

## AMERICA'S CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

11/19/2017

Today we continue our lesson on one of the most influential men in American history. His name is George Whitefield.

I. Whitefield preached his first sermon on June 27, 1735 at the age of 21.

A . His mother, relatives and 300 people crowded into the church to listen

1. It was no ordinary message
2. The presiding bishop said fifteen people were "driven mad."

B. Whenever and wherever he preached, large crowds gathered.

1. His meetings produced an immense sensation.
2. He attracted all classes;
  - a. Noble
  - b. Common
  - c. Rich
  - d. Poor
3. Lord Bolingbroke said; "He is the most extraordinary man in our times. He has the most commanding eloquence I ever hear in any person"
4. Historian David Hume said it was worth riding 20 miles to hear Whitefield.

II. One of Whitefield's close friends was Benjamin Franklin.

A. Franklin wrote in his autobiography in 1739:

"It was wonderful to see the change soon make in the manners of our inhabitants. From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seemed

as if all the world were growing religious, so one could not walk through the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street.”

B. Franklin further stated that; “His eloquence had a wonderful power over the hearts and purses of his hearers.”

1. Whitefield took an offering for an orphanage house he was building in Georgia.
2. Franklin supported the cause but believed the house should have been built in Philadelphia.
  - a. Franklin did not believe the colonies had the workman or materials to build with.
  - b. Franklin believed more assets were available in Philadelphia.
3. Franklin expressed the same to Whitefield who disagreed with him.
4. Franklin decided not to contribute to the work.
5. Franklin wrote that while listening to Whitefield’s sermon:

“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 pistols in gold. As he proceeded 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 finished so admirably that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collectors dish, gold and all. At this sermon there was also one of our club who, being of my sentiments respecting the building in Georgia and suspecting a collection might be intended, had, by precaution, emptied his pockets before he came from home. Towards the conclusion of the discourse however, he felt a strong desire to give and applied to a neighbor who stood near him to borrow some money for the purpose.”

C. Franklin was astounded at the voice of Whitefield; He stated;

“He had a loud and clear voice and articulated his words and sentences so perfectly that he might be heard and understood at a great distance...I computed that he might be heard by more than thirty thousand.”

1. On one occasion Franklin walked away from Whitefield and said he could hear him about one mile from where he was speaking.
2. This was without the modern electronic devices today.

D. Franklin spoke of the influence of Whitefield;

1. Whitefield spoke powerfully to tens of thousands and impacted their lives.
2. Whitefield through his preaching changed towns and the entire nation.

III. What others said about Whitefield.

- A. One observer stated; “He preached like a lion. His sermons were life and fire; you must listen whether you like to or not. There was a holy violence about him which firmly took your attention by storm.”
- B. Whitefield said of himself; “I have not come in my own name. No! I have come in the Name of the Lord of hosts (and he brought down his hand and foot with a force that made the room ring) and I must and will be heard!
- C. Pratney said of Whitfield; “His sermons were filled with immense feeling and pathos, He commonly wept profusely in the pulpit.”
- D. The established church both in England and America rejected him.
  1. Whitefield went to where the people resided. He went to the;
    - a. Countryside
    - b. Towns
    - c. Cities
  2. Whitefield spoke in the fields to coal miners on their way to and from work.

3. Whitefield spoke in the streets to crowds of 30,000 people.
  4. Pratney said; "Thousands came to hear him preach at 6:00 a.m. in the snow; whole cities turned out to hear the young man with the golden voice and a supernatural authority from heaven."
- E. In the light and the glory Peter Marshall stated; "The moment they knew he was coming, riders galloped down all the roads ahead of him, spreading the word that the man who had preached in Philadelphia like one of the old apostles would soon be preaching in front to the meetinghouse. Farmers dropped their hoes and left their plows, grabbed their wives and mounted their horses. One observer described a sound like distant thunder, and he saw a great cloud rising along the road---everyone was riding as fast as he could down the dirt road to Middletown. When Whitefield arrived, several thousand horses had been tethered in long lines at the back of a vast crowd of dust-covered farmers. It looked as if an entire cavalry division had dismounted and was awaiting him."
- F. Pratney summarized the work of Whitefield; "From 1739 until his death in 1770, 31 years of immense effect, his life was one uniform outreach, his vision one thing: preach Christ, and entreat men to repent and be saved."
1. Infidels were saved.
  2. Church goers were saved.
- G. In 1740 Whitefield arrived in Boston and stated; "It has the form of religion kept up, but has lost much of its power."
1. He laid the blame on the clergy; "The reason why congregations have been so dead is because they had dead men preaching to them. How can dead men beget living children?"
  2. Many ministers denounced him
- H. Whitefield stirred up the establishment and the common people heard him gladly!