

# John Wesley & Christian Zeal

by Geoffrey Thomas

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*John Wesley's conversion experience at 35 years old marked a significant turning point in his life, leading him to preach personal faith in Christ and emphasize the importance of instantaneous conversion.*

**Duration:** 59:29

**Scripture:** Isaiah 53:5, Ezekiel 33:8, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 22:14, Mark 16:15, Luke 5:32, Acts 2:38

**Topics:** "John Wesley"

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## Description

In this sermon transcript, the preacher, John Wesley, announces his text from Isaiah 53, emphasizing the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus for our sins. Despite initially preaching to a small group, his ministry quickly grew, with 1,500 people standing in the street by the end of his sermon. Wesley shares a personal story of a miraculous escape from a burning house, which deeply impacted him and reinforced his belief in God's providence. He later meets Peter Burla, who challenges Wesley to preach faith until he himself experiences it, leading Wesley to pray extemporaneously and preach personal faith in Christ. Despite facing violent opposition and mobs, Wesley remains steadfast in his mission to spread the word of God.

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## Transcript

I'm going to speak to you this morning on John Wesley and Tristan Veal. Now I came across the biography of Wesley, a number of biographies, and really these biographies inspired me, gave me a new appreciation for this man. And I live in Wales, about 40 miles away from the largest second-hand bookshop in the world.

In a little village called Hay-on-Wye, a castle, a cinema, many shops have been taken over by an unusual gentleman named Richard Booth. And this little town is just filled with millions of second-hand books. And I was going around there one day, and he was selling out a lot of books, which he felt were only fit for pulping because they were in such poor condition.

And there was a set of Wesley's works, the 14 volumes, the third edition of Wesley's works. And I had them all for a dollar. And what is excellent about these works is the 200-page index in the 14th volume.

And I can remember a good Presbyterian friend of mine, Dr. Ivan Evans, coming into my living room one day, and I said, look what I've just had. And the whole set of Wesley's works, look at them here, Ken Bob. And he looked at me, and he raised his nose, and he said, do you fumigate this room? Well, that's a good Presbyterian reply to the great Wesleyan.

But when you get into Wesley, you find out so much that stimulates and excites and moves you to the heights of admiration, especially for his zeal. Let me tell you something about Wesley's background. Wesley's great-grandfather, Bartholomew Westley, was a Puritan preacher who was ejected in 1662 and became a rector in Dorset and preached to little congregations in the Lyme Regis Valley until his death.

His son, John Westley, Wesley's grandfather, was a protégé of John Owen. He was a student at Oxford alongside Charnock and Howe and Philip Henry and Joseph Alain, and he became an itinerant evangelist and had many conversions. Although he was never episcopally ordained, he married the daughter of John White, who was one of the two Assessors at the Westminster Assembly, and a bitter opponent of William, Lord and Arminianism.

In 1661, he was imprisoned for not using the prayer book and was interviewed by the Bishop of Bristol and recorded the whole interview, the repartees, the discussion they had in his diary. And a century later, John Westley, who had that diary, reprinted it as a justification for his own practice of itinerant preaching. He was four times imprisoned and died when he was only 34.

He died, in fact, before his father, Bartholomew Westley. On his mother's side, John Wesley's grandfather was Dr. Samuel Annersley, who many considered to be the leading Puritan preacher. At the age of six, he began to read 20 chapters of the Bible a day and continued to do so all his life.

He was the minister of St. Giles, Triplegate, where Cromwell was married and where John Milton and John Fox were buried. He wrote the morning exercises at Triplegate, a series of sermons on the conscience, very influential, and many of them reprinted by Wesley. He too was ejected in 1662 and began to the chief non-conformist congregation in London for 30 years.

At the communion season, he himself would take the cup around every one of his members with a verse of scripture suitable for the needs of everyone, which practice and which verse would live in the memory of his congregation for a long time subsequently. And he married another daughter of a Puritan lawyer who had been one of the lay assessors at the Westminster Assembly. So two of Wesley's great-grandfathers were present at the Westminster Assembly.

Wesley's father, Samuel, was born in 1662, that notable year. He was intended for the non-conformist ministry, went to one of their colleges at Stoke Newington, and was set a project by one of his lecturers there, that he was to read the Anglican system of ecclesiology, and he was to refute it. Well, he read it and was persuaded by it, and so left then the ranks of the non-conformists and joined the Anglican Episcopalian Church, still retaining many of his Puritan convictions.

The emphasis on repentance and conversion, he was a very strong Protestant. He had a great love for biblical exegesis. He wrote a commentary on the book of Job, and Wesley kindly said of his father, he preached the same gospel that I preach.

But it is doubtful really whether Samuel Wesley grasped the doctrine of justification by faith. Wesley's mother was the remarkable Susanna. Brought up in that splendid Puritan household, her father, Dr. Samuel Annesley, she was his 25th child.

It was a home of learning, of disciplined devotions, of moral teaching, full of theological discussion. And when she was 13 years of age, she reviewed the whole dispute between the dissenters and the Episcopalian Church, and she concluded that the views of her father, and this father at that, were wrong.

And she at 13 then became an Anglican.

She was attractive and highly intelligent, modest, earnest, a devout Christian. I believe she was one of the most capable women in England of her day. She married Wesley's father when she was 19, and she bore him 19 children in 21 years.

It was a home of great poverty when the twin sons were... When twin sons were born, Samuel wrote to his bishop, last night my wife brought me a few children. There are but two yet, a boy and a girl. I think they're all present.

We've had four in two years and a day, three of which are living. Wednesday evening, my wife and I joined stocks, which came to six shillings to send for coal. We spent some time in Decker's prison, during which time she ran the home.

The family was raised to learn the scriptures, and sing hymns, and zealously keep the Lord's day. She spent time alone every week, talking independently to each child. It was John's turn on Thursdays to be instructed in the Bible by his mother, and Wesley passionately loved his mother.

She was his counselor and his friend for many years. It's something like the relationship between Dr. Machen and his mother. She read the Puritan classics.

She rejected the doctrine of predestination. She kept a journal. She examined herself.

Every day the whole household was silent, while she spent an hour in prayer and meditation, reading the word, and every Sunday evening she held a little service. Well, it started as a little service in her kitchen for the servants and the laborers in the local small holdings. Twenty-five to thirty people gathered there at first, but it ended up with two to three hundred people packing into her kitchen and listening outside the windows as she exhorted them in the scriptures.

Well, that was the scene of Wesley's upbringing, his background. While so much of dissent, of non-conformity, of Presbyterianism went into Unitarianism, Wesley was raised then in an evangelical Episcopalian home. Now, let me say something about the famous fire.

The fire took place in 1709, when John was six. It was midnight on an August day, and the flames somehow gripped the house, and the neighbors came running up across the Fenlands, seeing the vicarage in flames, and Samuel was a very unpopular vicar, and the farmers argued with him that he'd set it on fire himself, and there was complete confusion there, and they thought all the children were out until they heard a little cry, help, in an upstairs window. The father saw John's face, head outlined against the flames.

He tried to run back into the vicarage, but the house was like a furnace, and so he called on his children to pray with him, to commit John to God, and they were kneeling in a circle outside the house, and while they were praying, two of the laborers, seeing the boy's plight, went up to the wall. One stood against the wall, another on his shoulders, stretched out into the darkness, and told the boy to jump, and the boy jumped out, and was caught in midair, and the roof caved in behind him, and when they got up from their knees, the laborers handed John over to Samuel, his father. I could not believe it till I had kissed him two or three times.

He said, come neighbors, let us kneel down, let us give thanks to God. He has given me all my eight children. Let the house go.

I am rich enough. That scene made a tremendous impression upon the young boy. Every year he kept the anniversary of his deliverance from the flames.

It was a sign of God's hand upon him. He saw himself as a brand plucked from the burning. He even wrote his epitaph at one stage with those words upon it, a brand plucked from the burning.

His brother saw that and amended it, a brand not once only plucked out of the fire. He had been saved from the eternal burning. Well, Wesley went to Charterhouse School, and then to Oxford when he was 17.

When he graduated, he felt he should go into the ministry, and he prepared with his usual diligence. He could read the original languages, Hebrew and Greek. The Greek New Testament was in his hands all his life.

He preached in the villages of Oxfordshire until he was appointed a fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford in 1726. There had been a growing seriousness at this time. He rose at four every morning and read such books as Jeremy Taylor's Holy Living and Holy Dying, and Thomas Akempis' Imitation of Christ, and William Law's Serious Call, with a whole stress upon the inward life, with its confusion of imparted and imputed righteousness.

He kept diaries, and the diaries contained no notes of joy and hope, no singing. And after two years, he became his father's curate at Epworth, until he returned then to Oxford as a fellow for another six years. Six years of disciplined living again, an ascetic.

He tried to keep the fast days of the ancient church. He tried to keep the old Sabbath, the Saturday, as a holy day. He visited prisons, and the sick he gave away his spare money.

He was only getting 30 pounds a year, and he had no peace with that. He wrote in his journal at this stage, I think one can never be too much afraid of dying before one has learned to live. And to the question in the scriptures, who will deliver us from the body of this death? Wesley answered, death will deliver us.

Death shall destroy at once the whole body of sin. And so there is this Gnosticism which is influencing him. Then in 1735 there came a break, in his life, but the death of his father.

He went to visit his father on his deathbed, and Samuel put his hands on his head and prayed for him, and his last words to him were, be inward witness son, be inward witness. That is the strongest proof of Christianity. And John wrote, I didn't at that time understand those words.

Well, five months after his father's death, Wesley went to America, to Georgia. His motives were, he says, my chief motive is the hope of saving my own soul. He came seeking salvation.

It was a sort of work religion. On board the ship he met evangelical Christians for the first time. He met Moravian missionaries.

There was a violent storm in the middle of the Atlantic, and they mainsail was split, and the seas crashed in, poured through the holes below deck. There was complete panic by most people, except these evangelicals. They were singing psalms in the middle of the storm.

And afterwards Wesley staggered across to their pastor and said, weren't you afraid? I thank God, no, he said. But weren't you, your women and children, weren't they afraid? Oh no, our women and children aren't afraid to die. Well, as soon as he arrived in Georgia, he went to meet the leader of this evangelical community, Spangenberg, the second in command to count Zinzendorf, and later, of course, his successor.

He wanted to discuss his vocation of being a preacher. And Spangenberg hadn't got on, hadn't spoken to him very long before he discovered that this man had little understanding of the Christian faith. Do you know yourself? Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with you, a spirit, that you are a child of God? Well, Wesley had never been asked those questions before and was confused.

How to answer? Spangenberg followed up, do you know Jesus Christ? I know he's the Savior of the world. True, do you know he has saved you? I hope he has died to save me. Do you know yourself? Now I do, he said.

And he wrote in his journal, alongside the report of that conversation, they were vain words. Well, the whole time in Georgia was a disaster. The Indians weren't the simple expectant people that he expected them to be, and his preaching of the law and mortification and self-denial to them didn't help them in any way.

It was like ironing dirty linen. He returned after two years. He recorded in his diary as the ship came to land's end off the English coast, I went to America to convert the Indians.

But oh, who shall convert me? Who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion. It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country, and what have I learned myself? Why, what I least expected, that I who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God. Within a week of arriving, he was at London, and again looked for the evangelicals, the Moravian community, their leader Peter Birla, 10 years younger than Wesley, sent by Zinzendorf to be a missionary to England and America.

They had long conversations together, and one phrase of Birla stuck in Wesley's mind, my brother, my brother, that philosophy of yours must be purged away. Within a month he came under conviction of his sin and of his unbelief. He could see by faith alone we are saved.

What should he do, he asked Birla, should he stop preaching? Birla said, preach faith till you have it, and then because you have it, you will preach faith. At this time, he began to pray extemporaneously in public meetings, and to preach personal faith in Christ, but there was still a hang-up. I couldn't comprehend what Birla spoke of, an instantaneous work of conversion.

I couldn't understand how this faith should be given in a moment, how a man could at once be thus turned from darkness to light, from sin and misery to righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost. I searched the scriptures again, touching this very thing, particularly the Acts of the Apostles, but to my other astonishment, found scarce any instances there of any other than instantaneous conversion. Scarce any so slow as that of Paul, who was three days in the pangs of a new birth.

I had but one retreat to Birla, namely, thus I grant God wrought in the first ages of Christianity, but the times have changed. What reason have I to believe he works in the same manner now? Well, on Sunday

the 23rd of April, Birla promised to bring him some living witnesses, so he brought him some converted people, four Christians, and he sat them there in front of Wesley, and one by one they testified to him of the work of grace in their own hearts, and what God had done for them. They sang a hymn together at the end, and Wesley couldn't sing it, for weeping, and Birla prayed with him.

Birla said, I called upon the blood-covered name of the Savior for mercy on this sinner. The next week they met together, and Birla kept talking to him. Within a fortnight he left for Carolina.

I beseech you, believe in your Jesus Christ, he wrote to him. This is a time of seeking on the part of Wesley. On May the 24th, he woke up, and he opened his New Testament, and he read there, that are given unto us succeeding great and precious promises, that we should be made partakers of the divine nature.

He went to St. Paul's Cathedral, and the choir sang there, out of the depths of I cry to thee, O Lord, hear my voice, may thy ear be attentive to the voice of my supplication. There was an earnest giving to him in that scripture, and in that psalm of God's intention to be merciful to him. In the evening, well let me read these familiar words to you, I went very unwillingly to the society in Alder Gate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the epistle to the Romans.

About a quarter to nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sin, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death. His younger brother Charles, who had been converted the previous week, and was sick, was visited immediately.

An hour later, they trooped in to his bedroom with his friends. I believe, he said, we sang a hymn with great joy, and parted with prayer. Now that is one of the most famous conversions in the history of the church, and it seems to me one of the most significant features of it is the age of Wesley.

He was 35 years old. He was at an age when many another's life's work was over. Brainerd, and McShane, and Henry Martin, were the best years of many preachers, like Virgin, were arguably behind them.

Here, Wesley's life work was beginning, and that is so encouraging to all of us, isn't it? When we think when we are over 35, well, the best years of our lives are behind us. Who knows what great new things God will have for us. Today, in the postman's park near the post office headquarters in London, all those gates and the house are flattened long since, but there's a plaque on the wall of the place where it stood, and the London City Mission has open-air meetings just by that plaque, in that park, all through the summer months.

Well, five days later, on a Sunday, in a large fashionable company in London, Wesley sat for a meal, and of course turned the conversation around, testifying to them of his faith in Christ, that he'd been converted, they all must be converted. Well, it was sheer bad taste, and so after the supper, his hostess, Mrs. John Sutton, wrote a letter to his brother, Samuel Wesley, who was a high Anglican preacher, whom now Wesley was going to visit, and she said, uh, convert John while he's with you, for after his behavior on Sunday, when you hear it, you will think him a not quite right man. If a stop isn't put to this, the mischief he'll do wherever he goes, among the ignorant but well-meaning Christians, will be very great.

Two weeks after his conversion, Wesley was invited to preach the official university sermon at Oxford by the vice-chancellor at St. Mary's Oxford, and the whole university was assembled, the doctors, the masters, the graduates, the scholars. He'd been converted 18 days, he entered the pulpit, and he announced his text, Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 8, by grace are ye saved through faith, and then he opens up the the text, what faith is, through which we are saved, not historical, not the faith of demons, not the faith of apostles, but one faith in Christ, a whole ascent to the gospel, a full reliance on the blood of Christ, a trust in the merits of his life and death and resurrection, a resting upon him as our atonement and life, as given for us, as living in us, a closing with him, a cleaving to him as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, in one word, our salvation.

You are saved from sin through faith, all past sin, all guilt, all fear, all the power of sin, that is outlined, and then he begins, ah some will say this is an uncomfortable doctrine, nay it is very full of comfort to all sinners, that whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed, that the same Lord over all is rich in mercy unto all who call upon him, here is comfort, highest heaven, strong as death, what mercy for all, for Zacchaeus, a public robber, for Mary Magdalene, a common harlot, I can hear someone say, then I, even I may hope for mercy, and so you may, you who are afflicted, whom none has comforted, God will not reject your prayer, no, perhaps he will say the next hour, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee, so forgiven that they shall reign over thee no more, yea,

and that Holy Spirit shall bear witness with thy spirit, that thou art a child of God, oh glad tidings, tidings of great joy, which are sent unto all people, for everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, come ye and buy without money, without price, whatsoever your sins are, though red like crimson, though more than the hairs of your head, return to the Lord, he will have mercy upon you, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon, this must be the foundation of all our preaching, it must be preached first, not to all, to whom then are we not to preach it, whom shall we leave out, the poor, oh they have a peculiar right to have the gospel preached to them, the unlearned, the young, the sinners, least of all he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, why then, if

any, we are to leave out the rich, and the learned, and the reputable, and the moral men, truly they accept themselves often from hearing, yet we must speak the words of our Lord, for here is the tenor of our commission, go and preach the gospel to every creature, it goes on like that, gracefully, powerful, it is the first sermon in the book of sermons, in the volumes of Wesley's works, and he preaches again and again at Oxford to the students and the university, there are five sermons there, on the almost Christian, and awake thou that sleepest, they're most powerful sermons, and here he is then, 18 days after his conversion, and the fire of God is upon him, he goes from Oxford to the continent for three months, and visits the Moravian Christians, and when he returns he begins preaching

in earnest in the London churches, one by one the doors are closed against him, he is not allowed to return, indeed the pulpit of great Saint Helens was closed to him for 52 years, preached there in the morning, they wouldn't allow him to preach there again, 52 years later they allowed him to preach there again, and he wrote in his diary on the second occasion, what has God wrought since that time, he went to preach in Bristol and Oxford, the same things happened even in his father's old church at Ashworth, the vicar didn't allow him to preach there, people began crowding to hear him, he was preaching four or five times a day when churches are open there, then in rooms and private houses, two, three hundred people packing into parlours to hear him preach with great conviction, it is well

known how he began to preach in the open air, Whitfield had had the same problems, being refused permission to preach in consecrated buildings until the bishop agreed, Whitfield was going to Newgate prison, and then to Kingswood, the mining area near Bristol, there was an awful need there because of the poverty and the squalor, and so on the 17th of February 1739, he preached in the open air on a little hill, a natural pulpit for 200 miners, and by the end of March there were 20,000 people gathering there to hear Whitfield preach, the fire was kindled in the country, he invited Wesley, come quickly he said, and see what's happening here in Bristol, Wesley was reluctant, and Charles his brother was positively against it, and so Wesley with one of his weaknesses took a lot, and the lot said

go, so he went, he arrived in Bristol on the 31st of March, and on April 1st he followed Whitfield around, watching and looking with amazement, seeing what Whitfield was doing, seeing the great crowds hanging on to the words, the power of Whitfield's ministry, the next day he took the plunge at four o'clock, he preached to 3,000 people, announcing his text, Isaiah 61, 1 and 2, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captive, and recovery of sight to them that are blind, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and William Webb was converted on that occasion, 30 years old, his first convert, he lived 67 more years full of peace and joy in believing, there's a

beacon there now on Hannah Mount, Hannah Mount, 65 feet high with a flashing green light on it, and a plaque and an extract from Whitfield's journals and Wesley's journals, where the beginning of open air preaching and the evangelical awakening of the 18th century began, this then was Wesley's great work, the preaching of his lifetime, which he spent more than 50 years, he started that April in 1739, and by the end of the year he preached 500 sermons, only eight in buildings, he had invitations everywhere to preach, and so here we find him doing a series on Romans on Saturday nights in Bristol, and going to Newgate prison, and doing a series on John, and so there are enormous congregations everywhere, he and Whitfield in London are preaching to 14,000 people, for youthfulness there is

nothing that can compare with open air preaching, he said, his voice was clear and strong, it wasn't as rich as Whitfield's, it was measured, the distance it could carry, 84 yards, and heard perfectly, he spoke of the language of the faith and the hand, and he sometimes thought that Whitfield's actions were too violent, he often preached with his hands held high, and prayed extemporaneously always, wore a gown and cassock and Geneva band in the open air, knelt to pray, and the text he most commonly preached upon in his open air ministry was the verse from Corinthians, Jesus Christ, who of God is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, it's very significant I think that such a theological text should be the text that he used so much in open air preaching, the

sermons were printed and they were sold by the thousands, they were used as tracts, then as tests of orthodoxy, guidelines to orthodox evangelical doctrine, they were used for reading in the little society meetings when there was no Wesleyan preacher who could minister to them, in Crickhead on the Derby-Nottingham border, the preacher failed to arrive one Sunday, and so the steward, the elder in the congregation, went to across the way to his home and brought back some of the sermons of Wesley and looked to the congregation nervously and said, well I've got several sermons here and I'll read one of them but I don't know which one to read, the voice came from the gallery, read the shortest Henry and of course Wesley kept the journal, he began it in 1735, October the 14th and he ended it on

October the 24th, 1790, 54 years he kept the journal, 21 neat volumes, his base was London where there was a foundry which had been ruined, they were casting a cannon, the cannon had exploded and killed

many people and devastated this building and they bought it for 115 pounds and spent 700 pounds repairing it, they put an apartment there for Wesley, a chapel, a book room for literature, a stable, a study, but he was never in London long because he was always in demand for preaching, he traveled a quarter of a million miles and preached 40,000 sermons and wrote over 200 pamphlets and books and he often walked, when he was in Georgia he was walking a thousand miles a year, when he was 85 he was still capable of walking five miles in a day, but he usually rode on his horse about 65 miles

but in his 60s he grew tired of the horse and they had a carriage specially built for him which had a bookcase fitted into it and it was his study and his office and his library and even when he was on board ships as often he went across to Ireland, he'd sit in his carriage on top of the ship and go across in that way.

In the early years there was tremendous hardship and poverty, when he went down to Cornwall they walked down or two of them shared a horse between them and took it in turn to ride it, three of them, and they lived on Blackberries, Mulberries as they went down. In St Ives he and John Nelson had to sleep on the floor, Wesley using Nelson's top coat as a pillow and Nelson using Birkitt's notes from the New Testament as his pillow and there for two weeks they slept on the floor and preached in St Ives in the open air and the chiming church clock would wake them on the hours at three o'clock. Nelson woke up one night and groaned as he turned over so stiff lying on the floor and Wesley called across him through the darkness, cheer up brother the skin is only off one side so far.

So Wesley claimed that he never lost a night's sleep and that he could sleep anywhere just for a few minutes. He preached everywhere, doorways and barns and main streets, market places, the horse block, the steps of Cardiff Castle, in hollows on rocks, village greens, in a bowling green, a shooting range, a brickyard, clifftops and beaches, quay sides, forge rooms, butter markets, theatres, ballrooms. If he stayed in an inn then the first thing he did in the morning before he left he would preach in the yard to the people there.

He would preach in the chapels of the Baptist and the Presbyterians, the Independents and the Quakers, wherever people gathered. If he was walking and came across a funeral service he would wait for the service to be over then he would preach to the people that were gathered there. He worked on a triangle, his northern base was Newcastle on Tyne and when he first went there with John Taylor and saw the town, its depravity, its drunkenness, its swearing and its cursing, you and I would be moved to despair but he was moved to hope it was a town right for the gospel.

And so 7am in the morning he and John Taylor stood together at the end of a crowded street and struck up the hundredth psalm, all people that on earth do dwell sing to the Lord with cheerful voices. Three or four people gathered around and then he announced his text from Isaiah 53. He was bruised, he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquity.

The chastisement of our peace was upon him with his stripes we are healed. By the time he'd finished preaching there were 1500 people standing in that street. If you want to know who I am my name is John Wesley.

At five o'clock this evening with God's help I'll be here to preach again. The people were waiting for him, greater crowds than ever. That was the pattern of his ministry.

At Epworth he returned after 13 years and found an old servant of his father's there and was delighted to find that this man was a believer. Offered the curate there his services to preach that night, the man refused and so he went to worship there and the curate preached on quench not the spirit and one of the ways of quenching the spirit was enthusiasm he preached. Well John Taylor was the first out of the congregation and as all the congregation left he told them at the door John Wesley will preach here tonight in the graveyard.

And so there was John standing on his father's gravestone preaching that night and the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the holy ghost. And every evening that week he continued to preach to great crowds of people. Great indeed was the shaking among them lamentation and great mourning was heard.

God bowing their heart so that on every side with one accord they lift up their voice and weep aloud. Surely he who sent his spirit to breathe upon them will hear their cry and will help them. He often preached at five in the morning he would go to a village cross in the street and begin to sing.

The five o'clock service he said was the glory of Methodism and was grieved if he heard a Methodist preacher was neglecting the early morning service because then you'd catch the miner on his way to the pit and the steel worker on the way to the forge or the mill or the farm laborer going to the farm. Early rising was a great part of Wesley's life. Dr. Lloyd-Jones says you can divide all men into two classes.

They're either eaters or sleepers. He gets that from Lord Horton. It was the king's physician that he worked with.

Either you you're a good eater and a poor sleeper or you sleep well and you're a poor eater. Everyone is one or the other. Well now Wesley must have been because he slept very little.

He got an alarm clock. He found he wasn't sleeping through the night. He got an alarm clock and set it at seven.

Still awoke in the night. The next morning he set it at six. Still awoke in the night.

Next morning set it at five. Still he was awake in the night. The next morning he set it at four and slept right through the night.

And that was the time he kept for the rest of his life. He always woke up at four and he says very naively by the same experiment writing earlier and earlier every morning anyone may find how much sleep he really needs. Well Wesley used his time so powerfully.

He was confronted with tremendous violence. Players seeing a crowd would come across and would act and dramatize and put on a show would juggle and to try and would divert attention from him. But mobs were often screaming after his blood.

In Walsall a crowd came racing after him shouting drown him hang him crucify him tear his clothes off. He lost the lapel of his coat. He was hemmed in against the river and a man carried him across on his shoulder.

At far mouth the crowd burst into the house and began to push down the lap and plough the wall of the room where he was and the maid told to hide in the cupboard. But he suddenly opened the door and went

out and confronted the mob. Here am I. Which of you has anything to say to me? To which of you have I done anything wrong? To you or you or you? Pushing his way through them he comes to the street.

Neighbors countrymen do you desire to hear me speak? Yes he shall speak. Nobody shall hinder him. In Pensford they brought a bull and they baited the bull with sharp sticks and they drove the bull through the crowd.

It wouldn't go it didn't want to go but they drove it on with knives and right up to Wesley where he was preaching and try to throw this bleeding bull against him sending it off with a hand and trying to preach until it knocked the table down and some of his friends caught him and then this mob fell on the table and tore it to pieces and he moved 50 yards down and got up on a little hillock and continued to preach there. In Bradford-on-Avon the mob waited till he finished and then began to catcall and yell and Wesley writes this in his journal. Especially one called a gentleman who had filled his pockets with rotten eggs but a young man came unawares and clapped his hands clapped his hands on each side and mashed them all at once.

In an instant he was perfume all over. In Rugeley with William Grimshaw he was preaching and the mob poured over the hill like a torrent half drunk clubs in their hands he was beaten to the ground the mob were on him like lions. Grimshaw was torn thrown down and mud and filth covered him of every kind another friend was dragged by his hair no one did anything to protect him.

When he preached at Chester the next day the mob tore the house down where he stayed. Well now there were so many converts that he had um let me just pass on his zeal was phenomenal all the work he did he established dispensaries for the sick saving schemes for poor people. He opened a school for miners children at Kingswood he opened an orphanage at Newcastle.

After 30 years he could say he found an increase in zeal not a decrease. I want all the world to come to know the one I know. He visited prisons Newgate prison on the 26th of December.

47 were sentenced to death some of them scarcely more than boys. It all came out the prison doors opening their chains clinking and there was an awful silence by the crowd. Wesley stood up to preach and announced his text it is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than 99 just persons that need not repentance.

Three days later 20 were hung together five of whom were in peace he wrote. He wrote to his brother your business as well as mine is to save souls when we took priest's orders we understood to make it our one business. I think every day lost which is not mainly employed in this very thing.

He wasn't just a preacher he wasn't some professional evangelist. Wherever he went whatever he did he must speak he must warn others men and women rich or poor a man walking ahead of him on the road he would lengthen his stride and catch up with him. The hostler who helped him to dismount at the inn he would speak to him the guest at an inn table the servant girl who came to bring the food so astonished to see a man of his breeding obviously a gentleman speaking of her soul.

In Yorkshire in the Dales a woman stopped him on one occasion sir you didn't remember me when you were at Prudhoe two years since you breakfasted at Thomas Newton's I'm your sister you looked at me as you were leaving and you said be in earnest. The word sunk into my heart I didn't know what earnestness was till I thought and found Christ. His ministry of course was continued against a background of

controversy with other evangelicals with the world with the established church.

He had so many critics among the clergy and defended himself so movingly. Who is there among you brethren that is willing even to save souls from death at such a price? Can you bear the summer sun to beat upon your naked head and suffer the wintry rain or wind from whatever quarter it blows? Are you able to stand in the open air without any covering or defense when God casts abroad his snow like wool? And yet these are some of the smallest inconveniences for above all there are the contradiction of sinners the scoffings of the vulgar and the small contempt and reproach of every kind stupid brutal violence to the hazard of health or life or limb. Brethren do you envy me this honor? What I pray you would you buy to be a field preacher? I wonder of those who still talk so loud of the indecency of field preaching.

The highest indecency is in St. Paul's Cathedral when a considerable part of the congregation are asleep or talking or looking about not minding a word the preacher says. But there is the highest decency in a church yard or field when the whole congregation behave and look as if they saw the judge of all and heard him speaking from heaven. The bishop of Bristol sought to stop him and he writes a defense of the revival and answers this accusation that the evangelicals are the common enemy.

A public letter, my lord it can't be long before we shall both drop this house of earth and stand naked before God. Nor before we shall see the great white throne coming down from heaven and him that sitteth thereon. On his left hand shall be those who assure thee to dwell in everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

In that number will be all who died in their sins and among the rest those whom you preserve from repentance. Will you then rejoice in your clergy? The lord grant it may not be said in that hour these have perished in their iniquity but their blood I require at thy hands. When he preached his preaching always invariably began with the preaching of the law of demands.

Before he preached the good news he would speak of the general love of God to sinners and his willingness that they should be saved. Then he said he would preach the law in the strongest closest most searching manner possible only intermixing the gospel here and there showing it as it were a far off after more and more persons are convinced of sin we may mix more and more of the gospel in order to beget faith to raise into spiritual life those whom the law have slain. But this is not to be done too hastily either.

He writes the preachers who are neglecting their books your talent in preaching doesn't increase it is just the same as it was seven years ago it is lively but not deep there is little variety there is no compass of thought reading only can supply this with daily meditation and daily prayer. You wrong yourself by omitting this you can never be a deep preacher without it any more than a thorough christian.

Oh begin fix some part of every day for private exercises you may acquire the taste which you have not what is tedious at first will afterwards be pleasant whether you like it or not read and pray daily it's for your life there's no other way else you will be a trifler all your days and a pretty superficial preacher do justice to your own soul give it time and means to grow don't starve any longer he himself read five hours out of every 24 when one objector said to him but i only read the bible he said just so said george bell and what is the fruit why now he neither reads the bible nor anything else if you need no books but the bible you're above the apostle paul he wanted others to bring the book says he but especially the parchment he taught his preachers the duty of repetition to make

every particular item play into their understanding to fix it in their memories and write it in their hearts i remember my father asking my mother how could you have the patience to tell that blockhead the same thing 20 times over and she said why if i told him only 19 times i'd have lost all my labor he had scathing things to say about what was called gospel preaching thought it had become just a fine just a cant word we know no gospel without salvation from sin he writes on the gospel ministry what it is and opens it up that it must be the whole counsel of god it must be christ's sufferings on the cross and man's involvement the promises and divine wrath justification by faith i must rush on here he spent some time in ireland and in scotland on his labors he found the irish and

immeasurably loving people but very ignorant of the gospel he crossed there many times 42 times and preached in every county except cary sleeping in mansions and in mud huts with rain falling through the thatch when he was 86 years old yet preached there the last time i now find i'm growing old my sight is decayed so that i can't read small print unless there's a strong light my strength is decayed so that i walk much slower my memory of names is decayed so i stop a little to recollect them he preached at that last methodist conference of ireland and then went to the quayside at kingstown a great company gathered there to watch him going he stood and saw them all there and gave out a hymn and they all sang loudly then he slowly knelt down and prayed that god would bless them god would

bless their families that god would bless the church that god would bless ireland and some fell on his neck and kissed him and then on the ship he went the last they saw of him was standing in the prow with hands lifted in prayer as the boat went down the river and into the irish sea as he commended them to the lord there was little left at the time of his death he had no house he had no property he had his books and those were to be sold and the money was to be given to methodist funds he had his clothes the little coach and his loose cash he preached four months before his death in colchester on each side a minister had a stand with their arms under his armpits to keep him up his voice was feeble but his countenance seraphic long white hair down his shoulders his last sermon in the open

air he preached at that time under a great tree at winchell sea the kingdom of heaven is at hand repent and believe the gospel with a trembling voice he spoke the benediction and the people were aware that was the last time they would hear him and someone wrote the tears of the people flowed in torrents in february 1781 was his last illness and he often repeated the words then i the chief of sinners am but jesus died for me he was unconscious for periods and people were thinking he was dying and then he would rally and talk with surprising strength and vigor and when he could preach no more and when he could write in his journal or more he could still sing and he died with isaac watts on his lips rallying and with a loud clear voice singing i'll praise my car while i breath and when my

voice is closed in death praise shall employ my nobler powers and he sang that hymn all the way through and gave funeral instructions what was to be preached and then turned to them all and said but the best of all is god is with us and then tried to sing that hymn again i'll pray and that's all he got out and so left this world i admire and i revere wesley not for his views of god's sovereignty and salvation not for his sacramentalism and incipient perfectionism not for his opposition to the doctrines of grace which at times were dreadful caricatures and cruel he was a weaker man for that zeal is a wonderful thing but zeal can be dangerous like a boiler with a safety valve not working on it the cults the mormons we are surrounded by zealous people there are other graces besides the grace

of zeal but truth when it is wed to zeal is a powerful influence i love him for what he saw so clearly the great doctrine men need to be converted need to be convicted of sin need to repent need then to be

separated from the world in a life of holiness and not to live alone but to live in fellowship with other believers his keeping of the lord's day his belief in the infallibility of scripture his belief in heaven and hell i love his zeal against all opposition he was steadfast he was unmovable he was always abounding in the work of the lord he had a late start but oh how he labored more abundantly than those that were converted much younger we're told that there is a crisis of power in the church today and the crisis lies so often in our understanding of the power that is available to us

there is the power of faith that is spoken of in the eleventh chapter of hebrews which brings such great victories which subdues kingdoms and obtains promises and out of weakness men and women are made strong by faith who can measure the power of faith that is exercised in christ jesus our lord there is the power of the truth men and women the word of god is a sword the gospel is the power of god and the salvation to all who believe and there is the power of prayer the effectual servant prayer of a righteous man avails much that was the secret of the power of this man of god of john wesley this was the basis of his zeal how much has he to teach us how he rebukes us for our coldness in our lord's service amen may god help us let us pray we thank thee oh lord for this great company of

witnesses which surrounds us we thank thee for the zeal and fervor the service of those in dark days whom thou did send forth to shine his light that thou art the god of wesley waiting for thy people to cry to thee now and oh god we do cry to thee lord have mercy upon us and yea out of this congregation raise up wesleys and whitfields oh raise up many many we beseech thee who shall trumpet forth the great gospel of the glory of thy grace in christ multitudes of sinners perishing in darkness may come to the light of the glory of thy countenance in the face of jesus and seeing that light should be dazzled and spoiled for all the voluptuous beauties of this world ever consumed in order to serve wholeheartedly all their days this glorious and beautiful son so our heavenly father be pleased to

stir us up with thee inspire fire lead and guide us we ask these mercies that great glory may be given to him who at such a price purchase us from our sins even our lord jesus christ amen

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