

January 21, 2018

“O That I Was a Flame of Pure and Holy Fire”

The Revolutionary Gospel Urgency of George Whitefield

Various Scriptures

The surest remedies for a sin-sick nation are gospel preaching and gospel living.

LTS: Psalm 9

In 1776 when the United States became its own sovereign nation, it was understood that the basis of this new society would be self-governance. It was said that ours would be a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Of course the fundamental assumption of such a scheme was that the people who made up this fledgling nation possessed the necessary moral character that would preserve their liberty and protect them from tyranny.

Its clear from the letters and documents of our founding fathers that this need of a fundamental morality was necessary. For example, when John Adams was serving as our second president he wrote a letter to the Massachusetts militia that said in part,

We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.¹

A few decades later America was visited by french historian and diplomat, Alexis de Tocqueville, who, after a thorough tour of our country is attributed to drawing the following conclusion, “America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, she will cease to be great.” In other words, the secret to American freedom is American virtue.

But if it is true that at the founding of our nation the population possessed a general and remarkable virtue, to what was that virtue owing. Or, said in another way, if Tocqueville was right in declaring that America was good, where did that general “goodness” that ambient virtue come from? Answer: it came in large measure through the life and ministry of a single man. A man whose name was George Whitefield.

Let’s begin with a short biography, and then talk about his revolutionary sense of Gospel Urgency. I say “revolutionary” in part because he is sometimes called the

¹ Eric Metaxas, *If You Can Keep It*, (New York, Viking, 2016), 61

spiritual father of the American Revolution. I say it also and because his life and ministry transformed NOT one but two nations, England and the United States of America.

I. Whitefield's Biography:

1. George Whitefield was born to Thomas and Elizabeth Whitefield in Gloucester England on Dec. 16, 1714. That's 62 years before the American Revolution. His parents owned and operated the Bell Inn which was both a hotel and tavern. When his father died unexpectedly, it was left to his mother to run the inn. Though George was a precocious young man who had a knack for all things academic, there was no money to send him to school. By and by, however, someone mentioned to his mother that George might be able to attend Oxford if he was willing to be a Servitor² which meant that he would agree to serve some of the wealthier students as he went to school. And so he did.
2. Upon entering Oxford he met fellow students, John and Charles Wesley and joined what they called the Holy Club. The club was made up of a number of religiously serious young men who were all studying to become Anglican priests and who devoted themselves to serving the Lord. They were, however, unregenerate young men no matter how religious.
3. Having never known the true gospel of Jesus Christ, they thought they could earn their salvation by good works. Accordingly, Whitefield's life was one of almost draconian self-discipline and self-denial. He understood Christianity to be a set of external religious duties and performance. It was about living peaceably with one's neighbor, keeping a temperate diet, performing the forms of Sunday worship, and occasionally extending one's hand for the relief of the poor.³
4. All of this changed, however, when Charles Wesley (who was the first member of the Holy Club to embrace Christ alone for salvation) loaned Whitefield a book by Henry Scougal entitled, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*.⁴
5. In it, Scougal argued that (listen carefully) "A man may go to church, say his prayers, receive the sacraments, and yet, not be a Christian." Upon reading this Whitefield wrote, "How did my heart rise, how did my heart shutter, like a poor man

² J.C. Ryle, *A Sketch of the Life and Labors of George Whitefield*. (London, Forgotten Books, 2015), 12

³ Eric Metaxas, *If You Can Keep It*, (New York, Viking, 2016), 86

⁴ Henry Scougal, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (p. 2). Start Publishing LLC. Kindle Edition. Available on Amazon for \$.99

that is afraid to look into his account-books, lest he should find himself bankrupt: yet shall I burn this book, shall I throw it down, shall I put it by, or shall I search into it? I did, and holding the book in my hand, thus addressed the God of heaven and earth, saying: “Lord, if I am not a Christian, if I am not a real one, for Jesus Christ’s sake, show me what Christianity is, that I may not be damned at last.”

6. Then, by the mercy of God while lying in bed in his college dorm, he read the story of the thief dying on the cross beside Jesus, and, he writes “it was as though the scales fell from his eyes.” Young Whitefield realized that the thief hadn’t done anything except believe, and no sooner had the thief declared this, than Jesus said, ‘Today you will be with Me in paradise.’”⁵

7. To this Whitefield wrote, “Oh, what a way of divine life did break in upon my poor soul... Oh! What joy - joy unspeakable – even joy that was full of, and big with glory, filled my soul.⁶ What George Whitefield experienced that day is what for the rest of his life he would call, “The New Birth.” He had been born again of the Spirit just as Jesus described it in John 3:16-17.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

8. Not long before his death, looking back upon this life-transforming event Whitefield declared, "I know the place: it may be superstitious, perhaps, but whenever I go to Oxford I cannot help running to that place where Jesus Christ first revealed himself to me, and gave me the new birth."⁷

9. This was the turning point of Whitefield’s life for. He wrote, “My mind, being now more open and enlarged, I began to read the Holy Scriptures upon my knees.... This proved meat indeed and drink to my soul. I daily received fresh life, light and power from above. Prayer now became a rich joy. He states: Oh, what sweet communion had I daily vouchsafed to me with God in prayer. How often have I been carried out beyond myself when sweetly meditating in the fields! How assuredly have I felt that Christ dwelt in me and I in him. And how did I daily walk in the comforts of the Holy

⁵ Eric Metaxas, 2016, p. 90

⁶ John Piper, *I Will Not Be a Velvet Mouthed Preacher!* Desiring God 2009 conference for pastors. (<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/i-will-not-be-a-velvet-mouthed-preacher>) Last visited, 1/18/2018.

⁷ Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield: God's Anointed Servant in the Great Revival of the Eighteenth Century* (Kindle Locations 237-238). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

Spirit and was edified and refreshed in the multitude of peace.⁸ George Whitefield was 20 years old.

10. Eric Metaxas concludes, “What followed from this moment in a bed in Oxford’s Pembroke College can hardly be calculated.” ...a divine breeze blew that day, which over the course of the next weeks and months and years would become a sanctified tornado.”⁹

11. Soon, at the age of 22, Whitefield was ordained by the church of England and asked to preach his first sermon. “All in attendance that day said they had never heard his equal. Within weeks he had become an English phenomenon. The people wanted to hear him preach, and preach he did. In fact, he began preaching many times each day. He preached wherever he could. He preached in churches and in prisons. He preached to soldiers and every Sunday he preached NOT in ONE but in several churches.

12. He traveled to Bristol where he knew many people worked in the coal mines. The first day two hundred people walking home from work stopped to hear him preaching in the open air. The next day the number grew to more than a thousand. The third day 20,000 people showed up to hear him preach!¹⁰

13. He later wrote that the “first discovery of their being affected was to see the white gutters made by their tears, which plentifully fell down their black cheeks, as they came out of their coal pits.” Many thousands of these men and women received his message of salvation and freedom that day with great emotion.

14. Not long later, he sailed to the American Colonies. When he arrived in Philadelphia he discovered his reputation had preceeded him. Benjamin Franklin reported that on the first morning Whitefield preached to 6,000 and that after to 8,000. On Sunday 15,000 came to hear him.”

15. In his journal Whitefield once wrote, “Preached nine times this week, and expounded near eighteen times.... I am every moment employed from morning till midnight. There is no end of people coming to me, and they seem more and more desirous, like new-born babes, to be fed with the sincere milk of the Word.”¹¹

⁸ Arnold Dallimore, (Kindle Locations 254-260). Crossway.

⁹ Eric Metaxas, 2016, p. 90

¹⁰ Eric Metaxas, 2016, p. 95

¹¹ Arnold Dallimore, (Kindle Locations 590-592)

16. In England, David Hume, Scottish skeptic in philosophy, and deist though he was, is said to have raced off at five in the morning to hear Whitefield preach. Asked if he believed what the preacher preached, he replied, "No, but he does!"¹²

17. People could hardly keep themselves from going to hear him. Sarah Edwards, in a letter to her brother, wrote:

It is wonderful to see what a spell he casts over an audience by proclaiming the simplest truths of the Bible. I have seen upwards of a thousand people hang on his words with breathless silence, broken only by an occasional half-suppressed sob. He impresses the ignorant, and not less the educated and refined. It is reported that while the miners of England listened to him, the tears made white furrows down their smutty cheeks. So here, our mechanics shut up their shops, and the day-laborers throw down their tools, to go and hear him preach and few return unaffected... He speaks from a heart all aglow with a love that pours out a torrent of eloquence which is almost irresistible...¹³

18. He preached up and down the Colonies from Georgia to Massachusetts. Everywhere he went great throngs came to hear him preach. John Piper writes,

He was a phenomenon not just of his age, but in the entire 2,000-year history of Christian preaching. There has been nothing like the combination of his preaching pace and geographic extent and auditory scope and attention-holding effect and converting power. Ryle is right, "No preacher has ever retained his hold on his hearers so entirely as he did for thirty-four years. And His popularity never waned."¹⁴

19. But Whitefield was not preaching for popularity. He was preaching for soul transformation and real life change through spiritual regeneration. He didn't ride his horse through England and the Colonies to entertain people. He did it to fulfill his part of the great commission to "Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations." And souls - a vast multitude of souls - were, indeed, transformed.

20. When he came to America the fire of the Great Awakening was but a match-stick flame. But by the Power of the Spirit and the Preaching of the word by Whitefield, that tiny flame became a roaring fire that burned through the colonies. Whitefield was

¹² Leonard Ravenhill, *Portrait of a Revival Preacher*, (Bethany House Publishers website.) Last viewed on 1/ 20/2018. (<http://www.ravenhill.org/whitefield.htm>)

¹³ John Murray, 2008, p. 162

¹⁴ John Piper, 2009

determined to reach every man woman and child in America with the gospel. And her nearly did!

21. By 1740, Whitefield had become the most famous man in America. In 1749, George Washington was 8 years old. John Adams was 4 yrs old. And Thomas Jefferson had not been born yet.¹⁵ In fact, aside from King George himself, Whitefield was probably the most famous man in Britain at that time as well!¹⁶

22. Estimates are that eighty percent of the entire population of the American colonies (this is before TV or radio) heard Whitefield preach at least once.¹⁷ And as they heard, many of them repented of their sins, threw the full weight of their faith upon the righteousness of Christ alone, and experienced the New Birth. But for all this, Whitefield longed to accomplish more for the glory of Jesus Christ. He declared, **O that I was a flame of pure and holy Fire.**¹⁸ He longed to preach more, serve, and do good in the land without any encumbrance of his mortal humanity.

23. And by the way, this “new birth” was not merely some man-induced religious resolve. Salvation (the New Birth) is not By good works, but it is For good works (Eph. 2:8-10). The proof or “fruit” of a transformed heart is a transformed character. The fruit of the Spirit begins to show itself with power in the hearts of those who, drawn by the Spirit of God, savingly believe. And this was evident even to the unbelieving observers of the day.

24. On this point J.C. Ryle wrote,

Benjamin Franklin, the philosopher, “was a cold, calculating man, and not likely to speak too highly of any minister’s work. Yet even he confessed that it ‘was wonderful to see the change soon made by [Whitefield’s] preaching in the manners of the inhabitants of Philadelphia.’¹⁹

25. Likewise, Jonathan Edwards reported,

When once the Spirit of God began to be so wonderfully poured out in a general way through the town, people had soon done with their old quarrels, backbightings, and intermeddling with other

¹⁵ Thomas Kidd, *George Whitefield: American Spiritual Founding Father*, (podcast)

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ John Piper, 2009

¹⁸ Arnold Dallimore, (Kindle Locations 2264-2265)

¹⁹ J.C. Ryle, 2015, p. 36

men's matters. The Tavern was soon left empty and persons kept very much at home.”²⁰

26. You want to know what made America good in the early years of our nation? It wasn't Whitefield the man that brought the transformation, it was Whitefield's gospel, the transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ.

27. You see, There are two remedies for a sin-sick person and a sin-sick nation like ours: gospel preaching and gospel living. And I want to spend the remainder of our time talking about them.

II. Whitefield's Gospel Preaching.

1. If we are to gain something of Whitefield's Gospel Urgency, we need to understand what his gospel was. Certainly, it was the gospel of the N.T., but what is that exactly?

2. Turn with me to the book of Romans chapter 3. Here the apostle Paul explains man's desperate problem. Jesus taught that in order for people to enter the kingdom of God they must be more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20). How righteous is that? Jesus explains, "Therefore, you must be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). In other words, you've got to be as good as God. Now that's a BIG problem, isn't it, because none of us is righteous.

3. Notice how Paul teaches it in Rom. 3:10, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD." You see, we were created in the Beginning to glorify God by being like God in all holiness, purity, perfection, and joy. But here's the problem. Rom. 3:23, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." That is, instead of being righteous in God's sight, we are wicked, rebellious, and sinful to the core. From birth, we are hard-wired to rebel against God. Furthermore, because of our rebellion and sin, we deserve God's just, holy, and eternal wrath. Man's problem is that there is a righteousness we desperately need, don't have, and can't earn. So what's the remedy? Where do sinners get the righteousness we so desperately need?

4. The whole book of Romans is designed by the H.S. to answer that question. And it is summarized in 3:21-22. Paul explains, "But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,²² even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe."

²⁰ John Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography*, (Edinburgh, UK. The Banner of Truth Trust, 2008), 115

5. Where do we find the righteousness God requires? Paul answers, Christ for Righteousness!

6. Whitefield understood from Paul that the most dangerous thing in the world is self-righteousness. To believe that you are virtuous enough to merit God's acceptance and approval because of your good behavior or law-keeping. That kind of thinking will land you in Hell's judgment forever.

7. Whitefield was not merely a gifted preacher. He also possessed a brilliant theological mind. So, as he preached, he didn't merely appeal to people's emotions. No, he appealed to the rich truths of the Old and New Testaments. He especially loved to point people back to O.T. prophets such as Jeremiah who predicted that one day a Savior would come whose name is "The Lord our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6).

8. If pressed, I suspect most professing believers would tell you that salvation in Jesus Christ come to sinners through His death on the cross. And that understanding is true, albeit incomplete. As Whitefield preached it,

We generally, when speaking of the merits of Christ, only mention... His death. Whereas... His life and active obedience is equally necessary. Christ is not such a Savior as becomes us, unless we join both together. Christ not only died but lived, not only suffered but obeyed for, or instead of, poor sinners. And both of these jointly make up that complete righteousness, which is imputed to us, as the disobedience of our first parents was made ours by imputation.²¹

9. In other words, just as Adam's sin was imputed (or reckoned) to us unto condemnation, so Christ's righteous life must be imputed to us (by grace, through faith) for salvation. The reason Jesus lived a perfect life for 33 years BEFORE his death on the cross was (in His own words) "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15). Not only did Jesus Die FOR YOU, he also Lived His whole life in perfect righteousness FOR YOU.

10. You may say, This gospel is wonderful! It seems so easy to embrace! But oh how hard it is for sinners to throw themselves upon such a gospel. To do so one must admit that he/she is spiritually bankrupt in the eyes of God and has nothing to offer Him for salvation but their sin. Oh how our proud, unregenerate souls abhor such teaching. We would feel better about salvation if we could earn it. But then the glory would be ours. And God has said, "I will not share my glory with another" (Isa. 48:11).

11. Listen to me now, God is glorified in salvation only as it magnifies and proclaims the undiluted sufficiency of Christ. We come to him not as donors and benefactors, but

²¹ Lee Gatiss (editor), *The Sermons of George Whitefield. Vol. 1*, (Wheaton, Crossway, 2012), 265-266

as beggars and children who need something that they must receive entirely from another. We come with a heart that says with the publican at the temple, “God, be merciful to me the sinner.”

12. Whitefield understood that the true Gospel is about sinners receiving – by grace through faith – forgiveness of sins AND the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. He declared, “Never was there a reformation brought about in the church but by the preaching of the doctrine of an imputed righteousness.”²²

13. So Whitefield would stand before sometimes 20-30,000 people and say...

Were you ever made to abhor your own righteousness? For the prophet beautifully expresses it, ‘Your righteousnesses are as filthy rags’ (Isa. 64:6)... Knowing the terrors of the Lord, let me persuade you to close with Christ and never rest till you can say, ‘The Lord our righteousness.’ Who knows but the Lord may have mercy, may abundantly pardon you? Beg God to give you faith. And if the Lord gives you that, you will by it receive Christ with His righteousness and his all. You need not fear the greatness or number of your sins. For are you sinners? So am I. Are you the chief of sinners? So am I. Are you backsliding sinners? So am I. And yet the Lord (forever adore his rich, free and sovereign grace) the Lord is my righteousness... Seek the Lord to be your righteousness, a righteousness that will entitle you to life everlasting.²³

14. Behold the words of the apostle Paul,

Rom. 1:17 “For in [the Gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.”

Rom. 5:21 “God made Him who knew NO sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the Righteousness of God in Him.”

15. Beloved, cultivating true Gospel Urgency begins with understanding what the gospel is. The good news is that God has provided a way for sinners – yes ungodly sinners like you and me - to be declared righteous in His sight for all eternity by casting themselves by faith upon the mercy of God in Jesus Christ our righteousness.

16. This is the core of Whitefield’s gospel (and of Paul’s). By this grace alone do sinners experience the New Birth and become reconciled to God forever.

²² Ibid., 266

²³ Ibid., 278, 279

17. So the remedy for a sin-sick nation is Gospel Preaching. But it also involves Gospel Living.

III. Whitefield's Gospel Living:

1. I say that the remedies for a sin-sick person or nation is both Gospel Preaching and Gospel Living because of what Jesus said in Matt. 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

2. I take this to mean that as people in this world see the good works that grow naturally and abundantly in our lives like fruit on the tree of our salvation, they may end up glorifying God by their own repentance and salvation. So let us not think shallowly about the place of good works in our lives.

3. Whitefield argued from Scripture that the imputed righteousness of Christ always bears the fruit of moral purity and good works.²⁴ That was certainly true in his own life. Let me highlight a few notable examples.

A. Devoted to ministering to the Poor:

- 1) The first thing Whitefield did when he came to America was to help John Wesley establish an orphan home just outside of Savannah, Georgia. He called it Bethsaeda meaning "house of mercy."
- 2) Whitefield was scrupulous about any money that came into his ministry. He took for himself only what he needed to sustain him. The rest of it went to support ministries like the orphan home. He was constantly raising money to support it.
- 3) Ben Franklin tells of the seemingly irresistible power of Whitefield's appeal for money to support the orphan house. He wrote:

I happened... to attend one of his sermons, in the course of which I perceived he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles in gold. As [Whitefield] proceeded, he said, I began to soften, and concluded to give the coppers. Another stroke of his oratory made me ashamed of that, and determined me to give the silver; and he

²⁴ Ibid., 268

finished so admirably, that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all."²⁵

- 4) It bears noting that Bethesda still exists today as the longest standing institution for helping children in America. It is now known as Bethesda Academy.

Ministering to Rivertree Academy

B. But Whitefield was also devoted to helping the the black men and women in America.

- 1) He was so appawed by how some slave owners treated their slaves that he Published a scortching open letter throughout the colonies which read in part as follows:

Your dogs are caressed and fondled at your tables, but your slaves, who are frequently styled dogs or beasts, have not an equal privilege. They are scarce permitted to pick up the crumbs that fall from their masters' tables. Nay, some... have been, upon the most trifling provocation, cut with knives, and have had forks thrown into their flesh; not to mention what numbers have been given up to the inhuman usage of cruel taskmasters, who, by their unrelenting scourges, have ploughed upon their backs, and made long furrows, and at length brought them even to death itself. I hope there are few such monsters of barbarity suffered to subsist among you. Is it not the highest ingratitude as well as cruelty, not to let your poor slaves enjoy some fruits of their labour? Whilst I have viewed your plantations cleared and cultivated, and have seen many spacious houses, and the owners of them faring sumptuously every day, my blood has almost run cold within me, when I have considered how many of your slaves have neither convenient food to eat, nor proper raiment to put on, notwithstanding most of the comforts you enjoy were solely owing to their indefatigable

²⁵ Eric Metaxas, 2016, p. 101

labours....²⁶

- 2) It took a lot of courage to publish such a letter, and he suffered greatly as plantation owners attacked him mercilessly for his censure. But Whitefield didn't care. Someone needed to cry out against this barbaric injustice.
- 3) Today is Sanctity of Life Sunday. And as Christians we are sickend but the gross injustice and butchery by which millions of innocent babies are killed in America every year. O may we not be found silent on the issue of abortion. And may God so grant that one day we may see the complete abolition of the abortion industry just as we once witnessed the abolition of slavery.

Ministry to Pregnancy Help Center:

- 4) Whitefield was bold and clear on the mistreatment of slaves, though, as we will see in a moment, he was remarkably blind to the larger issue.

C. Willing to Suffer for the Gospel.

- 1) Part of Whitefield's Gospel Urgency was a willingness to suffer. Not all the crowds who gathered round him were adoring. Some hated him.
- 2) In his letter to the Philippians Paul said, "For it has been granted that for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29)
- 3) J.C. Ryle writes regarding Whitefield, "That any human frame could so long endure the labor he went through, does indeed seem wonderful. That his life was not shortened by violence, is no less wonderful"²⁷
 - a. Once he was nearly murdered in bed by an angry soldier.
 - b. Once narrowly escaped being stabbed with a sword
 - c. Once he was nearly stoned by a Catholic mob in dublin who cast dirt, stones, rotten eggs, and dead cats at him.

²⁶ Arnold Dallimore, (Kindle Locations 1166-1174).

²⁷ J.C. Ryle, p. 17

- d. “But, Ryle says, “he was immortal till his work was done.”²⁸
- 4) As we learned last week from Philippians chapter 1, Gospel Urgency demands that we overcome our fear of suffering and count it a privilege to potentially suffer for Christ’s sake if we will ever become effective at winning souls for Christ.

4SG Gospel Ministry Downtown F/W

4. A Model of Humility:

- A. As great a man as Whitefield was, he wasn’t always right. He made mistakes, and was not without sin.
- B. For example, in his youthful zeal he openly criticized and questioned the salvation of other ministers and pastors who didn’t live up to their God-given duties.²⁹
- C. In the early days, even though he was warned by Jonathan Edwards of the dangers, he was given to mystical impressions, believing that God often spoke to him specifically and personally aside from the plain meaning of Scripture.
- D. And most tragically, while Whitefield decried the abusive treatment of slaves by their masters, he never really grasped the injustice and evil of slavery itself. This is easily demonstrated by the fact that he himself had slaves working for him at his orphan home. Every biographer I have read marks this as the one dark blot on an otherwise unimpeachable reputation. And there was no excuse for it. But then, we must remember, aside from Jesus Himself all our heroes are sinners.
- E. I can’t help but think, however, that if he had come on the scene just 65 years later, he would have immediately seen his error and partnered with Wilberforce and Newton to bring an end to slavery. But alas, it was not to be. The reason I believe he would have owned his error in this regard is because of his history of uncommon humility.
- F. His Biographer, Arnold Dallimore, said:

A frequent expression of Whitefield’s is most characteristic of the man: “Let the name of George Whitefield perish, so long as Christ only is exalted. Let my name die everywhere, let even my friends forget me, if by that means

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Eric Metaxas, p. 112

the cause of the blessed Jesus may be promoted.

- G. Regarding mystical impression, Whitefield eventually demonstrated the ability to own his error. When his wife was about to give birth to their only child, Whitefield had an “impression” that he thought had come from the H.S. as if God had spoken to him personally. He was to name his baby John, and he would grow up to be a great preacher. Four months after his birth, however, baby John died. Humbly, Whitefield confessed to Edwards, “I missapplied several texts of Scripture. Upon these grounds, I made no scruple of declaring, “That I should have a son, and that is name was to be John.” Later, when he came back to New England, in 1745, he spoke to Edwards of what happened. He confessed that ‘Many good souls, both among clergy and laity, for a while, mistook fancy for faith, and imagination for revelation.’³⁰
- H. Later he wrote, “I find that I frequently wrote and spoke with my own Spirit, when I though I was writing and speaking by the assistance of the Spirit of God. I have likewise too much made inward impressions my rule of acting... By these things I have given some wrong touches to God’s ark, and hurt the blessed cause I would defend, and also stirred up needless oposition. This has humbled me much... I bless God for ripening my judgments a little more, for giving me to see and confess, and I hope in some degree to correct and amend, some of my mistakes.”³¹
- I. Oh beloved, how different our homes would be if we regularly humbled ourselves and owned our sins and errors to one another without equivocation and in Spirit-wrought humility.
- J. This gospel-wrought humility evidenced itself in other practical ways. Several years into his ministry, his old friend John Wesley attacked him publically for his Calvinistic theology. But Whitefield refused to respond in kind. In fact, when it became aparent that the rift between the two of them would tare English Methodism apart, Whitefield resined his role as president and gave the reins to Wesley so there would be no division.
- K. And in the end, Shortly before his death, he requested that when he died, John Wesley might be asked to preach his funeral sermon.³²
- L. Oh that we would exhibit this wonderful, unity- preserving, Christ-honoring

³⁰ John Murray, p. 242

³¹ Lee Gatiss. Vol. 1, p. 21

³² J.C. Ryle, p. 24

humility in our dealings with one another. You see, it does little good to be zealous with the gospel if your life fails to bear its holy fruit. My hope and prayer for Calvary Bible Church is that we would become a people zealous with Gospel Urgency, and that our Gospel Urgency would be marked NOT only by Gospel preaching (and telling), but Gospel Living as well.

5. Today, as we look at the turmoil of our country and world, it's clear that every party and political personality has a theory for how to fix what is broken in America. But it never works because human ingenuity can never remedy the real problem which is sin. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed and lived can transform hearts and thereby transform the nation. May God fill us with the kind of Gospel Urgency that will have such a transforming effect on our nation once again.