sort of absolute folly has robbed churches of the burning zeal to pray that God will send us revival.

I don't know when Christ is coming. I frequently pray the prayer of John on the Isle of Patmos, even so, come Lord Jesus. But let me tell you, until he comes, he has a work for his church to do in the world.

Until he comes, neither this church nor any other church has the right to live in spiritual coldness and deadness. None of us has the right to be talking about a living Christ without any experience of living power. We surely should be crying for a great awakening.

Let it come. O God, we pray thee, let the shower of blessing fall. We are waiting.

We are expecting. O revive the hearts of all.

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