

The Preaching of George Whitefield

by E.A. Johnston

E.A. Johnston explores the life and preaching of George Whitefield, highlighting his impact on revival and modern Christianity.

Duration: 1:00:21

Scripture: Exodus 19:18, Matthew 5:17, John 1:17, Romans 3:20, Romans 6:14, Galatians 3:24, James 2:10

Topics: "George Whitefield"

Description

The video is a sermon transcript about the preaching of George Whitefield, a renowned preacher in the 18th century. Whitefield had a powerful and captivating preaching style that kept his audience in awe. He was able to vividly describe scenes and draw his listeners into the message, making them feel as if they were witnessing the events themselves. His preaching was compared to the intensity of Mount Sinai and had a profound impact on his audience, often leading to scenes of emotional distress and conversion. The video also mentions the dramatic death of Whitefield, where he struggled to breathe and ultimately passed away while his aide held him.

Transcript

Once asked if he would give permission for his sermons to be published. He said, yes, if you will publish the thunder and lightning as well. Well, I'm not sure that's possible, but we're going to hear how he preached.

Good to have you, Ernest, come and present your material. We'll have a word of prayer and commit you to the Lord and ourselves as listeners. Thank you, brother.

Father, we thank you for gifts given to members of the body of Christ. We thank you for the gift of writing and for publishing books. And Lord, you have given this to our brother Ernest in a generous way.

And we pray that you will bless him this morning from his studies as he shares with us some insights into the preaching of George Whitefield. Lord, we don't pine and say, oh, I wish I were living in the time of Whitefield, because the God of Whitefield is the God of today. And we pray only for a double portion of the spirit of God that was upon Whitefield so eminently as he preached in Britain and in the colonies in North America.

So bless our brother today, anoint him, and may our hearts be tuned in to what he is saying. We pray in Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

Thank you, Dr. Ted. Well, the last time I spoke on revival at the Institute here was a Monday evening school of preaching. And during that time, I had a broken rib.

And then I get an invitation to come again and speak on-- I have a missing rib. Yeah? And now I have a broken wrist, which makes me a little hesitant of accepting a further invitation. Maybe the old farts have it out for me, I don't know.

No, really, the one who has it out for me and who's against revival is the devil. And the last thing Satan wants to see is a revived church. And you want to get Satan raging against you, you lay hold of God in prayer on a regular basis, crying out for revival, and they'll get his attention.

I was blessed this morning at 5.30 in the morning. I got a phone call from many you will know him. Giorgio died down in Ghana, Africa.

And he told me to tell you that his church in Africa this week has been in prayer and fasting every day for this conference here this week. And he strategically timed his phone call, knowing I would be leaving, knowing the time of day to catch me at 5.30 this morning to share that with us. And when you have brothers and sisters in Africa laying hold of God with that seriousness, God's going to do great things, and he has done great things here.

I've been blessed immeasurably this week by the messages, by the prayers, and we're not through yet. Well, George Whitefield was an unusual man. He was a surrendered man.

He was a modelly used servant of God. The hardest thing about preparing this message today wasn't so much on what I was going to say about Whitefield, but what I was going to leave out. My book is over 1,200 pages.

I literally could have written another 1,000 pages and not covered his enormous life. So it was the leaving out that was the hardest part to share with you today. I want to kind of go over a little bit of where I was this last week.

But before I begin, I'd like to just introduce you to George Whitefield with his own words. There may be some in our group this morning that are not familiar with the life and ministry of Whitefield. And I'd just like to read a page or two from his journals.

This was written in 1739 when he was 24 years old. And this is Sunday, May the 6th, 1739. Preached this morning in the moorfields to about 20,000 people who were very quiet and attentive and much affected.

Went to public worship morning and evening and at sixth preached at Cannington. That's Cannington Common. It's a large, grassy area.

Such a sight I never saw before. I believe there were no less than 50,000 people and near four score coaches besides great numbers of horses. There was an awful silence amongst them.

God gave me great enlargement of heart. I continued my discourse for an hour and a half. And when I returned home, I was filled with such love, peace, and joy that I cannot express it.

I believe this was partly owing to some oppositions I met with yesterday. It is hard for men to kick against the pricks. The more they oppose, the more shall Jesus Christ be exalted.

And then, Tuesday, May the 8th, preached in the evening as usual on Cannington Common. Some considerable time before I set out from town, it rained very hard. So at once I thought of not going.

But several pious friends joined in hoardy prayer that God would be pleased to withhold the rain, which was done immediately. To my great surprise, when I came to the Common, I saw above 20,000 people. All the while, except for a few moments, the sun shone out upon us.

And I trust the sun of righteousness arose on some with healing in his wings. The people were melted down very much at the preaching of the word and put up hardy prayers for my temporal and eternal welfare. Why did God use George Whitefield? We're going to look at that today.

I think giving you just a little brief rundown of where I was last week would be helpful. I started off in London with a fellow Whitefield scholar, Dr. Digby James, and he and I went to Tottenham Court Chapel, which was Whitefield's main chapel in London, that and the Moorfields Chapel. His wife, Elizabeth, is buried beneath the pulpit there.

Looking at the church, which is a new church. The old church was bombed during the last bombing of World War II. It destroyed it, and I'm assuming that her remains were blown to smithereens as well.

But it was there at Tottenham Court that Whitefield preached his famous farewell sermon, The Good Shepherd, before he went to America for the last time. And then we went from there to Moorfields. And it was just hard to imagine the tens of thousands of people coming up from London and their coaches and on foot with torches in their hand before daylight assembling to hear him, to hear this odd man with a squint in his eye when he was a little boy.

A nurse was treating him with the measles, and through an error, he ended up with a squint in his eye. It looked like his left eye was continually looking at his nose. In fact, later in his career, the London stage put on some very profane and perverse plays about Whitefield that were absolutely disgusting, and they called him Dr. Squintum, making fun of him.

The dear man was lampooned and lambasted more than any other man in his generation or many in the history of the church. From Moorfields, we went to Kennington Common, where I just read that, and then we went to Mayfair, where Whitefield, he says he preached 80,000. I think his figures were a little exaggerated.

It was probably more like 50,000. But try to picture, without any amplification, without any microphone, what a tremendous voice he had to be heard by 10, 20, 30,000, 40,000 people. It's quite remarkable.

Well, from London, we traveled down to Bristol, and in Bristol, we went to Dummer in Basingstoke. Whitefield took Robert Kenshin's charge there when he was an ordained priest with the Church of England and ministered to people in that little country village. It's exactly the same today as it was then.

We then went to St. Cyr in Stonehouse. We went to Kingswood, where Whitefield, on Hannah Mount, preached at the colliers. He got up on a little mount, and he said, These poor rag muffins, they're known as barbarians.

They won't come to the churches. I'll be like Jesus, and I'll go out to them in the field. He stood on this mount, and I stood there.

That's where they lived, down in these little hovels. He started to preach, and 200 of them started to come up and listen to him. Eventually, there were 2,000.

The next day, there were 20,000 of these colliers. He said they were so affected by the word that their tears were making white gutters in their black, coal-stained faces, that the people were so melted down, knowing that there was a Jesus that loved them so greatly. There he was, this odd man in a cassock and gown, with a squint in his eye, an ordained priest in the Church of England, now a Methodist, just preaching out in the fields, in the open air.

In Bristol, we went to Wesley's New Room, which was a church that John Wesley built there. When he took over for Whitefield, when Whitefield went to America, he asked Wesley to come and preach in the open air, which Wesley was at first reluctant, but he did go and had great success there. Then we went to Rod Burrell Chapel, which is a little chapel.

You go down a hill, and there's a graveyard here, and here's the chapel. Inside is the cane, the walking stick that Whitefield had that I got to hold, and his broad-bottomed chair is there that he would sit in and then preach from later on. That's all remarkably preserved from Rod Burrell, which is near Painswick.

We went up to Gloucester, which is the place of his birth, the Bell Inn. His father was a wine merchant who died when he was two years old. His mother remarried.

It wasn't a good marriage, and they started to have financial trouble, and Whitefield had to stay out of school to help at the inn. He would pour beer and mop up where his little blue apron, and he was pretty much a servant there, which helped him because when he went to Oxford, he went as a servitor. What that was was a servant to the John Wesleys and the Charles Wesleys, the more privileged students.

He polished their shoes and emptied their buckets, and that's how he got his schooling at Oxford, as a servitor. So God prepared his servant even then. In Gloucester, we went to St. Mary the Crypt, the church where Whitefield was baptized, preached his first sermon, which the good Bishop Benson, which ordained Whitefield, said that Whitefield's sermon drove 15 people mad.

The good bishop said he hoped that the effects of the sermon wouldn't wear off any time soon. And I stood at the baptismal fount where Whitefield baptized a Quaker. The Quaker was 62 years old.

Whitefield baptized him because the man wanted to be born into the kingdom of God through a living faith, and they prayed around him and held hands, and then Whitefield preached the sermon from that baptismal fount right there, and that was quite exciting. From there, we traveled on up into Glasgow, Scotland, where, through research, we found the High Kirk Churchyard, where Whitefield preached in the open air those many, many times, where the people were just astounded and melted down under the preaching of the word. 20,000 out there in Glasgow, under the sky.

He preached from a graveyard there. And then we went to Cambuslang. One thing I wanted to just kind of read briefly, a little bit from Arthur Fawcett's magnificent book on the Cambuslang revival, just to give you a flavor, just a little paragraph.

This doesn't give it any justice, but I wanted to just read a little bit. On Tuesday, 6 July 1742, he came to Cambuslang at midday and preached at 2, 6, and 9 o'clock at night. Such a commotion surely never was heard of, especially at 11 at night.

It far outdid all that I ever saw in America. That's Whitefield speaking. For about an hour and a half, there were scenes of uncontrollable distress, like a field of battle.

Many were being carried into the mass like wounded soldiers. Mr. McCulloch, that was the pastor there, preached after I had ended until past 1 in the morning, and then one could scarce persuade them to depart. All night in the fields might be heard the voice of prayer and praise.

Well, we went there to those preaching braes in Cambuslang. It's a natural amphitheater. It broke my heart when we got up to the church because Willem McCulloch's grave is graffitied over with satanic symbols.

In fact, it was so bad, I asked that my picture be taken above the graffiti. It just wounded my heart so greatly. But the preaching braes, you can see where they set up the communion tents, where they served 10,000 people communion that day, and it was said that Whitefield's face was lit up like an angel as he served communion and God came down in his glory in his manifest presence during the communion time.

The people were just uncontrollable and they're weeping, crying out under conviction of sin. That was Cambuslang. From there, we went over to Dunfermline to Ralph Erskine's church where Whitefield preached three times before he had the breach with the Scottish Presbytery.

They wanted him to just preach for them, and he was more Catholic in spirit. He wanted to preach for everybody, and Ralph Erskine's church is a cafe now. It's just horrible.

He's right outside, his crypt's right outside, graffiti all around it, beer cans and cigarettes, and there's a little merry-go-round right in front of the church. It's absolutely, you have to see it to even believe it. I'm still trying to digest it all, what the glory that was and how the gold has damned.

But once we were in Edinburgh, we were asking Ian Murray to try and help us find the Orphan House Hospital Park where Whitefield preached and revival came down in Edinburgh, and Ian Murray didn't know where it was, and neither did Dallimore. So we did some research, and we found out that John Harriet's Hospital was indeed the Orphan House Hospital there, and that building's still there. So we went there, and we got permission to come in.

We got the little visitor tags and did our research, and we did validate that that indeed was the place. And I walked around the grounds outside. It's right below the castle, and you could easily compute that 10,000 to 20,000 people could stand out there outside right now on the greens.

Back then, there was more grass. So that's where Whitefield preached in Edinburgh with such great power from the Holy Spirit. Well, before we proceed, I thought it would be good if I read you a little bit of James Packer's foreword to the book.

He was very gracious in doing this, and he wanted to read it. And he asked for 300 pages, and I called him up, and he said, Hello, J.I. Packer here. I said, Dr. Packer, do you want more chapters on the book? He said, No, no, this is quite enough, quite enough.

I think I wore him out. But then when I got his foreword, he wore me out because he wrote more about Whitefield and his foreword than I did in 1,100 pages. I guess that's why they call him Packer.

But I wanted to read a little bit of this. I won't read all the foreword because if you want all of it, you'll have to buy the book. But this is J.I. Packer.

They both, by the way, were born in Gloucester. They both went to school at St. Mary-de-Crypte. When I went into the schoolroom at St. Mary-de-Crypte, I imagined a little James Packer sitting in there and a little squint-eyed George Whitefield sitting in there as students.

But they're both Gloucester men. George Whitefield of Gloucester, England, intercontinental gospel preacher with a voice like organ music. Isn't that beautiful? And a lifelong West Country accent was a phenomenon.

Now what he means by that West Country accent, when Whitefield would say Christ, he wouldn't say Christ, he'd say Croist. And I asked the manager at the new hotel across from St. Mary-de-Crypte to pronounce Gloucester for me, and she pronounced it Gloucester. It's that West Country twang, so you just have to picture Whitefield with that accent.

Packer says that Whitefield was a phenomenon. He was an unusual human being whom God equipped and used in a quite unique way. He was a very godly man.

The time when as a student in Oxford he met the Wesleys, his passion was to grasp and be grasped by the God they served, the God of the Bible, the God and Father of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Following his conversion, he left Oxford and ministered in and around his hometown. He came to the bishop's notice and received ordination at 21, two years younger than the statutory minimum age.

Overnight, he became a popular preacher, always highlighting the new birth. Throughout his ministry, he lived by rule, maintaining a steady devotional life each day, reading and rereading the marvelous Puritan exposition of the Bible by Matthew Henry, usually on his knees, and interceding at length for the advance of God's kingdom. His penitent humility before God was lifelong and deep and was the taproot of the compassionate, confident, and confidential boldness that never ceased to amaze his hearers.

He was a disciplined man, abstinence in food and drink, taking no more sleep than he needed, and he could manage on less sleep than most, and always meticulous in his personal affairs. Single-minded and eager, well-focused and joyful, genial and practical, he lived every day full stretch for his Lord. Premature aging and the onset of asthma or angina or perhaps both did not slow him down.

The awed response that he commanded whenever he preached was as much admiration for his transparent spiritual zeal as for the stupendous force of his preaching as such. He was a very gifted man. To his natural, energetic, alertness and charm were added in sanctified mode all the powers that mark great actors.

What were these? First, the power to command and hold attention. Movement or action, as the classical theorists or rhetoric called it, is central here, and Whitefield was never still in the pulpit. Second, a big, in Whitefield's case, a huge voice capable of expressing the whole range of human emotions and attitudes.

Whitefield could thunder, lament, caress and encourage with overwhelming, heart-searching, heart-breaking power. Third, total identification with what he was projecting, not, in Whitefield's case, a

character on stage, but the holiness and mercy of God and the transformation of life that Christ brings when through faith and repentance we learn to live in, through, to, and for Him. Fourth, the ability to make every utterance an easy flow of vivid and arresting speech.

All great actors and all great preachers can do this. Fifth, power so to impact each individual in the crowd that he or she feels personally addressed, arrested, and drawn into what is going on. In Whitefield's case, persuasion from God through his messenger.

Thus, gifted as a dramatic communicator, Whitefield had an evangelistic and nurturing ministry in the pulpit of unprecedented power and fruitfulness. Well, he goes on, but that is a good handle on Whitefield. As a matter of fact, in the appendix to the book, I have 30 pages of Packer on Whitefield that he's published in a journal before.

It's quite astounding how he describes Whitefield. Let's look at the man and his preaching. Whitefield was a man of revival.

You know, our week here has been revival-focused. And I hope some of you that if you came here without the revival bug having bitten you, that perhaps the revival bug has now bitten you. See, with revival, first, there's an interest in revival.

You get an interest in revival. I remember a couple decades ago, I started to have an interest in revival. And then that interest grows into a hunger.

Those of you here that are revival men and women, you know what I'm talking about. That interest becomes a hunger, a hunger for revival. You want to learn and you want to know all you can about the subject of revival.

Well then, through God's grace, through prayer, that hunger becomes a burden. You know what I'm talking about, that burden. That burden for revival.

And when you get to that stage, that stage can have a physical toll on your body. I was talking to Brother Al at the breakfast table and he was talking about Leonard Ravenhill. Leonard Ravenhill knew the burden of revival.

It took a physical toll on his physical frame, being out of bed at 2 o'clock in the morning and praying and crying out to God and intercessoring, prevailing prayer. It takes a toll on you. That's the burden.

But you know what? You get to that point, God says, go higher. Go higher. And the next stage, if you can carry that burden of revival long enough and you don't give up like so many do.

How many of you know friends that have prayed for revival and they've fallen away through the years? They've given up or we'd have times of revival. Remember Miss Oldford? We'd meet here in the mornings. Dr. Ted Hester, we'd pray for revival and those pastors would come faithfully.

Then they quit coming, didn't they? It's that persistence, that tenacity. If you hang in with the burden of revival long enough and you have that importunity with God, then that burden for revival becomes a holy desperation and you can no longer live without seeing it. It's your meat.

It's your drink. It's that holy desperation where every fiber of your body is consumed with the desire to see God come in His manifest glory and revive His sleeping bride. That holy desperation.

That's that holy desperation that happened on the Isle of Lewis when the man said to the others, he said, we've been meeting at midnight all these months crying out to God and it's all a bunch of humbug unless we look at the text. It says Psalm 24, Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? He who has clean hands and a pure heart. It goes, brother, are my hands clean? Is my heart pure? That's that holy desperation.

That's when they came to the end of themselves when God came down. And that's what God wants us to get to in revival. And when you get to that place in revival, that's the price of revival, the cost.

Dr. Ofer used to tell me, what costs counts and what counts costs. And there's a price in revival. And a lot of these pastors that are praying for revival to come to their church don't have any inkling of the price and the cost of revival.

And that's why they don't have it. When you lay hold of God in prevailing prayer that costs something and there's a sacrifice, he takes that sweet aroma, like the broken vase, the ointment, it goes up into his holy nostrils and he comes down in glory. Well, Winfield was like that.

Winfield understood that. Winfield knew full well what it was like to be a man of revival. Well, who was George Winfield? There's a lot of misinformation about him.

In fact, it's staggering when you think about it. Many are not familiar with George Winfield, even though he preached over 18,000 sermons. He crossed the Atlantic 13 times in a day when travel was difficult at best and slow-moving ships with sails on them.

In fact, besides Pope or King, there was hardly a man more famous or well-known on two continents than George Winfield in his day. He was more well-known than his good friend Ben Franklin. If you can imagine that, he was.

Well, there's so much misinformation about Winfield. I wanted to read this. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones wrote this about Winfield.

Actually, he said this. He was having a Puritans conference in England in the late 50s. He was addressing pastors, and this is what he said.

There is one remarkable fact about this man, Winfield, to which I must turn for a moment, and that is the amazing neglect which he has suffered. It would be very interesting to discover what the result would be if I asked everyone present now to write an essay on George Winfield. How much would you have to say? I venture to assert that he is the most neglected man in the whole of church history.

The ignorance concerning him is appalling. One is constantly discovering this in reading and in listening to people. It has become the habit to refer to the great awakening and revival of 200 years ago as the Wesleyan Revival.

It is spoken of always in terms of what John Wesley in particular did. Even Charles has had to suffer. People seem to have the idea that all that happened in the 18th century was the sole result and activity of John Wesley.

Thus, throughout the years, Winfield has either been forgotten or depreciated. Books have poured out on John Wesley without ceasing throughout the intervening years, but in the case of Winfield, there was no religious denomination to do so. That is, I think, the main explanation of why he has been so sadly

neglected.

If you were to say to someone in Winfield's day that John Wesley was the leader of the revival, they would look at you as someone who was completely out of touch with the facts. George Winfield was the primary leader of the revival of religion in England. In fact, when Winfield was preaching in London and startling crowds of tens of thousands, John Wesley was still unconverted.

That's something many don't know, but when you look that up and research that, it's a startling fact. There were pamphlets being written against Winfield in the press. He had 30 pamphlets written against him before Wesley even came on the scene.

John Wesley was completely unknown. It was Winfield's invitation for John Wesley to come to Bristol and preach in the open air where Wesley first started to have mass acceptance and gain popularity. Yet history has told us that it was John Wesley who was the leader of the revival.

Part of this is God's ways. God oftentimes in his great wisdom will take the primary leader of revival and hide them and make the secondary leader come up. As was the case of Azahel Nettleton in the Second Great Awakening and Charles Finney.

Azahel Nettleton was the primary leader of the revival. Charles Finney was the secondary leader. But God likes to keep the small and the ignoble.

He who called the little lad from the sheep coat and made him a king delights in the ignoble and the small, doesn't he? When you study revival, it isn't Boston where revival begins or New York City. It's a little bitty town of Northampton. Right? When you look at where revival happens, it's always an obscure place.

Why didn't God move 1949, 1952 in the Athens of Scotland, Edinburgh? Well, he chose a little bitty Isle of Lewis, didn't he? It's God's ways. God's ways. Well, here, Whitfield literally bursts upon the scene.

But we see why he's been so neglected. But it's interesting. When you look at it, when Whitfield came to America, he came at the invitation of Jonathan Edwards.

And the Great Awakening had already begun here. When Whitfield arrived, he became the primary instrument of the revival. It's been said that Jonathan Edwards lit the fire of revival in New England and George Whitfield came and threw gasoline on it.

And that's exactly what happened. He and Gilbert Tennant started going around and preaching and others, other revival men, and it just became, God just started to come out in his manifest presence every time they preached. Yet, Whitfield is relatively unknown.

There's a couple reasons. Wesley was an organizer. In fact, Whitfield said that Wesley penned his sheep and he had not.

And also, because Whitfield left no denomination behind him, there wasn't anyone to carry on his name or his legacy or write books about him. In fact, Whitfield's often comment was, let the name of George Whitfield perish. And indeed it has.

When we went to Bristol, Wesley's new room, the Methodists have this beautiful chapel there where you can buy Wesley keychains and whatever you want. It's just beautiful. And we went to find Whitfield Court, which was a street named after Whitfield, and the very sign's been torn down.

There's a new building being put up. There's no remnant of George Whitfield there at all. So his desire to be forgotten has happened.

Well, when the churches in England closed their pulpits against Whitfield, they did so because of his message. His message was, he must be born again. And many in the ministry didn't like that message because there was an unconverted ministry there.

Many of the men in the Church of England were unconverted. And the last thing they wanted to have their congregations hearing was a messenger saying, he must be born again. Even though he was an ordained priest in the Church of England, he was denied the use of the pulpits.

And eventually he went out into the open air, and that's where the mass crowds in Moorfield and Kennington Common would come to gather and hear him preach. He had an enormous voice. His voice could carry such a great distance, preaching to 30,000, 40,000 people without any amplification.

Ben Franklin once measured his voice. They were in Philadelphia one time. Whitfield was preaching from the steps of the courthouse in Philadelphia, and Benjamin Franklin went around with a notepad counting off tens and twenties of individuals and in his mind measuring the people and the distance that Whitfield could be heard.

And Ben Franklin kept walking, and Franklin determined that Whitfield could easily be heard by 30,000 people at a distance of a mile away. Can you imagine that? In fact, one day when Whitfield was preaching from the courthouse steps in Philadelphia, there was a little fishing vessel in the harbor. The sailors heard every word of his message, and one of them was converted.

Listening to him out, his words carried by the wind out to the harbor. George Whitfield had a great love for widows and orphans. He founded an orphanage in Savannah, Georgia, and 237 years later, Beseda, which I visited it last year, went through the archives.

It's still a thriving institution. It's now an academic high school that takes in troubled kids that nobody else will take them, and orphans, and it's a godly focused, God-centered institution. It's still going strong, and in their room where they have their museum articles is a full-length portrait of Selina Countess of Huntington that survived two hurricanes and a fire, and it's still hanging there.

She was Whitfield's benefactor. He was her chaplain, and she was the one that introduced him to the wealthy and the rich and famous of society in London. He was quite a remarkable man.

It's hard to imagine how popular he really was. Whitfield was a born orator. Yes, Al.

I've heard that. I haven't been able to validate that, but yes, I did find that through my readings and writings. She was a remarkable woman.

The book by Faith Cook, *On Her by Banner*, is a wonderful book. I highly recommend it. What's the definition of an orator? The definition of an orator is action, action, action, and Whitfield was never still in the pulpit.

He was kind of like David Ford today. If you notice, David Ford is very Whitfieldian. He's always moving around.

Whitfield was very much like that. In fact, John Wesley had a problem with that. He called Whitfield, he said Whitfield was too much like a Frenchman in a box, which meant he moved his hands too much, which I won't be doing that today because one of mine isn't working very well.

The Arabians have a proverb that says, he is the best orator who can turn eyes into ears. Think about that. That's what Whitfield could do.

Whitfield used to draw such vivid pictures of the things he was describing that his hearers could believe they actually saw and heard them. On one such occasion, the famous Lord Chesterfield was among his hearers. Whitfield was describing the miserable condition of the poor lost sinner, and he was comparing the poor lost sinner to a blind beggar.

The night was dark and the road was dangerous and the poor blind beggar is stumbling along this narrow path with his little dog and his walking stick, his staff, and Whitfield's oratory of describing this scene, he so warmed his subject and so enforced it with such graphic power that the whole auditory was kept in breathless silence as if they saw the movements of the poor old man as he made his way to the edge of the preface and there his little dog leaves him and he only has his walking stick and as the man is teetering and tottering on the edge of the cliff, which is certain destruction below, the scene was so graphically portrayed that Lord Chesterfield, just as the man was about to fall, Lord Chesterfield jumped from his chair and he said, My God, my God, he's gone! And he went and tried to save him from falling. That's the kind of grip and grasp Whitfield had on his audience. I heard Leonard Ravenhill on a videotape say one time that most preachers today are about as exciting as a weatherman giving the weather.

Well, with Whitfield, that wasn't the case. Whitfield preached like a lion. Let me tell you about Whitfield.

Whitfield was like Mount Sinai. When he preached, he was all together on a smoke. Dr. Ted mentioned the comment that when they asked Whitfield if he could print his sermon, he said, Yes, but you left something out, brother.

He said, Yes, you can print it, but only if you print with it the lightning and the thunder, but you left out the rainbow. Now think about that. Think about that.

Do you see his illustration? Lightning flashes into darkness and reveals sin. Thunder awakens and it alarms and it startles. And the rainbow represents the lovingness of Christ.

Whitfield always believed in this. He said, You have to take a sinner to Mount Sinai before you can take him to Mount Zion. Even John Wesley understood the necessity of preaching law before grace.

Wesley would get on to his preacher saying, You're not preaching law before grace anymore. And today we wonder why we have the problems we have when we're not following those examples. Sometimes it's good to tread the old paths to paths that work that God honors.

Well, Whitfield was born at the Bell Inn, and as he grew up, he learned to be a servant. And as he served in the Bell Inn and served those students at Oxford, he became one of the greatest servants in the kingdom of God. And there was an instance where Whitfield was preaching and, believe it or not, an old man had fallen asleep on the front pew, on the front seat.

He was sound asleep. And Whitfield stopped his sermon, and his face grew red, and he looked at that man, and in a loud voice he said, If I had come to speak to you in my own name, you might well rest your

elbows on your knees and your heads on your hands and sleep. And once in a while look up and say, What is this babbler talking of? But I have not come to you in my own name, no.

I have come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts. Just then he brought down his hand and foot with such a force that it made the whole building ring. Well, the old man that was asleep on the front row was no longer asleep, and he's rubbing his eyes, and he's peering up at Whitfield in startlement.

And Whitfield looks at him and says, Aye, aye, cried Whitfield, fixing his eye on him. I waked you, have I? I meant to do it. I have not come here to preach to stocks and stones.

I have come to you in the name of the Lord God of hosts, and I must and will have an audience. Now, the next time you're preaching and someone falls asleep, feel free to use that. Well, Whitfield, in his theology, I have a whole chapter on his theology, Whitfield was a Calvinist, and there was a breach between he and John Wesley.

Wesley, of course, was an Armenian, and then Wesley had his doctrine of perfectionism, which Whitfield had a big problem with, but it was terrible. They were two good men. It should never have happened.

They had a public breach. It hurt their congregations greatly. It's a lesson for us today that we shouldn't divide over such issues.

God used both of them, even though Wesley was an Armenian and Whitfield was a Calvinist, he used them both because they both were men surrendered to God and full of the Holy Spirit. We get too hung up on our theology today and our doctrine, and God's looking not for our heads. He's looking for our hearts.

He wants our hearts. We try to approach God so much with our heads. I go to many churches, and I hear a very well, homiletically perfect, expository message, doctrine all through it, but it's an essay to be considered, preached to the head, and God doesn't want us to approach Him through the head.

He wants us to bend the heart. Whitfield understood that. He preached doctrine, but he preached it to the heart.

Whitfield was no hyper-Calvinist like his contemporary John Gill. No, Whitfield was very similar to Charles Spurgeon, another Calvinist, and both men always called lost sinners to Christ. Whitfield would plead.

He would beg his hearers to flee from the wrath to come with tears in his eyes and cry. He would say, if you won't weep over your sins, George Whitfield will weep for you. And he'd throw his head back and tears would just stream down his face and he'd become so overwrought that it would take him several minutes to compose himself before he could continue his message.

He was so consumed with the lost dying and going to hell, he begged people to fly to Christ every time he preached. There's a lesson there. I go to churches where they don't give invitations, they don't call sinners to Christ, and their numbers are small.

Well, there's a reason why their numbers are small, and they'll stay that way until that changes. So there's lessons to learn from the preaching of George Whitfield. On one occasion, Whitfield was calling sinners to come to Christ.

He stomped his foot violently and he looked skyward, he looked heavenward, and he cried out, Stop! Stop! Gabriel! Gabriel! Come back! Lest you go through the heavenly portals without taking one soul with

you. Come back! He was very much an actor. And his acting ability was God-given, his oratory was God-given, and God used it for his glory.

One time, when Whitfield came to the dissenting meetinghouses, he caught a lot of flack from not being in the Church of England, and even though he was an ordained priest, he preached in dissenting meetinghouses, mainly. Dissenting? Dissenting. Dissenting from the Church of England.

And he would often call out, he'd call out, Gabriel! Gabriel! Have you any Baptists up there in heaven? Gabriel would say, No, no Baptists up here. Gabriel, have you any Methodists up there in heaven? No, no Methodists up here. Gabriel, how about Presbyterians? Do you have any Presbyterians up in heaven? No, no Presbyterians.

All we have up here are Christians. And Whitfield was very big on that. He was very Catholic in spirit in the regard that he believed in preaching Christ and Him crucified.

And it mattered little what denominational barriers were set up to prevent him from doing that. That's why he had his breach with the Scottish Presbytery, with the Erskine brothers. The Erskines were good men, but they had a wrong head at the time and they felt bad afterward, particularly one gentleman, Mr. Gibb, Reverend Gibb, apologized profusely.

What did Whitfield preach? We stand here in a center that I've been trained in as a Fellow of the Institute in Expository Preaching. And that's really all I know because that's what Stephen Alford taught me. But when I studied George Whitfield, he wasn't what I would call an expositor.

George Whitfield preached textually. When you look at Whitfield and Asahel Nettleton and men like that, even Finney, they would just have one verse of the Bible. They would announce one verse and they would preach on that one verse.

But by the time Whitfield was through, he brought in so much scripture that it was expositional by the time he was done. He was a master at that. And so when we preach, we need to be aware that Whitfield wasn't rigid in having all his sermons printed out.

He preached extemporere. In fact, he didn't have time to prepare sermons. If you preach six times a day, 13 times a week, often a week, you don't have time to prepare messages.

You're preaching all the time. He preached over 18,000 sermons of which only 79 are in existence with a few extras here and there in library archives. And when you look at his sermons, they're so plain and so basic and so ordinary.

You read them and you go, wow, how in the world did God use this plain, ordinary man? This message has nothing spectacular about it. And it was not the man. I wrote the book pretty much to show that it wasn't that George Whitfield was such an extraordinary man.

You have to be careful with biography because you don't want to lean towards hagiography. And I pointed out Whitfield's faults at the very outset. He was a human with human faults.

He had his share. He believed in slavery, which was wrong. He owned slaves, which was wrong.

It was a black mark against him. He was a man who was not faultless. He was an ordinary man with human failings.

All the great men I've known in my life have been human. Okay? All the great men I've known have been human, even your husband, Heather. And that's one thing I appreciate about him.

He was like he was all the time. So Whitfield had his faults, but when you study his life, you see that when he preached, it wasn't him so much, it was God through the man. He was a vessel, sanctified, set apart for God's use, completely surrendered to the Holy Spirit, and when he preached, he preached with authority.

But where did that authority come from? That authority came from on high because he asked for the Most High to anoint him before he preached. He preached with the power and unction of the Holy Spirit, much like Dr. Oford did. When Dr. Oford got up here, I said in my little booklet, *Why God Used Stephen F. Oford*, he was a man not big in physical size, but when he entered this pulpit, he looked like he could be a linebacker for the San Francisco Giants.

He was huge in the pulpit because of that authority that he had, that anointing. Well, Whitfield was very animated in the pulpit. Cornelius Winter, his traveling aide, in fact, Cornelius Winter, became a very famous and much-used preacher in his own right.

William J. of Bath, England, was converted under Winter's ministry and was the pastor in Bath for, I think, 63 years. He wrote the memoirs of Cornelius Winter. When I was in Rotterboro Chapel, I learned from the caretaker that Cornelius Winter preached his first sermon there and his last sermon there.

When he preached his last sermon, he went back to Paines and went a few miles down the road and died. Cornelius Winter said of Whitfield that Whitfield was such an actor in the pulpit that when it would come time to talk about the sinner before the judgment, the bar of God, that Whitfield would reach in his gown and pull out a black cap and put on a black judge's cap and wear it and he'd point at the sinner like a judge. He would act out every scene, every text so vividly.

On another occasion, when Whitfield was describing Peter and Peter's shame of leaving the court of denial, Whitfield would grab a hunk of his gown and bring it up over his face like this and walk away in shame with his head bowed. And Cornelius Winter said, as often as I have seen him do this, I have yet to see it not have its desired effect. Whitfield was a surrendered man.

Whitfield was a focused man. He was focused on the glory of God. He spent, I was telling Brother Al, at the table.

I believe one of the main reasons God used Whitfield and Wesley so much before they both entered the scene in their private lives, they had the love feast on Fetter Lane, the Oxford Club. The early Methodists would have these love feasts. Well, what was a love feast? It was a night of fasting.

It was on Friday. They'd fast all day Friday. They'd spend all night in prayer.

They did that every week. They would stay up all night in prayer and fasting. And what they were doing was laying hold of that hymn, Brother David, that hymn of Jesus Christ's Garment through sacrifice, that cost of prayer, and getting power from on high.

And when they burst on the scene, they didn't burst on the scene as popular preachers with human giftings. They burst on the scene with power from above. And that's why God used them.

That's why God shook two continents under Whitfield's preaching. It's been said that Whitfield was never a pastor, but in reality, he was the pastor of two continents. He would go and he'd start a little society here, and he'd go here, and he'd start a society there, and then Wesley would come behind him and organize them.

And Whitfield was so humble that he didn't mind that. In fact, when Wesley and he got back together over the years, it was Whitfield who healed the breach and took a condescending role of inferiority to Wesley. He would be Wesley's helper.

And that was George Whitfield. The last letters that that dear man wrote the last five years of his life were signed less than the least of all. He always viewed himself as a worm, a hell-bound worm, if not for the grace of God.

That was Whitfield. Well, I'll close with this. Last year, I went to Exeter, New Hampshire, with the pastor of the Old South Church, Presbyterian Church in New Barriport, Massachusetts, where Whitfield's buried beneath the pulpit.

When you go to the church, the church was built in 1756. It's the same way now as it is today, the same way when George Washington came in to get the first regiment of the Revolutionary War was gathered in their broad aisle. George Whitfield was buried beneath the pulpit.

You can go down these steps into the cellar, and in this crypt are three men. On the left-hand side is Jonathan Parsons, the pastor of the church, whom Whitfield called to be the pastor of that church that grew out of Revival, which is that church there now. Whitfield's in the middle, and Joseph Prince is here, who Dallimore incorrectly called him the blind boy that Whitfield referred to in his travels, the blind boy.

Dallimore said it must have been this other man he named him, and I corrected that. It was Joseph Prince, the blind preacher. Joseph Prince preached 10,000 sermons throughout New England in Revival, and he was completely blind.

He learned the Bible by someone reciting it to him, and he would ride with Whitfield. Whitfield mentions him in his journals. I was out riding today with the blind boy, Prince, and God came down.

That's the man buried next to Whitfield. His story is yet to be told. His Bible's there in the church.

Well, when we went to Exeter, we found this stone that's about as high as this plant, granite stone, from here to there, and it's got Whitfield. It says, Whitfield preached on this spot in Exeter, New Hampshire. It was the last sermon he ever gave.

He was dying. His asthma was absolutely suffocating him. I believe he not only had asthma, but he had emphysema, which grows from an asthmatic life, and here he is, 55 years old, and he's tired, and he wants to just go from Exeter.

He'd been up in Portsmouth. He wants to go from Exeter to Newburyport to spend the night to preach in the morning for his good friend, Jonathan Parsons, but as he comes into Exeter, the people find out, and a crowd gathers in the field of 4,000. 4,000 people immediately within 45 minutes gather.

Can you imagine that? Unannounced, comes into town, and 4,000 people, the ministers of the city, beg him to preach. So he agrees. He was always selfless in his body.

He would sleep less than three hours a night, and he's making his way to the two hogsheads that were hastily erected. They put a little board across two hogsheads, and he's walking there, and a pastor stops him. And he says, Mr. Whitfield, you look more fit for bed than to preach.

And Whitfield said, quite right, sir, but I'd rather wear out than rust out. I must go preach and then go home and die. He knew he was going to die.

And he stood in that field. He got up on that little platform. Now picture this.

He stood on that platform for two hours preaching. His health was gone. He stood bolt upright for two hours.

He didn't even have a podium to lean on. Imagine the strain on your body being in that weakened condition, standing there fatigued, standing bolt upright for two hours. But before he began his message, this is what to me typifies the man, and I'll end with this.

He stood there, and he said, Lord, Master, the great Emmanuel, my Redeemer, you who have assisted me in past times, you will not let me down. You will assist me again, and I will wait for thy assistance. And he stood there silent for two minutes, for two minutes as the breeze blew through the hair on that autumn day in late September 1770.

He stood there for two minutes. What was he waiting for? He was waiting for the one thing that he knew would affect his hearers, and that was the Holy Spirit in the man. He was waiting for God's assistance.

He was waiting for the anointing. He was waiting for unction from on high, because he had learned that was the only thing that stirred the heart. That was the only thing that broke up the false foundations of self-righteousness and showed man what corrupt hearts they actually had and what need they needed of a blessed, bleeding Redeemer.

And as he stood there, he felt that he had the assistance and the Holy Spirit was upon him. Then he preached one of the greatest messages of his day which said that his chest heaved the whole time. He could hardly get going, but once he did, his voice was lucid, and he took off.

He just took off like a bird soaring. And then he went home to the manse. He ate little.

At three o'clock in the morning, he awoke. He couldn't breathe. He started rushing from window to window, gasping for air.

That house in Newburyport is still there. It's a yellow house now. You can see the window where he was gasping for his last breath.

And he died in a chair with Richard Smith as aide hugging him, holding him. And he literally spent his life for Christ. It's like the little stanza that we know so well here that Dr. Oldford used to say, only one life right? Soon past only what's done for Christ will last, right? And as I lay dying, this is the last verse of that stanza, and as I lay dying, how great it shall be that the lamp of my life has been burned out for thee.

And that was George Whitfield. May we follow him in his temperament. May we follow him in his surrender.

May we follow him in his preaching.

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