

George Whitefield: "Ye must be born again"

I have been reading a re-print of an old book called "*Fastened Like Nails*" which is about Christian men down through the last 500 years or so that have had an impact on the world, and it's been fantastic.

One of my favorites is George Whitefield. His life and ministry is very convicting, and one verse that he kept always at the forefront of his mind was John 3v3,7 "**Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God...ye must be born again.**"

He was always on the move looking to tell folks about the Lord Jesus Christ. He made 13 trips across the Atlantic to do missionary work! That would be considered a lot of traveling even today when a trip is only a few hours plane ride, but he did it back in the 1700s when the voyage took weeks on a sailing ship.

On one such trip, after a particularly bad storm in which everyone had been drenched from several days of tossing at sea, he gathered all the passengers and the entire crew and preached to them that "**ye must be born again.**" He was twenty five at the time. I wasn't doing stuff like that at the age of twenty five, and that's convicting to me!

A friend of his, Benjamin Franklin, once listened to him preach and estimated that 30,000 people on flat ground would be able to hear his booming voice perfectly. In towns all across England and America, he would tell people about the Lord Jesus Christ and their need to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.

(In his book "*O Biblios*" Alan O'Reilly has an outstanding quote about a time that George Whitefield preached to a village of coal miners and the effect that the Gospel had on them.)

He didn't care who you were, he just wanted to tell you about Jesus! He was constantly preaching to anyone and everyone. He'd preach to groups of coal miners in England, he'd go wigwam to wigwam in Indian villages and through an interpreter tell about how a Saviour came to save sinners no matter where they are from or what color they are. He did the same thing to groups of slaves on the plantations in Bermuda, as well as in groups of villagers up and down the country on both sides of the Atlantic. He was absolutely tireless in his efforts to "get the gospel out to sinners," to borrow a phrase from one of my favorite Brits, John Davis.

Am I tirelessly working to spread the good news as far and wide as I can? Are you? (My answer to that is "no," not nearly to the extent of George Whitefield, and I find that very convicting.)

He was also very bold in interacting with "**men of high degree**"! John Davis often mentions writing to celebrities, and I think that's a great idea. George Whitfield would do the same thing! In a letter to Benjamin Franklin, who was a world famous friend of his at the time, he wrote "I find that you grow more and more famous in the learned world. As you have made much progress in investigating the mysteries of electricity, I now humbly urge you to give diligent heed to the new birth. It is a most important and interesting study, and, when mastered, will richly repay you for your pains." It seems that Franklin never took up a serious study of what God said about the subject, but my point is that Whitefield cared enough to write that and was bold enough to send it. What a great example!

One time a friend asked him "George, why is it that you preach so often upon the text "**ye must be born again?**" Whitefield stared at him for a moment then said "Because....**ye must be born again!**"

What an attitude! What a man! I have been very convicted by reading about this life of this Godly man, and others, and I hope that it will cause you to take a look at yourself and what you're doing for the Lord as the Lord's return gets closer and closer.

(Also, Ruckman's History of the New Testament church is one of the greatest history books of all time, and certainly the greatest on church history, in my opinion. You'll hear more about ole George in that one as well)