George Whitefield [Pt 2]

1. **THE YEAR OF 1740**: George Whitefield sails across the Atlantic to arrive in the colonies late in the year of 1739. He will leave in January 1741. So, he will have the entire year of 1740 to minister the gospel to the colonies. This year of ministry would take too much time to recount. But Lawson says it was extraordinary! Dr. Lloyd Jones, “His preaching here in the United States was simply overwhelming.” Whenever Whitefield showed up, commerce ceased, businesses shut down, farmers left their plows in the fields, judges delayed their hearings, and entire towns were shut down to gather to hear Whitefield preach. He set the landscape of America ablaze with his preaching.
* Whitefield comes to **Philadelphia**, a city of about 13,000 at the time. Yet 6000 gather to listen to him preach. He first tries to preach in a church, but the church structure was not adequate. He then journeys to and preaches his way through **New Jersey**.
* He then travels to **New York City**, and 1ST addresses 8000 people in a field. On Sunday morning he preached to 15,000 people, and then finally to 20,000 people in the afternoon - the largest gathering to ever assemble in the colonies.
1. Returns back to **Philadelphia** and preaches at various cities in the area, and as he comes to **Philadelphia** the second time, he is gaining great momentum. He is the talk of the town. He would preach to 6000 in the a.m. and 8000 in the p.m. By Sunday morning the crowds had grown to 10,000. In the afternoon there were 25,000, and then finally for his farewell address there were 30,000 people. As he preached, Whitefield is bringing heat, passion, and truth. His sermons we’re not little devotional ditties. He was preaching the Scriptures with authority and power. Benjamin Franklin, who became a very close friend of George Whitefield’s, wrote, “I computed that Whitefield might well be well heard by more than 30000 people.”
2. As he goes to **New York**, one man wrote: “I have never seen in my life such attentive audiences as Mr. Whitefield‘s in New York. All he said was a demonstration of life, and power of the Spirit. The people’s eyes and ears hung upon his lips. They greedily devoured every word. He preached for four days, twice each day. He was a man of sprightly temper and acts and moves with great agility. The endowments of his mind are uncommon. His wit is quick and piercing. His imagination is lively. And as far as I can discern both are under the direction of a sound judgment. He has a most ready memory and speaks almost entirely without notes. He has a clear, musical voice and a wonderful command of it. He uses many gestures, but with great propriety. Every accent of his voice and every motion of his body speaks. Both are natural and unaffected. It looks so natural for him to speak. He has a great mastery of words. But studies plainness of speech. He speaks not his own zeal. He displays a most “catholic” spirit, a universal spirit. He professes that his whole design is to bring men to Christ. And that if he can obtain this end his converts may to go whatever church and worship in whatever form is best.” Whitefield understood that he was a harvester of souls and put his arms around the body of Christ. He had a very peacemaking tone with other brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.
3. Benjamin Franklin became his publisher. Benjamin Franklin printed 10 additions of Whitefield’s daily journals. He wrote with great beauty. More than half of the books that Benjamin Franklin published were either by Whitefield or about Whitefield. They had a strong partnership together. He leaves **Philadelphia** at the height of his popularity.
4. He travels south to **Savannah** and tends to the orphanage. Wherever he preaches, he is collecting funds that go entirely to support the orphanage.  For 20 years, this orphanage will be the personal financial responsibility of George Whitefield. This would be a great burden to George Whitefield. Later, the aristocrats in England pulled funds together to remove this financial burden from Whitefield.
5. He sailed up north to **Delaware**. He then traveled to **Philadelphia**, and into the surrounding area. He preached in **Philadelphia**, and when he leaves, thousands of men get on thousands of horses to follow George Whitefield to wherever he was preaching the next time. They follow him to **New Jersey**. They just want to hear him preach one more time. From **New Jersey** he goes back to **New York City**, and then he comes back to **Philadelphia** where he’s met with even growing success. He is energized along the way as he is traveling. He met other preachers who are strong hearted. He forms a bond and a partnership with these other preachers. He is fueling the passion of these other pastors.
6. He sailed north to **Newport**, **Rhode Island**. His preaching produces great gospel success. He preaches over a week in **Boston**, and then goes up the coast line as far as **Maine**. He then goes down the coastline preaching Christ. He preaches in **Boston**.
7. Thomas Prince writes regarding Whitefield’s ministry in **Boston**, “The very face of the town seemed to be altered.” He rides by horse to where Jonathan Edwards has invited him in **New Haven**, **Connecticut**, and preaches four times there. Whitefield wrote, “October 19, 1740, preached in the morning and good Mr. Edwards wept during the whole time and the people were equally affected.” Edwards writes that the entire town was affected.
8. He preached in **Northfield, Connecticut** with great impact. [See Farmer quote, p. 8, below]
9. Whitefield often was moved to tears when he preached. One man came to him displeased with his weeping in the pulpit. Whitefield’s responded, “You won’t even weep for your own soul; I must weep for your soul.”
10. **OPPOSITION & OPPORTUNITIES:** (1741-1742) in January, of 1741 Whitefield sailed back to England. One would think Whitefield would stay since there was so much abundant spiritual fruit. However, his thoughts were to go elsewhere to awaken other souls now that the awakening was taking place in the colonies.  When he left England in the summer of 1739, he departed at the height of his ministry there. When he came back, the church doors are closed to him. He returned to an unexpected controversy that all but undermined his ministry.
* John Wesley had written a small booklet called Free Grace. It was a frontal assault on the doctrine of predestination. It undermined Whitefield in the eyes of the people. while Whitefield was gone, Wesley assumed a place of influence with the people. He told the people that White
* field was preaching the devil’s doctrine. It created a painful separation between John Wesley and Whitefield.
* This conflict divided thousands of Christians depending upon where you would line up behind either of these men. Whitefield continued to offer the “olive branch” to Wesley. He tried to build bridges in their relationship.  Whitefield was once asked, “Do you think that you will see John Wesley in heaven?” He responded, “No, I will not see Wesley in heaven. Because he will be so close to the throne of grace, and I will be so far away in the back corner of heaven that I will not be able to see Wesley.”
* Whitefield would eventually turn the Methodist movement over to Wesley to remove any sense of competition that it would exist between them. It was Whitefield that requested that Wesley preach his memorial service.
* Due to this conflict, Whitefield fell out of favor with many people and with the press which only further spread this division. Whitefield would go to these large fields to preach, and there were people there who were hired as hecklers to be disruptive. Whitefield also took business away from the hucksters, and they would throw eggs and rocks and pieces of dead cats at him. They killed an animal and drained the blood and threw blood and feces at him. There were multiple attempts to take his life.
* Whitefield writes, “I received many blows and wounds. One was particularly large and near my temples. I thought of Stephen. I was in great hopes like him to be dispatched in this bloody triumph in the immediate presence of my Master.“ Dallimore, who wrote a great two-volume biography of Whitefield, indicates that wherever Whitefield went, blessings followed him. People came to know Christ and churches were raised up. The author had to fast forward the years because the accounting would become too repetitious to hold the reader’s attention. Blessing after blessing etc. John Newton indicated that there were in streets of London at six in the morning torches held in hand to go in the early hours to hear Whitefield preach whenever he was in London.
1. **A WIFE AND CHILD:** After meeting Sarah Edwards, Whitefield longed for a wife. He hastily married a widow named Elizabeth James who was older than he. She had never traveled anywhere. It proved to be a great difficulty to her as she would try to travel with Whitefield. Before her death, she brought him a son, and that son would die. It would be a very tragic thing. Whitefield suffered great financial stress due to the burden of the orphanage. He was continually having to send money to Georgia. It left him personally bankrupt. With his wife and a new son [John], Whitefield could no longer afford to live in London. Whitefield had them go back to Gloucester in the winter and John, at four months of age, dies from his exposure to the cold - in the very house where Whitefield was born. God was breaking and crushing Whitefield. It is well said that whenever God chooses to use someone greatly, he will break him greatly so that they’re crushed in spirit and able to have their characters molded by God. Whitefield is introduced at this time to Lady Hastings who lessons his financial burden. She helps him with financial support.
2. **SERMON EXCERPT**: Here is an excerpt from one of Whitefield’s sermons so that we get a chance to be exposed to his preaching. “I offer you salvation this day. The door of mercy is not yet shut. There does now remain a sacrifice for sin for all who will accept the Lord Jesus Christ. He will embrace you in His arms of love. O turn to Him. Turn to Him in the sense of your own unworthiness. Tell Him how polluted you are. Tell Him how vile you are, and do not be faithless but believing. What, you fear that the Lord Jesus will not accept you? Your sins will be no hindrance. Your unworthiness is no hindrance to Him. If you’re own corrupt hearts do not keep you back, nothing will hinder Jesus from receiving you. He loves to see poor sinners coming to Him. He is pleased to see sinners lie at His feet pleading His promises. And if you thus come to Christ, He will not send you away without His spirit. No, He will receive you, and He will bless you. O, do not put a slight on His love. He wants you to believe in Him that you might be saved. This, this is all the dear Savior desires. To make you happy, and to make you leave your sins, and to sit down eternally with Him at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Let me beseech you to come to Jesus Christ. I invite you all to come to Christ and come to Him now and receive Him as your Lord and Savior. He is ready to receive you. I invite you now to come to Him that you might find rest for your souls. He will rejoice over you if you will come. He will be glad that you’re coming. He calls you by His ministers, O come onto Him. He is laboring to bring you back from your sin and to bring you back from Satan unto Himself. Open the door of your heart and receive the Lord Jesus and the King of glory shall enter into your soul. My heart is full. It is quite full. I must speak or I will burst before you. What? Do you think your souls are of no value? Do you esteem them not worth saving? Are your pleasures worth more than your souls? Would you rather regard the diversions of this life than have the salvation of your souls so you will never be partakers with Him in Glory. If you come unto Him, if you come to Christ, He will supply you with His grace and bring you home to glory and there you shall sing praises and you shall sing hallelujah to the Lamb forever. May this be their happiness for all who hear me here today.”
3. **TIRELESS ITINERATE**: 1754-1769 - His wife dies in 1768. In September 1769, Whitefield prepares to step onto a ship to sail back to the colonies. It will be his last sermon on British soil.
* He arrived in **Charleston**, **South Carolina**. He preached for 10 consecutive days in Charleston when Charleston was perhaps the major city of all the colonies. He traveled south into **Georgia** in late spring. He takes a ship and travels north, preaching in **Philadelphia** and **New York**. He goes up the **New England** coastline all the way up to **Maine**. He comes all the way back down to **Exeter**, **New Hampshire**. He is weary.  He is tired. Before he left for the colonies, John Wesley saw him and said that he looked much older than his age.
* As he prepared to preach on an open field in September in 1770, Whitefield prays, “Lord I am weary in the work, but not weary of the work. If I have not yet finished my course let me go and preach for you one more time in the fields and seal your truth, and I will be ready to come home to you.” This proved to be almost prophetic. After he preached, he then took a horse ride down to **Newbury Port, Massachusetts**. As he is at this pastor’s house, a two-story house, he goes up to the second floor and he preaches what will be his last sermon. There are a couple of thousand people gathered there.
1. **HIS DEATH:** Whitefield battled with asthma all his life and the stress of what he called the “gospel sweat” from his preaching. He retired in the middle of the night. There was a secretary present, a man who was an eye observer of everything that took place. Whitefield gasped for air. His throat began to close down. He was to preach that very morning, but at 6 o’clock he died.
* He wanted to die preaching in the pulpit. But if he could not die in the pulpit, bury me under the last pulpit or bury me in the next pulpit in which I am to preach. Two doors down, he is buried under the pulpit. When you stand in the pulpit to preach, Whitefield is literally under the pulpit. You can go down into the basement of the church, and there in this basement is the tomb of Whitefield. People took portions of his clothing and his body which were found in London and would finally be returned until they had to seal the tomb shut with cement. For the funeral service, there were so many ships that came into the harbor, that the harbor could not contain any more ships. They were backed up down the coastline.
* In England there was a memorial service, and John Wesley preached that service. Wesley, “Have we read or heard of any person since the apostles who testified the gospel of the grace of God so widely and so extensively through so large a part of the inhabited earth?  Have we read or heard of any person who called so many thousands, so many myriads, of sinners to repentance above all? Have we read or heard of any who has been a blessed instrument in His hands in bringing so many sinners from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God?”
* J.C. Ryle - “No preacher in England has ever succeeded in arresting the attention of such crowds as Whitefield that he constantly addressed around London. No preacher has even been so universally popular in every country that he visited, England, Scotland, and America. No preacher has ever retained his hold on his hearers as he did for 34 years.  His popularity never waned.”
1. **APPLICATION**: The best of us are intimidated by this for who can run with Whitefield? None of us can. But there is also the positive application. That no matter who you are or where you are, there is a work for you to do, and that we must expand ourselves in that work. We must sacrificially give of our self in the service of the Lord. That we must say with our Master that we’ve come not to be served but to serve and to give our life a ransom for many. In what way do you need to pick up the pace by the grace of God? His death at 55 reminds us how little time we have to serve the Lord while we’re here on this earth. Psalm 90:12 “Teach us to number our days that we may present to you a heart of wisdom.” Ephesians 5:16, “We must redeem the time. (To buy the opportunities) because the days are evil. John 9:4 - “We must be about our Father’s business for night is coming when no man can work.” When Christ returns, may our shoulder be to the plow.

**THE FOLLOWING IS THE ACCOUNT OF A FARMER REGARDING THE SERMON WHITEFIELD PREACHED IN NORTHFIELD, CONNECTICUT ON OCTOBER 23, 1740.**

“Now it pleased God to send Mr. Whitefield into this land; and my hearing of his preaching at Philadelphia, like one of the Old apostles, and many thousands flocking to hear him preach the gospel; and great numbers were converted to Christ; I felt the Spirit of God drawing me by conviction; I longed to see and hear him, and wished he would come this way. I heard he was come to New York and the Jerseys and great [multitudes](https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/multitudes) flocking after him under great concern for their Souls which brought on my Concern more and more hoping soon to see him but next I heard he was at Long Island; then at Boston and next at Northampton.

Then on a Sudden, in the morning about 8 or 9 of the Clock there came a messenger and said Mr. Whitefield preached at Hartford and Wethersfield yesterday and is to preach at Middletown this morning at ten of the Clock, I was in my field at Work, I dropt my tool and I had in my hand an ran home to my wife telling her to make ready quickly to go and hear Mr. Whitefield preach at Middletown, then run to my [pasture](https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/pasture) for my horse with all my might; fearing that I should be too late; having my horse I wish my wife soon mounted the horse and went forward as fast as I thought the horse could bear, and when my horse got much out of breath I would get down and put my wife on the Saddle and bid her ride as fast as she could and not Stop or Slack for me except I bad her and so I would run until I was much out of breath; and then mount my horse again, and so I did several times to favour my horse; we improved every moment to get along as if we were fleeing for our lives; all the while fearing we should be too late to hear the Sermon, for we had twelve miles to ride double in little more than an hour and we went round by the upper housen parish.

On the Road to the Sermon: And when we came within about half a mile or a mile of the Road that comes down from Hartford, Wethersfield and Stepney to Middletown; on high land I saw before me a Cloud or fogg rising; I first thought it came from the great River, but I came near the Road, I heard a noise something like a low rumbling thunder and presently found it was the noise of Horses feet coming down the Road and this Cloud was a Cloud of dust made by the Horses felt; it arose some Rods into the air over the tops of Hills and trees and when I came within about 20 rods of the Road, I could see men and horses Slipping along in the Cloud like shadows and as I drew nearer it seemed like a steady Stream of horses and their riders, scarcely a horse more than a length behind another, all of a Lather and foam with sweat, their breath rolling out of their nostrils every Jump; every horse seemed to go with all his might to carry his rider to hear news from heaven for the saving of Souls; it made me tremble to see the Sight, how the world was in a Struggle; I found a Vacancy between two horses to Slip in min and my wife said law our cloths will be all spoiled see how they look, for they were so Covered with dust, that they looked almost all of a Colour Coats, hats, shirts, and horses.

The Crowd: We went down in the Stream but heard no man speak a word all the way for 3 miles but every one pressing forward in great [haste](https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/haste) and when we got to Middletown old meeting house there was a great multitude it was said to be 3 or 4000 of people [Assembled](https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/assemble) together; we dismounted and shoo[k] off our Dust; and the ministers were then Coming to the meeting house; I turned and looked towards the Great River and saw the ferry boats Running swift backward and forward brin[g]ing over loads of people and the Oars rowed [nimble](https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/nimble) and quick; every thing men horses and boats seemed to be Struggling for life; The land and banks over the river looked black with people and horses all along the 12 miles I saw no man at work in his field, but all seemed to be gone.

Whitefield Speaks: When I saw Mr. Whitefield come upon the [Scaffold](https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/scaffold) he lookt almost [angelical](https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/angelical); a young, slim, slender, youth before some thousands of people with a bold undaunted [Countenance](https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/Countenance), and my hearing how God was with him every where he came along it [Solemnized](https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/Solemnized) my mind; and put me into a trembling fear before he began to preach; for he looked as if he was clothed with authority from the Great God; and a sweet [solemnity](https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/solemnity) sat upon his brow And my hearing him preach, gave me a heart wound; By Gods blessings: my old Foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me; then I was convinced of the doctrine of Election: and went right to quarrelling with God about it; because that all I could do would not save me; and he had decreed from Eternity who would be saved and who not.

Made for Heaven or for Hell? I began to think I was not Elected, and that God made some for heaven and me for hell. And I thought God was not Just in so doing, I thought I did not stand on even Ground with others, if as I thought; I was made to be damned; My heart then rose against God exceedingly, for his making me for hell; Now this distress lasted Almost two years: - Poor – Me – Miserable me. – It pleased God to bring on my Convictions more and more, and I was loaded with guilt of Sin, I saw I was undone forever; I carried Such a weight of Sin in my breast or mind, that it seemed to me as I should sink into the ground every step; and I kept all to my self as much as I could; I went month after month mourning and begging for mercy, I tried every way I could think to help myself but all was failed : - Poor me it took away most all of my Comfort of eating, drinking, Sleeping, or working. Hell fire was most always in my mind; and I have hundreds of times put my fingers into my pipe when I have been smoaking to feel how fire felt: And to see how my Body could bear to lye in Hell fire for ever and ever. Now my countenance was sad so that others took notice of it.

"Forsake everything that was Sinful" … I made a great Resolution that I would forsake every thing that was Sinfull; & do to my uttermost ever thing that was good; And at once I felt a calm in my mind, and I had no desire to any thing that was sin as I thought; But here the Devil thought to Catch me on a false hope, for I began to think that I was converted, for I thought I felt a real Change in me. But God in his mercy did not leave me here to perish; but in the space of ten days I was made to see that I was yet in the Gall of bitterness; my Convictions came on again more smart than ever – poor me-

At the Very Mouth of Hell: There was then a very [Mortal](https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/mortal) disease in the land, the fever and the bloody [flux](https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/flux); and I was possesst with a notion that if I had it I would die and goe right to hell, but I presently had it and very hard too: then my heart rose against God for making me for hell, when he might as well have made me for heaven; or not made me at all: - Poor me – Oh that I would be a Dog or a toad or any Creature but Man: I thought that would be a happy change for they had no Souls and I had. Oh what will become of me was the language of my mind; for now I was worse than ever, my heart was as hard as a Stone: my Eyes were dry, once I could weep for my Self but now cannot shed one tear; I was as it were in the very mouth of hell. The very flashes of hell fire were in my Mind; Eternity before me, and my time short here. Now when all was failed me then I longed to be [annihilated](https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/annihilate); or to have my Soul die with my body; but that way failed too. Hell fire hell fire ran Swift my mind an[d] my [distemper](https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/distemper) grew harder and harder upon me, and my nature was just wore out – Poor me – Poor Soul.

Saved by Christ: …One day as I went out into my field to work when I went out of my door, I fell into a prayer and continued so until I cam[e] to the place of my work and then I had a glorious Sight. It seemed as if I really saw the gate of heaven by an Eye of faith, and the way for Sinners to Get to heaven by Jesus Christ; as plain as ever I saw anything with my bodily eyes in my life, I looked round to see if I could see any poor Creature; I thought that I could almost point and shew them the straight way to heaven by Jesus Christ: I saw what free Grace was; I saw how stubborn and willful man was; I saw it was nothing but accepting of Christ’s Righteousness and the match was made; I saw I was saved by Christ, Here I thought I had the sealings of the holy Ghost; and here I had evidence clear what I saw here is unspeakable, I could do no work here but lay down for want of bodily Strength until the view was a little [abated](https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/abate)...