

Windows of Witness (George Whitefield)

Reference, Quotes from - *"The Christian Leaders"*, JC Ryle, 1878

"For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts 4:20

What a privilege is ours to have the preserved testimonies of individuals who have surrendered their lives in service to God. As JC Ryle states in *The Christian Leaders*, "The instruments that God employs to do his work in the world deserve a close inspection." As exhorted in Hebrews 13:7, I pray that, through their examples, you and I may follow in their faith.

George Whitefield, born in 1714, in Gloucester (South West England), is a man whose life made a tremendous mark in this world for God.

By his own testimony George Whitefield said he was "addicted to lying, filthy talking, and foolish jesting," and that he was a "Sabbath-breaker, a theatre-goer, a card-player, and a romance-reader." As an older teen, the Lord saved George Whitefield, and transformed his life. Whitefield was made to hear and see clearly the doctrines of grace, which "took deep root in his heart, and became, as it were, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh". In his young 20's then, Whitefield surrendered to God's call on his life to preach, admitting, "that if I held out longer I should fight against God."

Within the many details of Whitefield's life, the crossroad that turned his entire ministry was his adoption, and attention to open air preaching. "Seeing that thousands everywhere would attend no place of worship, spent their Sundays in idleness or sin, and were not to be reached by sermons within walls, he resolved, in the spirit of holy aggression, to go out after them 'into the highways and hedges,' on his Master's principle, and 'compel them to come in.' "

The first discovery that God was giving efficacy to his open air preaching was during his preaching to hundreds who were brought out of the coal mines, with faces completely darkened by the coal dust. Whitefield, while writing to a friend, penned "they were glad to hear of a Jesus who was a friend to publicans, and came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. The first discovery of their being affected was the sight of the white gutters made by their tears, which plentifully fell down." Whitefield preached this way, nearly 10 times per week, for 34 years.

In a diary entry he writes the following "I preached in Moorfields to an exceeding great multitude. Being weakened by my morning's preaching, I refreshed myself in the afternoon by a little sleep, and at five went and preached at Kennington Common, about two miles from London, where no less than thirty thousand people were supposed to be present."

Benjamin Franklin (a close friend of Whitefield) wrote in his Autobiography that George Whitefield's voice could be clearly heard almost a mile away!!! One thing is certain, all who heard his Preaching, heard of Christ! In his dying days Whitefield declared, "How willing I would ever live to preach Christ! But I die to be with Him!"

May we, likewise, spend our days exalting Christ!

~ Pastor Tim Hodge