



Spirit of Grace

Herald

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One of My Heroes - **George Whitefield**

Willie Nelson sang a famous song titled: "My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys." If I were to write a similar song, I would probably title it: "My Heroes Have Always Been Evangelists." As a young believer, I

seemed to be drawn to the great evangelists of church history. I read nearly every biography I could get my hands on if it concerned someone God had used to win many souls to Jesus. D. L. Moody, Charles Finney, John Wesley, Billy Graham... if they won souls in a big way, I was fascinated. And as I researched evangelism throughout the history of the church, I came

across a man whose name you do not normally hear – George Whitefield.

But noticing certain writers give him honorable mention as they discussed the great men of God of the past, I finally decided I needed to read about him myself. I bought a biography that was quite a challenge, even to someone like me who loves to read. It was a massive two-volume biography simply titled "George Whitefield," written by Arnold Dallimore. Once I started reading, I

knew I had something special. The story of George Whitefield's life and ministry is amazing, and for anyone who loves evangelism, it can impact you like few other books could. I was so impressed once I started reading, that when I took several days to go stay in my uncle's cabin in the woods, in order to seek the Lord, I took not only my Bible, but the two-volume biography of Whitefield. I was stirred to the depths of my soul, and I believe that much of my African ministry I do today was brought about by the Holy Spirit touching me as I read of the life of this great man of God.

In this short space I cannot possibly tell his story, but allow me to share how George Whitefield first made the decision to preach outdoors – something considered quite radical in his day:

Whitefield began to debate the merits of preaching outdoors.



It would solve two of his major problems. First, he would no longer be at the mercy of jealous, resentful pastors for ministry opportunities. And second, it would remedy the problem he had faced nearly from the beginning, which was that no church could hold the number of eager listeners who wanted to hear him preach. Clearly this would be a

breach of Church of England protocols and would invite much criticism and charges of "enthusiasm!" But the more Whitefield considered it, the more he liked the idea. To blunt a little of the criticism he started at a place where there was no Church of England assembly and where almost no ministers had ever dared to go. He went to preach to the coal miners of Kingswood. These folks were entirely uneducated, rude, crude, immoral, and irreligious. They were almost considered sub-human by polite folks. Ministers left them alone and they were content to keep to themselves. The men who worked the mines were dirty and went through life with coal dust on their faces and dirt under their fingernails.

George Whitefield

It was to such a people that George Whitefield came. He put up no posters, had no speakers or microphones, and no organization behind him. There were no ushers, no counselors, no musicians or singers, and there was no platform. He simply showed up one day with a friend, and went around to some of the houses inviting people to come and hear the gospel. Taking his stand on a hill, he raised his magnificent voice, declaring, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall see the kingdom of God." He immediately caught the attention of those nearby. A young, good-looking man decked out in the black Church of England ministerial robe preaching on their turf was not an everyday occurrence. In addition, Whitefield's voice and preaching magnetically pulled people toward him. Soon around 200 gathered around to hear the twenty-four-year-old preach to them about Jesus and the new birth.

Whitefield told a funny story, which didn't seem like something a preacher would do, but attracted them all the more. Before the sermon was over he covered all the bases: man's depravity, God's love, heaven, hell, and Christ's redeeming sacrifice on the cross and resurrection. Those who laughed at his humor now found themselves crying, and George Whitefield knew he was getting through to them when he saw narrow white gutters on their faces where their tears were washing away the coal dust from their blackened cheeks. God clearly set His seal on Whitefield's new outdoor ministry, and George made another appointment to come back and preach. By the time he returned word had quickly spread about the amazing young preacher, and now instead of 200 he preached to 2,000. Crude, rough, tough coal miners were getting saved and being transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, and Whitefield knew that he had found a means of ministering to the masses that was far superior to the limitations of church buildings, of which most could only hold a few hundred people...

Wow! There is so much more to tell. The best way to learn of Whitefield is to buy Arnold Dallimore's biography. There is a shorter biography of the great preacher by John Pollock (no relation). Or for the condensed version, you can go to our website, click on the audio devo catalog page, and either read the article or listen to the audio version of the three-devo series I titled *George Whitefield – Evangelist Extraordinaire*.

Relief for Houston

From Dennis Pollock:

I cannot remember a catastrophe which devastated a city the size of Houston ever before in the history of our nation. Thousands have lost their homes, and quite a few have lost loved ones. The suffering and emotional pain are immense for many. Even though I live just five short hours driving time from this area, we experienced nothing more than a couple of showers. It behooves those of us who have not experienced such loss to come to the aid of those who have. I have preached in a church located in the heart of the affected region for many years. I know the pastor and some of the members well. They are now in the process of helping one another and helping others in their area with cleanup and restoration. They are doing this because it needs to be done, and making no profit at all and taking no salaries for this effort. Every penny which comes to them is immediately funneled into restoration and relief efforts. Our ministry plans to contribute to them, and we want to give you a chance to give as well. Over the next month, any funds you send us marked for Hurricane relief will be sent on to this church and will go entirely toward their hurricane relief labors. Please pray about making a generous donation and marking it for "Hurricane Relief."

