

LIGHT THE FIRE AGAIN

DAILY PRAYERS FOR THE
NEXT GREAT AWAKENING

LENT 2020



BY REV DR ANDREW J TAYLOR
WITH A FOREWORD BY PETE GREIG

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Morning and evening prayers for Lent 2020
inspired by the Psalms and the Journal of John Wesley.

Andrew J Taylor
with a foreword by Pete Greig



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FOREWORD

BY PETE GREIG

"I continue to dream and pray about a revival of holiness in our day that moves forth in mission and creates authentic community in which each person can be unleashed through the empowerment of the Spirit to fulfil God's creational intentions."¹

— JOHN WESLEY ON PRAYER

It's extremely exciting to be embarking upon this 2020 Lenten journey together – thousands of us in different types of churches and different parts of the country praying daily in total unity that God would Light the Fire Again in our nation.

From Ash Wednesday (February 26th) to the middle of Holy Week (Wednesday 8th April) we will be praying together twice a day, in the morning and the evening, five days a week. (This five-day model means that if, like me, you are liable to miss the odd day, you'll be able to catch up on Saturdays. And of course, Sundays are traditionally a day off in Lent). Each devotional only needs to take ten minutes but I would encourage you to linger for a little longer when you can, and to expand upon the set prayers in this book. This material will also work well in corporate church prayer meetings.

We are so grateful to Rev Dr Andrew Taylor, who first published this brilliant booklet in 2014, for allowing us to revise and re-release it as a resource for Wildfires churches. Based in Cambridge, Andrew is a pioneer minister ordained in the Church of England with a particular passion for prayer and new monasticism. His wife Connie is one of the leaders of YWAM England. Together they have pioneered the Cambridge House of Prayer.

AN INVITATION TO FAST

It is traditional to fast during Lent. This is something that Jesus just assumed his followers would do: 'When you fast...' he said to them (Matthew 6:16). During Lent this year you may like to join us in fasting – denying yourself some form of bodily appetite or comfort whether it's food, alcohol, social media, television, make-up, sex or even 'body lotion' (this last one was practiced by Daniel in the Bible!) Fasting is a powerful way to pray because it focuses our minds, fuels our faith, and adds fire-power to our prayers. Obviously, if you struggle with any kind of eating disorder you should probably fast something other than food.

People often get quite introspective during Lent, but this resource is a bit different. It's about intercession rather than introspection. Rather than looking inwards each day, it will encourage you to look backwards at what God has done in the past, outwards at the needs of our world today, and upwards to the Lord in prayer. We enter the wilderness this Lent like prize-fighters entering the ring: not to retreat but to advance. To do spiritual warfare as Jesus did. To seek a fresh outpouring of the Spirit as he did, emerging forty days later 'in the power of the Spirit' (Luke 4:14) 'proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease' (Matthew 4:23).

INSPIRATION

Light the Fire Again draws inspiration from three primary sources, two ancient and one modern: the Psalms, the life of John Wesley, and the cultural context of our world today.

1. Psalms. Reading (on average) three Psalms twice a day, we will pray our way steadily through the entire psalter, all 150 psalms, by Easter. (Don't panic – the longer ones get broken down a bit!) What better way could there possibly be of interceding, lamenting and worshipping this Lent than with the original prayer book of Israel? I should warn you, however, that some Psalms are going to feel a bit uncomfortable or downright disturbing (eg Psalm 137:9). Try to read these in the light of Jesus and, if there are sentiments that don't really remind you of him, it may simply reflect the fact that we now know things about God's heart revealed in Christ that they didn't yet fully understand. Theologians call this 'progressive revelation'. But also, remember that the Bible isn't just some ancient echo-chamber for a Western millennial mind-set. It doesn't always comply conveniently with my contemporary cultural preferences. It rarely pampers to the vagaries of my current emotional state. Thank God! I want to be provoked. I want to be part of something bigger and older than me.
2. John Wesley – For almost half a century, from 1740-89, John Wesley the great leader of England's eighteenth century awakening and the founder of Methodism, kept a daily journal. It's an extraordinary resource. Twice a day we will take either a short extract from one of Wesley's diaries, or an event from his life, and use it to fuel our prayers. You will find all sorts of delightful surprises, like the description of Wesley delivering a woman of a demon in Kingswood, or the way he resolved an argument with his friend George Whitefield, or the Easter day when pouring rain reduced him to 'only' preaching four times before leading a Methodist Society meeting at night. It seems to me that our destiny is shaped by our history and, if we are to truly contend in prayer for the next Great Awakening, we will find faith for it in the stories of the last Great Awakening.
3. Our cultural context – Wesley lived more than 250 years ago and the Psalms were written more than 2500 years ago. But this is not an exercise in nostalgia. Here today we face formidable challenges in our own families, communities and nations. And so, as we look back at what God has done in the past, and look around at the grave challenges of our time, we step into the wilderness of Lent with a mixture of desperation, determination and desire, praying with the prophet Habakkuk:

*Lord, I have heard of your fame;
I stand in awe of your deeds, Lord.
Repeat them in our day,
in our time make them known;
in wrath remember mercy.
(Habakkuk 3:2)*

PETE AND SAMMY GREIG

On behalf of the Wildfires churches

INTRODUCTION

BY ANDREW TAYLOR

**"We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace in England,
as I trust shall never be put out."**

— NICHOLAS RIDLEY, OCTOBER 16TH 1555

Two bishops in the Church of England, Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, were burnt at the stake as martyrs for their faith in 1555. John Foxe records Latimer's prayers in the Tower of London while he waited for his execution. He prayed, "'that God of his mercy would restore His Gospel to England ONCE AGAIN'; and these words 'once again' he did so beat into the ears of the Lord God, as though he had seen God before him, and spoken to Him face to face."² Just under two centuries later, the Lord moved powerfully, bringing revival to England through John Wesley and the Methodist awakening. One biographer saw John Wesley's life as a direct answer to that prayer of Hugh Latimer in the Tower of London. Once again the Gospel was restored to our land.

Latimer's words to Ridley as they were being burnt at the stake, on 16th October 1555, had been "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace in England, as I trust shall never be put out."³ One historian suggests that John Wesley's life in the 18th century was like a blazing fire, as he travelled around the country on horseback proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.⁴

As a boy, John Wesley had nearly died in a fire at his father's rectory in Epworth. He referred to himself in the words of scripture as "a brand plucked out of the fire" (Zechariah 3:2). Many years later John Wesley's heart was "strangely warmed"⁵ at a quarter to nine at Aldersgate on 24th May 1738, when he heard Luther's Preface to Romans being read aloud. Wesley's evangelistic zeal then led him to travel on horseback a quarter of a million miles, and the Gospel was preached in England once again. Skevington-Wood says, "The symbolism of fire links the upper room in Aldersgate Street with the blazing parsonage at Epworth. The brand plucked from the burning had now found his destiny. Henceforth the flame within would carry him throughout the land to ignite the tinder of revival."⁶ "Guarding the holy fire; that was what he was doing," writes Prof Bonamy Dobree. "He was himself a flame going up and down the land, lighting such candles as by God's grace would never be put out; and as one reads [Wesley's] colossal journal one gets the impression of this flame, never waning, never smoky, darting from point to point, lighting up the whole kingdom, till in due course it burnt out the body it inhabited."⁷ Over the next 30 days, let us remind the Lord of the prayer of Latimer when he was in the Tower of London.

2 Foxe, J. Book of Martyrs, Whitaker, 278.

3 Foxe, Martyrs, 309.

4 Dobree, J. Wesley. 96–97, quoted in Skevington-Wood, The burning heart, 68.

5 Wesley, J. The Complete Works of John Wesley, Journal, Volume 1, 24th May 1738, 103.

6 Skevington-Wood, A. The burning heart. John Wesley: Evangelist, 67.

7 Dobree, J. Wesley. 96–97, quoted in Skevington-Wood, The burning heart, 68.



WEDNESDAY 26 FEBRUARY // PSALMS 1 & 24

Psalm 24:4 *"The one who has clean hands and a pure heart"*

ASH WEDNESDAY

And so, our six-week journey through Lent begins today. Millions of Christians are starting to fast or having their foreheads marked with a cross using ash from last year's palm Sunday crosses (hence the name 'Ash' Wednesday). It's a symbol of repentance and a reminder that we're embarking upon a solemn journey through the dust of the desert to the cross of Christ at Easter. The cross is drawn not upon the hand but upon the forehead because this is a time for turning our thoughts in a particular direction.

The forty days of Lent mirror the forty days of Jesus in the wilderness, and the forty years spent wandering in the wilderness by the Israelites. With them, and with the whole Wildfires community, we are entering the wilderness now. Significant battles await us, but these challenges will lead us somewhere wonderful. The wilderness led the Israelites to the Promised Land, it led Jesus into his ministry and it leads us to Easter.

And so we will be praying this Lent for God's promises over our lives to be fulfilled, for the resurrection power of Jesus to be let loose, and the fire of the Holy Spirit to fall, once again in our land.

The last awakening to shake the British Isles came to the Outer Hebrides, 1949-53. Thousands were swept into the Kingdom and on one night God's presence was experienced

so powerfully that 75% of those who gave their lives to Christ did so before they even made it to a church meeting. This astounding revival began at a prayer meeting in the village of Barvas when a young man stood to read Psalm 24, one of today's Psalms: 'Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart' (vv.3-4a). He shut his Bible and said, 'It seems to me just so much sentimental humbug to be praying as we are praying, to be waiting as we are waiting here, if we ourselves are not rightly related to God.' He then began to repent of his sin getting his own heart right with God until he fell to the ground under the power of the Holy Spirit.

Transformation and salvation in the nation always begins with personal consecration. It was the same for John Wesley, whose heart was quietly ignited at a prayer meeting in London and with that flame he set the nation ablaze. And it was the same for Jesus in the wilderness where he prepared his heart with prayer, fasting and spiritual warfare, before launching out in public ministry. On this Ash Wednesday at the start of this journey of consecration, let's take time to confess our sins to the Lord using the prayer below and the Methodist Covenant prayer, written 265 years ago by John Wesley himself.

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, as I step into the wilds of Lent, would you "search me and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23-24).

JOHN WESLEY'S COVENANT PRAYER

*I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing, put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,
exalted for you, or brought low for you;
let me be full,
let me be empty,
let me have all things,
let me have nothing:
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours. So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.
Amen.*

THURSDAY 27 FEBRUARY // PSALMS 2- 5

Psalm 4:3 *"Set apart"*

PREPARED BEFORE HE WAS BORN

John Wesley once said, "If I were to write my own life I should begin it before I was born."⁸ This was the way he paid tribute to his past. Wesley's family tree had a huge effect on his personality and prepared him for the work of evangelism long before he came into the world. He had a strong sense of God's purpose for his life, as did the prophet Jeremiah. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." (Jeremiah 1:5)

Wesley's ceaseless travel ministering up and down the land, it could be said, "was in his blood"⁹. Samuel Wesley, John Wesley's father, was an Anglican, and John was brought up at Epworth in the family rectory. John Wesley's mother Susanna was the daughter of Doctor Annesley, a well-known Puritan, and she herself had been raised in a very disciplined home with very strong moral, devotional and educational

standards.¹⁰ Susanna Wesley ordered her timetable very strictly. She examined herself before God, she meditated and set herself apart through daily times of devotion, and she kept a spiritual journal, which helped her observe the strict Puritan Sabbath. This was all part of her daily 'method' (a Puritan word, that described the way she ordered her life, many years before John Wesley started his ministry).

Wesley drank in his mixed Anglican and Puritan inheritance "with his mother's milk"¹¹, and it influenced him powerfully. He stayed a Church of England man to the end of his life, but his prime concern was for the good of souls. He had a strong sense of discipline and he had a keen desire for reform within the Church of England. If existing church order stood in his way, he would cast it aside without hesitation. "The rebel under the skin would keep bursting through."¹²

PRAYER

Today we pray with the psalmist Psalm 4:3 "the Lord has set apart the godly for himself". Lord, you set John Wesley apart to be your vessel, to see a national awakening unto revival in the 18th century. Do it again Lord — set your people apart for a national awakening today. Prepare me Lord — set me apart Lord, I am here to do your will.

8 Clarke, A. Memoirs of the Wesley Family, Vol 1, 94.
9 Skevington-Wood, A. The burning heart John Wesley: Evangelist, 19.

10 Monk, R.C. John Wesley: His Puritan heritage, 21.
11 Newton, J.A Methodism and the Puritans, 5
12 Skevington-Wood, A. The burning heart, 19.



THURSDAY 27 FEBRUARY // PSALMS 6-8

Psalm 6:4 *"Save me because of your unfailing love."*

SAVED FROM DROWNING

There is an incident that John Pollock relates at the beginning of his biography of John Wesley concerning how Wesley was saved from drowning. This took place in Cornwall in the late 1770s. Wesley himself was over 70 years of age. Peter Martin, the proprietor of a hostel in Redruth, Cornwall, was preparing John Wesley's horses, while Wesley was eating his meal with some other travellers. He could tell that John Wesley was telling one of his innumerable anecdotes because of the periodic roars of laughter. Every so often, there was a silence. It was then that Mr Wesley must have been speaking of the things of God.¹³

Although Wesley had made a commitment to preach at St Ives that evening, Peter Martin was concerned about the danger of crossing the estuary by the ford. The man responsible for the vessel tried to persuade him not to cross because it was so dangerous. Although Wesley listened very politely, he said that he had made a promise that he intended to keep. John Wesley looked out of the window of the carriage and cried loudly to Peter Martin, "Take the sea! Take the sea!" Peter Martin responded quickly and after spurring the horses, there was a splash and the carriage entered the ford. Peter Martin says, "I struggled hard to maintain my seat in the saddle, while the poor affrighted animals were snorting and rearing in the most

terrific manner and furiously plunging through the opposing waves. I expected every moment to be swept into eternity and the only hope of escape I then cherished was on account of my driving so holy a man."¹⁴

Wesley called quite loudly to him, "What is thy name, driver?"

"Peter."

"Peter, fear not; thou shalt not sink!"

Wesley put back his head and Peter urged on the horses. They got safely over, but as Peter recalled, "It was a miracle, as I shall always say." They arrived at St Ives, both wet. "Mr Wesley's first care was to see me comfortably lodged at the tavern. He procured me warm clothes, a good fire, and excellent refreshments. Nor were the horses forgotten by him," said Peter Martin. Totally unmindful of himself, Wesley proceeded according to his appointment.¹⁵

Pollock says at the start of his biography that "a biographer may well feel like Peter in danger of being drowned in a sea of material: the millions of words that Wesley wrote!"¹⁶ But the story of John Wesley being saved from drowning at St Ives also reminds us that he was a man who was very confident that the Lord was his personal Saviour. It was this truth of personal salvation that he preached across the length and breadth of our land.

PRAYER

Lord, we pray that you would raise up more John Wesleys in our day to bring a message of hope and deliverance and freedom from sin. Yours, Lord, is a message of unfailing love. Save us, save our nation because of your unfailing love, we pray. We are in perilous times, You are our only hope of escape, Lord. Save us, Lord, from the huge tide of opposition we face today. You, Lord, are our only hope. Save us and deliver us, Lord Jesus, we pray!

¹³ Pollock, Wesley: The Preacher, 7.

¹⁴ Pollock, Wesley: The Preacher, 8.

¹⁵ Pollock, Wesley: The Preacher, 9.

¹⁶ Pollock, Wesley: The Preacher, 8.



FRIDAY 28 FEBRUARY // PSALMS 9–11

Psalm 9:13 *"Lift me up from the gates of death."*

A BRAND PLUCKED OUT OF THE FIRE

It was on the night of 9th February 1709 that the Epworth Rectory was destroyed by fire. Henry Perlee Parker painted a picture of the dramatic scene of John Wesley's rescue. The old buildings were alight and young John Wesley was trapped inside, looking through the curtains, and a brave villager, balanced on another villager's shoulders, pulled him out of the building seconds before the roof caved in.¹⁷

Samuel Wesley invited all who were present to pray: "Come, neighbours. Let us give thanks to God. He has given me all my eight children. Let the house go, I am rich enough."¹⁸ Although Wesley was very young (he had not yet reached six years of age), this event left a big impression on his memory. He believed that God had spared him for a purpose. He said of himself that he was "a brand plucked out of the fire". (Zechariah 3:2)

John Wesley would regularly observe the anniversary of that night. On one occasion he said it was "the strongest impression I had till I was 23 or 24 years old". It is significant, too, that after Wesley was converted, he saw that he was spiritually "a brand plucked from the

fire". His rescue at Epworth was preparation for the very specific mission that the Lord had for his life. Later in his life when he was sitting for a portrait, he chose to be painted with a house in flames in the background, with the words beneath, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"¹⁹

The overriding emphasis throughout Wesley's life became 'personal salvation'. He saw that personal salvation was what Britain needed, and many historians believe that Wesley saved the whole English nation from revolution. Many European nations underwent terrible suffering during revolutions in the 18th and 19th centuries, but England did not. Not only did a third of the nation become Methodist some years after Wesley's death, and did thousands respond to the message of personal salvation, but the national attitude and character of the nation was also changed fundamentally.

Towards the end of his life he summarised his vision with these words: "The church has nothing to do but save souls; therefore spend and be spent in this work."²⁰

PRAYER

Lord, you lifted up John Wesley from the gates of death, as a brand plucked from the fire. You had mercy on him, and you had mercy on our nation. Lord, have mercy on us today. You are our God — you came to seek and save the lost. Come and seek and save us today, Jesus. Without you sovereignly intervening we are destined for destruction. Lord, have mercy on us and our nation, and lift us up from the gates of death today.

¹⁷ Skevington-Wood, *The Burning Heart*, 29.

¹⁸ Skevington-Wood, *The Burning Heart*, 29.

¹⁹ Skevington-Wood, *The Burning Heart*, 29, 30.

²⁰ Minutes of Conference, 29 June 1744, revised 1745.



FRIDAY 28 FEBRUARY // PSALMS 12-14

Psalm 12:1 *"Help, Lord, for the godly are no more; the faithful have vanished from among men."*

A PERIOD OF MORAL DISORDER

The moral standards in England before the Methodist revival began in 1738 were very low. Sir Robert Walpole, the Prime Minister from 1722–1742, lived in an adulterous relationship with Maria Skellett, "who lived in his house the Old Lodge at Richmond Park."²¹

Alcohol and gambling were the popular pastimes of this time. Gin-drinking had reached almost epidemic proportions and violent crime had become so bad and hangings so frequent that "Dr. Johnson ironically expressed his fear that the navy might run short of ropes."²² Harold Nicolson describes England in the first part of the 18th century as being "in a period of moral disorder."²³

The low moral standards had resulted from a prevalent indifference to the Christian faith. Thomas Secker, the Bishop of Oxford, said, "an open and professed disregard of religion is become, through a variety of unhappy causes, the distinguishing character of the

age."²⁴ Goldsmith said that sermons from the pulpit were "generally dry, methodical and unaffecting; delivered with the most insipid calmness, so that should the peaceful preacher lift his head over the cushion, he might discover his audience, instead of being awakened to remorse, actually sleeping over his mechanical and laboured composition."²⁵

Today we, too, are in a period of moral disorder. Drug addiction and alcoholism are rampant and pornography is a multi-billion-pound industry which some have described as a plague among our young people. As a nation we have drifted a very long way from our strong Christian heritage. Texts that once every school pupil knew by heart such as the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments are so unfamiliar that the Church of England is introducing a course to teach the basic tenets of Christianity, 'The Pilgrim Course'²⁶.

Britain needs waking up again.

PRAYER

Lord, as a nation we have abandoned our Christian heritage. Wake us up! You moved powerfully in the 18th century through Wesley attacking those same evils of licence and moral decay, through the preaching of repentance and conversion. Help us today, Lord, for the godly are no more and the faithful have vanished from among men. Rebuke the evils of our day, Lord. Awake the church out of its lethargy. Send another revival to our nation, Lord. Breathe on us again, we pray!

21 Skevington-Wood, The Burning Heart, 9.

22 Skevington-Wood, The Burning Heart, 11.

23 Nicolson, H. The Age of Reason, 1700–1789, 369, Skevington-Wood, The Burning Heart, 9.

24 B. Porteus and G. Stinton, The works of Thomas Secker, Vol 5. 292. Skevington-Wood, The Burning Heart, 12.

25 Friedman, A The collected works of Oliver Goldsmith. Vol 3, 151, Skevington-Wood, The Burning Heart, 12.

26 www.pilgrimcourse.org/the-course

MONDAY 2 MARCH // PSALMS 15-17

Psalm 15:1 *"Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill?"*

THE HOLY CLUB

After being raised by his highly disciplined mother, John Wesley went to school at Charterhouse. He attended chapel and continued to say his prayers morning and evening and to read his Bible, but in this season he was no longer subject to his mother's strict discipline.²⁷

He went to university to read classics and later became a clergyman and an Oxford don. While preparing for holy orders, his mother urged him to "enter now upon serious examination of yourself that you may know whether you have a serious hope of salvation by Jesus Christ."²⁸ John Wesley started writing in an old red notebook, which had been his grandfather's, keeping a record of his temptations using shorthand.²⁹

In August 1730, John Wesley, Charles Wesley and William Morgan started "a little society" daily visiting prisoners (of whom there were some debtors) and twice a week reading prayers. This was the beginnings of what came to be known as the "Holy Club". "During John Wesley's teaching days at Oxford University the Holy Club observed a strict discipline which John devised himself but which followed closely the pattern of other similar societies." Charitable work, including the visiting of prisoners and

helping the poor, was a key part of the pattern of his life. "The members of the club spent an hour, morning and evening, in private prayer.

At nine, 12 and three o'clock they recited a collect and at all times they examined themselves closely, watching for signs of grace and trying to preserve a high degree of religious fervour. They noted in cipher [that is, coded] diaries all the particulars of their daily employment. One hour each day was set apart for meditation. They fasted twice a week, observed all the feasts of the Church and received the sacraments every Sunday. Before going into company they prepared their conversation, so that words might not be spoken without purpose. The Primitive Church, insofar as they had knowledge of it, was to be taken as their pattern."³⁰

There were a number of nicknames that Wesley and his friends received. They were derisively called "Methodists", "Sacramentarians", "Enthusiasts", "Bible Moths", the "Reforming club" and "Supererogation men". Of all these, the name "Holy Club" was the most popular one among Oxford students. Although they were called Methodists, this was still ten years before the Methodist revival began.³¹

PRAYER

Lord, I pray for a revival of holiness in me today. Create in me a pure heart, O God. Show me where there is an offensive way in me, where there is slander on my tongue and where I do not keep my word. I turn away from these things Lord and I turn to you and receive your cleansing, Lord. How wonderful is your dwelling place, O Lord God Almighty. I long to live on your holy hill.

²⁷ Pollock, Wesley: The Preacher, 25.

²⁸ Pollock, Wesley: The Preacher, 33.

²⁹ Pollock, Wesley: The Preacher, 33.

³⁰ Vulliamy, C.E. John Wesley, Epworth Press, 55 quoted in Snyder, H. The Radical Wesley and patterns for Church Renewal, 18.

³¹ Snyder, The Radical Wesley, 18, 19.



MONDAY 2 MARCH // PSALM 18

Psalm 18:28 "You, O Lord. keep my lamp burning."

A CANDLE THAT SHALL NOT BE PUT OUT

In 1730, John Wesley preached once a month in Oxford at the Castle and at Bocardo, the prison where most debtors were. Over 150 years earlier, Archbishop Cranmer and Bishops Ridley and Latimer had lain there at that very same prison, before they were burned at the stake for their faith in 1555.³² Some of Wesley's biographers link his life to the prayers of Latimer and Ridley.

Latimer prayed in the Tower of London while he waited for his execution, "that God of his mercy would restore His Gospel to England ONCE AGAIN"; and these words 'once again' he did so beat into the ears of the Lord God, as though he had seen God before him, and spoken to Him face to face."³³ Just under two centuries later, the Lord moved powerfully, bringing revival to England through John Wesley and the Methodist awakening. One biographer saw John Wesley's life as a direct answer to that prayer of Hugh Latimer in the Tower of London. Once again the Gospel was restored to our land.

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the country on horseback proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.³⁵

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"Guarding the holy fire; that was what he was doing," writes Prof Bonamy Dobree. "He was himself a flame going up and down the land, lighting such candles as by God's grace would never be put out; and as one reads [Wesley's] colossal journal one gets the impression of this flame, never waning, never smoky, darting from point to point, lighting up the whole kingdom, till in due course it burnt out the body it inhabited."³⁸

PRAYER

Lord, you reached down from on high and took hold of John Wesley and set him apart to be your vessel to see a national awakening unto revival in the 18th century. Do it again, Lord! Do not let the legacy of Wesley burn out; do not let the candle of your Gospel burn out. Let it go up and down the land again, Lord. Let it burn brightly across this land once again.

32 Pollock, Wesley: The Preacher, 49

33 Foxe, J. Book of Martyrs, Whitaker, 278.

34 Foxe, Martyrs, 309.

35 Dobree, J. Wesley. 96–97, quoted in Skevington-Wood, The burning heart, 68.

36 Wesley, J The Complete Works of John Wesley, Volume 1, 24th May 1738, 103.

37 Skevington-Wood, A. The burning heart. John Wesley: Evangelist, 67.

38 Dobree, J. Wesley. 96–97, quoted in Skevington-Wood, The burning heart, 68.



TUESDAY 3 MARCH // PSALMS 19–21

Psalm 19:7 *"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul."*

A SERIOUS CALL

At Oxford John Wesley was introduced to the writings of the early Church Fathers and William Law's new book *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* which powerfully influenced him.

Wesley was particularly inspired at the thought of reaching Christian perfection. Law's book, *A Serious Call*, together with Law's earlier book, *Christian Perfection*, made a big impact on Wesley. He says that these books, "convinced me more than ever the exceeding height and breadth and depth of the law of God. The light floated in so mightily upon my soul that everything appeared in a new view. I cried to God for help, and resolved not to prolong the time of obeying Him as I had never done before ... and by my continued endeavour to keep his whole law, inward and outward to the utmost of my power, I was persuaded that I should be accepted of Him, and that I was even then in a state of salvation."³⁹

John Wesley himself acknowledged that *A Serious Call* sowed the seed of Methodism,⁴⁰ and contributed much to the spread of

evangelicalism. It made the deepest impression on Wesley himself; he preached after its model;⁴¹ he used it as a text-book for the highest class at Kingswood school (which Wesley founded); and, a few months before his death, he spoke of it as "a treatise which will hardly be excelled, if it be equalled, in the English tongue, either for beauty of expression or for justice and depth of thought."⁴²

John Wesley was also inspired by the patristic fathers and one church father in particular interested him, Macarius the Egyptian. Macarius' description of 'perfection' as the goal of the Christian in this life fascinated John Wesley. Macarius' homilies are written with a warmth of feeling, an affection and enthusiasm that are instantly attractive. In his 18th homily, Macarius says "everyone should push himself to beg the Lord to make him worthy to receive and find the heavenly treasure of the Spirit in order to be able to easily and to promptly fulfil all the commandments of the Lord without blame and with perfection."⁴³

PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, that the law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. I thank you for your Word and I thank you for the length and depth and breadth of your love. Open my eyes to see the treasures that are found in you, Lord Jesus, and your precious Holy Spirit. Revive me with a fresh call to live a holy and devoted life for you Lord Jesus.

³⁹ Wesley, J. Volume 1, 24th May 1738, 99

⁴⁰ Wesley, J. Note 31. Sermon CVII, 11th ed., 1856, vol. VII.

⁴¹ Letter to Law of 1738, quoted by Overton, 33.

⁴² Bartleby online William Law and the mystics www.bartleby.com/219/1206.html

⁴³ Pseudo-Macarius, Homily 18,142.



TUESDAY 3 MARCH // PSALMS 22-23

Psalm 23:4 "I will fear no evil."

TRAVELLING WITH THE MORAVIANS

After training as an Anglican clergyman and obtaining a Fellowship at Oxford, John Wesley set out on a mission, crossing the Atlantic Ocean to Georgia in North America, to convert the native American Indians. It was Saturday, January 17, 1736, and John and Charles Wesley and Colonel Oglethorpe were sitting with others in the state cabin of The Simonds, a ship in the middle of the Atlantic. The weather was bad and had been getting worse throughout the day. Then a wave suddenly burst in the state cabin "with a noise and shock almost like that of a cannon." Although Wesley had been sheltered by a bureau he was alarmed to discover that he had been and still was "afraid to die". Later, as the clock turned midnight, Wesley noted in his diary: "Stormy still, and afraid!" John Wesley, as chaplain on board the ship, had met a group of 26 German Moravian travellers on board and their response during the storm was very different from his own, and this made a deep impression on him.⁴⁴

These German Moravians always had a positive disposition and were to undertake

mundane tasks with a servant heart and a cheerful attitude. They were willing to serve, accomplishing tasks that the English passengers were either too lazy or proud to consider.⁴⁵ If other crewmen or passengers mistreated them, they turned the other cheek. The Moravian hymns that they sung were beautiful, a huge contrast to the laboured Church of England metrical psalms. John and Charles Wesley had continued their commitment to continue the strict disciplines of the Holy Club, a system of prayers, readings, fasts and good works. This did not impress the Moravians who realised that the intent of this discipline was to acquire merit before God. The Moravians were motivated by "a more excellent way", "justification by faith", the doctrine of the Reformation. Wesley admitted that he did not understand it, and he continued to trust in his own righteousness. When another storm hit The Simonds a few days later, although he was unhurt, he was shocked again by his own fear. He said to himself, "How is it that thou hast no faith? Being still unwilling to die."^{46 47}

PRAYER

Thank you that through the cross and your resurrection from the dead we can be born again by the Spirit. You did not give us a spirit that makes us a slave again to fear but a spirit of sonship. Thank you, Lord, that even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we need fear no evil.

44 Pollock, J. Wesley, The Preacher, 67 quoted in Wesley, Journal Vol 1, 17, 17th October 1735.

45 Wesley, Vol 1 Journal, 25th January 1736.

46 Pollock, J. Wesley: The Preacher, 68.

47 Wesley, Journal, 23rd January 1736.



WEDNESDAY 4 MARCH // PSALMS 25–26

Psalm 25:4 *“Show me your ways, O Lord teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour.”*

ZINZENDORF AND HERRNHUT

John Wesley was impressed not only by the Moravians' piety and good works but by their calm assurance of faith during storms at sea, something he lacked.

In Wesley's day Moravianism was a new movement with ancient roots. In 1722 a small group of Moravians had settled on Count von Zinzendorf's estate at what was called Herrnhut. Zinzendorf saw these new Moravian communities as a way to extend dramatically the 'ecclesiolae in ecclesia' or 'little churches within the church' approach to church renewal. The Moravians on board The Simonds were travelling from Germany to the Americas.

Wesley remained in contact with the Moravians during his two years in Georgia, including August Spangenberg, who was a missionary. While in Georgia, Wesley experimented with some changes, such as

hymn-singing and using lay men and women in parish work. What he saw as genuine attempts to recover early Christianity by the Moravians he put into practice himself. Wesley had a zeal for holiness which in turn became “a passionate desire to bring a new vitality to church” and build “a modern Christian community” in one Anglican parish.⁴⁸

However, although there was genuine zeal in Wesley and a strong desire for early Christianity to be restored, the energy and motivation was largely his own. As a missionary for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which detailed strict rules for its missionaries, Wesley did much in an effort to obey the Instructions of the Society. Wesley was very strict in his discipline and much of his work in Georgia was driven by his own efforts, and not by a confidence in the grace of God.

PRAYER

Lord, show me your ways, O Lord, and teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth. Lord, you guide the humble in what is right. Show me where I am proud and confident in my own strength and abilities. I yield to you, Lord. I yield my dreams, my goals and my aspirations to you, Lord, and I take them to the cross. Come and have your way in me, Lord. Be my teacher, Lord, for you are my God and my Saviour.

⁴⁸ Snyder, H. The Radical Wesley and patterns for Church Renewal, 18, 19, 21.



WEDNESDAY 4 MARCH // PSALMS 27-28

Psalm 27:5 "For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe."

LEAVING GEORGIA

Wesley did not hide the main reason for his mission to Georgia in America, which was for his own personal spiritual growth. "My chief motive, to which all the rest are subordinate," he said, "is the hope of saving my own soul."⁴⁹ He wrote in a letter, "I hope to learn the true sense of the Gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen ... They have no comments to construe away the text. They are as little children, humble, willing to learn, and eager to do the will of God; and consequently they shall know of every doctrine I preach whether it be of God. By these therefore I hope to learn the purity of the faith which was once delivered to the saints."⁵⁰ However, life in Georgia was very different from all that he anticipated and it was no long before his illusions were dashed.⁵¹

Although Wesley did not actually resign from his position in Georgia, he effectively ran away from a situation that had become, largely because of his clumsiness, completely impossible. As a result of repelling Sophy Williamson, a member of his congregation, from Holy Communion, legal proceedings were taken up against him. Before her marriage he had been romantically involved with her, and

this exacerbated the situation considerably. Wesley was angry and fed up and left Georgia in disgust. In the official list of early settlers there is a record of Wesley's departure, with a short entry "run away".

On his arrival back in England, Wesley reached a critical point in his life and ministry. He had come to see how futile his whole spiritual journey had been. It had been simply a refined way of trusting in his own works. He now saw at last the futility of this course. What could he do next? He did not know. But God had it all in hand.⁵²

This was the end of a chapter for John Wesley. He had to face the fact that all his attempts to earn salvation had resulted in despair. Realising that his ecclesiastical rigour had been fruitless was the main thing that he had gained from the Georgia experience. His ecclesiastical rigour had led him to a dead end and he knew it. Another positive result from his missionary endeavour was his encounter with the Moravians and the importance that they attached to the doctrines of "justification by faith" and "personal conversion".⁵³

PRAYER

Lord, we pray for those who are living lives of quiet desperation, and who do not know that there is a free gift of salvation that does not need to be earned but has been paid for at a price. You are our Deliverer, who rescues us from all our troubles who saves us from all despair. Rescue us and save us. We pray for the end of one chapter and the beginning of the new. Turn the page, Lord, and do a new thing in our land!

49 Wesley, J. Letters, Volume 1, 188 to John Burton, 10 October 1735.

50 Wesley, J. Letters, Volume 1, 188 to John Burton, 10 October 1735.

51 Skevington-Wood, The burning heart, 51.

52 Skevington-Wood, The burning heart, 56, 57

53 Skevington-Wood, The burning heart, 57, 58



THURSDAY 5 MARCH // PSALMS 29–31

Psalm 30:1 *"You lifted me out of the depths."*

ALDERSGATE EXPERIENCE

John Wesley's quest for spiritual reality and his preparation for his work as an evangelist came to a climax on 24 May 1738. Of the years of his life, 1738 was the most decisive year. Of all the days in his life, 24th May 1738 was the most decisive, as this was the day that he was converted. His experience at Aldersgate Street was the crisis and turning point of his career. Wesley came into a place of saving faith on 24 May 1738 and it was this that released him into his true vocation as an evangelist.⁵⁴

He wrote in his Journal:

"In the afternoon I was asked to go to St Paul's. The anthem was De Profundis,⁵⁵ based on Psalm 130:1–8

- 1 *Out of the depths, I cry to you Lord;*
- 2 *O Lord hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.*
- 3 *If you O Lord kept a record of sins, O Lord who could stand?*
- 4 *But with you there is forgiveness, therefore you are feared.*
- 5 *I wait for the Lord my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope.*
- 6 *My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.*
- 7 *O Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with*

the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.

- 8 *He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins."*

The music and the words deeply touched John Wesley and a seed was planted. Later that day, in the evening, he met with a group of friends who were reading from the book of Romans.

While meeting with these friends he heard Luther's "Preface to Romans", which reads, "God judges what is in the depths of the heart. Therefore his law also makes demands on the depths of the heart and doesn't let the heart rest content in works; rather it punishes as hypocrisy and lies all works done apart from the depths of the heart."⁵⁶ Wesley suddenly saw for the very first time the extent of his sin despite having been to church, despite having been a missionary. He realised the extent to which God by grace and by grace alone saves us 'out of the depths'.

Wesley famously says in his Journal, "In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed."

PRAYER

Lord, you were attentive to John Wesley's cry for mercy, you heard his cry, you saved him out of the depths. I cry to you from the depths of my heart, save me and save my nation. Be attentive to my cry for mercy. I wait for you, Lord. I put my hope in you, Lord, for with you there is unfailing love, with you there is full redemption. Lord, hear my cry!

⁵⁴ Skevington-Wood, A. The burning heart, 59.

⁵⁵ Wesley, J. Journal, 103.

⁵⁶ Luther, M. Preface to Romans. www.ccel.org/l/luther/romans/pref_romans.html



THURSDAY 5 MARCH // PSALMS 32–34

Psalm 32:1 *"Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered."*

FETTER LANE SOCIETY

The Fetter Lane Society was Wesley's support group now that he had come to faith. Some of the members of the group were John and Charles Wesley, James Hutton, and Peter Böhler. They and a couple of others met (at the suggestion of Böhler) a few weeks before on the evening of May 1st. The rules of the Society were later printed with the title "Orders of a religious society, meeting in Fetter-Lane; in obedience to the command of God by St James,⁵⁷ and by advice of Peter Böhler, 1738: 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another that ye may be healed.'"⁵⁸

The Fetter Lane Society's rules included weekly meetings for prayer and confession,

division into bands of 5 to 10 persons each, the right and duty of each person to speak freely, procedures for admitting new members, and provision for a monthly love feast from 7 to 10 PM.⁵⁹

The restoration of early Christianity within the Church of England had been John Wesley's dream. This society became the context, now that Wesley had come to Christ for Wesley to pursue this dream.⁶⁰ Attendance of the Fetter Lane society was a vehicle for believers to live out their faith and they could do that by confessing their faults to one another, and praying for one another that they be healed.

PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, that you are faithful and just and if we confess our sins you will forgive us and cleanse us from all our unrighteousness. Lord, we pray for the new wine and new wineskins for the revival that you are bringing to our land. Thank you, Lord, for the principles from scripture of "confessing our faults to one another" that you have given us. Show us how we can put them into practice in our day, as Wesley did in his.

⁵⁷ James 5:16

⁵⁸ Simon, John Wesley and the Religious Societies, 196–200. Snyder, H. The Radical Wesley and patterns for Church Renewal, 27.

⁵⁹ Wesley, J. Journal 1, 458–459.

⁶⁰ Snyder, The Radical Wesley, 28.



FRIDAY 6 MARCH // PSALMS 35–36

Psalm 36:8 “You give them drink from your river of delights.”

“MY HEART WAS STRANGELY WARMED”

John Wesley had written in his Journal on the day of his conversion “I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”⁶¹ This Reformation truth that by grace we are saved through faith had deeply impacted John Wesley’s heart. Some call it Wesley’s evangelical conversion, others see in it a complete turning-point in his life, experientially, psychologically and theologically.⁶² One biographer devotes a chapter of almost one hundred pages to what he calls “the conversion”, in which “theory had become fact, expectation had become fulfilment, desire had become possession”.⁶³ Dean Carpenter considers it “one of the three most momentous conversions in Christian history,⁶⁴ along with those of Paul and Augustine.”

Before Wesley could preach the Good News of the Gospel to England he needed to receive it himself, and this had now happened.

He preached a gospel of grace. Scores of entries in his Journal are simply a variation on that theme. “I offered the grace of God ... I offered the redemption that is in Christ Jesus... I proclaimed the name of the Lord ... I proclaimed Christ crucified ... I proclaimed the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ ... I proclaimed free salvation ... I declared the free grace of God ... I exhorted the wicked to forsake his way ... I began to call sinners to repentance ... I invited all guilty helpless sinners.”⁶⁵

Wesley’s preaching to the poor in England was a river of grace. Wesley had felt the grace of God himself and later it was his desire that his audience would not just hear it, but feel it too. His biographer says, “it was his burning preoccupation”. After preaching in Edinburgh many years later Wesley said “I am amazed at this people ... use the most cutting words, and apply them in the most pointed manner, still they hear, but feel no more than the seats they sit on.”⁶⁶

PRAYER

Lord, we pray for a new spiritual thirst and a new spiritual hunger in our land. Have mercy on the lost, those who are completely unchurched. Lord, let them drink from your river of delights. Pour out a river of grace on our land. Just as John Wesley felt the depths of your love in the depths of his heart and went on to preach a gospel of grace to the minds and the hearts of a poor and needy nation, do it again Lord.

⁶¹ Wesley, J. Journal, 103.

⁶² Davies, R. Methodism, 57–60.

⁶³ Schmidt, M, John Wesley: a theological Biography, Vol 1, 263.

⁶⁴ Carpenter, S.C. Eighteenth Century Church and People, 197.

⁶⁵ Wesley, J. Journal 174 4th April, 1739, vol III 429, 15th September, 1749, 444, 24th October 1749, vol IV, 202, 17th April 1757, vol III, 281, 24th February, 1747, vol 11, 185, 29th April 1739, vol IV, 56, 28th March, 1753, vol III, 334, 21st February, 1748, 88 30th September, 1783.

⁶⁶ Skevington-Wood, A. The burning heart, 150.



FRIDAY 6 MARCH // PSALM 37

Psalm 37:4 *"Delight yourselves in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart."*

INSPIRED BY THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH

The term 'Early Church' meant the church of the first three or four centuries for Anglicans in the 18th century. The term 'Primitive Church' for Anglicans meant the Church of the New Testament period. Following Aldersgate, Wesley focused more and more upon the Primitive Church.⁶⁷

In Wesley's sermon 'The Mystery of Iniquity'⁶⁸ he said:

Persecution never did, never could give any lasting wound to genuine Christianity. But the greatest it ever received, the grand blow which was struck at the very root of that humble, gentle, patient love, which is the fulfilling of the Christian law was struck in the fourth century by Constantine the Great, when he called himself a Christian and poured in a flood of riches, honour and power upon the Christians more especially upon the clergy ... Just so, when the fear of persecution was removed and wealth and honour attended the Christian profession, the Christians did not gradually sink but rushed headlong into all manner of vices ... and this is the event,

which most Christian expositors mention with such triumph! ... Rather it was the coming of Satan and all his legions from the bottomless pit: seeing from that very time he hath set up his throne over the face of the whole earth, and reigned over the Christian as well as the pagan world with hardly any control! ... Such has been the deplorable state of the Christian church from the time of Constantine to the Reformation. A Christian nation, a Christian city (according to the scriptural model) was nowhere to be seen; but every city and country a few individuals excepted, was plunged in all manner of wickedness.⁶⁹

Wesley believed the Church of England as he knew it was as fallen as was Christianity generally.⁷⁰ His dream was of the restoration of primitive Christianity. In larger measure he saw many elements of new Christianity restored: anointed preaching of the Gospel, the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, large numbers coming to faith and many healed and restored from the oppression of the enemy.

PRAYER

Lord, we cry out to you that you would come and do a new thing in our land today. We thank you for changing the spiritual landscape in the 18th century England through a life laid down for you, Lord Jesus. We pray for anointed preaching, the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, healing and deliverance again. We delight in you, Lord Jesus. We yield to your sovereign purpose for our nation today and say come and renew us by your Spirit. Pour out your Spirit on us, today!

67 Snyder, H. The Radical Wesley, 80–81.

68 Wesley, J. Mystery of Iniquity, LX1, 253.

69 Wesley, J. Volume VI, 246–247.

70 Snyder, H. The Radical Wesley, 81.



MONDAY 9 MARCH // PSALMS 38–40

Psalm 40:2 "He ... gave me a firm place to stand."

A FOUNDATION OF REPENTANCE

The change in John Wesley's preaching after his conversion in 1738 was very clear. Wesley summarised his preaching, explaining how firm foundations were only laid when his preaching started to emphasise "justification by faith":⁷¹

- 1 *From the year 1725 to 1729 I preached but saw no fruit for my labour. Indeed it could not be that I should; for I neither laid the foundation of repentance nor of believing the gospel; taking it for granted, that all to whom I preached were believers, and that many of them 'needed no repentance'.*
- 2 *From the year 1729 to 1734 laying a deeper foundation of repentance I saw a little fruit ... but it was only a little ...*
- 3 *From 1734 to 1738, speaking more faith in Christ I saw more fruit of my preaching and visiting from house-to-house, than ever I had done before; though I know not if any of those who were outwardly reformed were inwardly and thoroughly converted to God.*

- 4 *From 1738 to this time speaking continually of Jesus Christ, laying Him only for the foundation of the whole building, making Him all in all, the first and the last; preaching only on this plan, 'the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the gospel; the 'word of God ran' as fire among the stubble; it was glorified more and more; multitudes crying out 'what must we do to be saved?' and afterwards witnessing 'By Grace are we saved through faith.'"*

Wesley had been encouraged before his conversion by the Moravian Peter Böhler to "preach faith before he had it in order that he would then preach faith because he had it". What Böhler had hoped had been achieved. Immediately after Aldersgate, Wesley had then wanted to tell the Fetter Lane Society what had happened. As he says in his Journal "I testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart."⁷²

PRAYER

Lord, we pray for a new spiritual thirst and a new spiritual hunger in our land. Have mercy on the lost, those who are completely unchurched. Lord, let them drink from your river of delights. Pour out a river of grace on our land. Just as John Wesley felt the depths of your love in the depths of his heart and went on to preach a gospel of grace to the minds and the hearts of a poor and needy nation, do it again Lord.

71 Wesley, J. Vol 8, 468–9, The principles of a Methodist father explained, Skevington-Wood, A. The burning heart, 71–73.

72 Wesley, J. Journal, Vol 1, 476, Skevington-Wood, The burning heart, 71–73.



MONDAY 9 MARCH // PSALMS 41–43

Psalm 42:7 *"My tears have been my food day and night ... Deep calls to deep."*

INSPIRED BY THE CHURCH FATHERS

In his diary entry for July 30, 1736, John Wesley wrote: "I read Macarius and sang."⁷³ Wesley's affinity for Macarius becomes understandable when you discover the ancient saint's concern for the work of the Holy Spirit, which imparts grace and brings about entire sanctification, holiness of heart, in obedient believers. Macarius⁷⁴ said, "Thus the soul is completely illumined, with the unspeakable beauty of the glory of the light of the face of Christ and is perfectly made a participator of the Holy Spirit."

It is interesting that the Early Church Fathers saw the gift of tears as an important part of the work of transformation that God works by his Spirit. The Desert Fathers, along with Macarius, were convinced that this weeping kept them from sinning and that this was the only way to true salvation, to the true life, whereby God would come and dwell within them. Evagrius the Solitary said,⁷⁵ "First pray for the gift of tears, so that through sorrowing you may tame what is savage in your soul. And having confessed your transgressions

to the Lord you will obtain forgiveness. Pray with tears, and all you ask will be heard. For the Lord rejoices greatly when you pray with tears." Cassian said, "it is one thing for tears to run down when our heart stirred by the thorn of our sins overflows ... It is another thing when the shedding of tears springs from the contemplation of the goods of eternity and from the longing for its coming glory."⁷⁶

Anglicanism is rooted in a Benedictine spirituality and Benedict also frequently emphasised the importance of praying with tears in his Rule. He said, "Pray frequently. Confess your past sins to God each day in prayer with tears and sighs."⁷⁷ He also said, "We must be aware that he will only listen to us if we pray not so much at length but with purity of heart and tears of compunction."⁷⁸ Yet again he said, "... we can achieve this if we refrain from all sin and put all our effort into prayer accompanied by tears, into reading, compunction of heart and abstinence."⁷⁹

PRAYER

Your word says, "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and seek my face, I will hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal the land." Lord, transform me by the work of your Holy Spirit. I need the sanctifying work of your Holy Spirit in my life. Come and have your way in my life. I stand in the gap for my nation, and I repent on behalf of the land. Lord, have mercy! Come and heal, come and forgive, I pray.

⁷³ Wesley, J. Journal, Vol 1, July 30, 1736.

⁷⁴ Pseudo-Macarius, Homilies 1, 38.

⁷⁵ The Philokalia, Volume 1, 58.

⁷⁶ Cassian, Conference 9, 118–119.

⁷⁷ The Rule, Benedict, 18, chapter 4.

⁷⁸ The Rule, Benedict, 41 chapter 20.

⁷⁹ The Rule, Benedict, 74 chapter 49.



TUESDAY 10 MARCH // PSALMS 44-46

Psalm 44:13 *"You have made us a reproach to our neighbours."*

EXCLUDED FROM THE CHURCHES

The following Sunday after his Aldersgate experience, John Wesley says that he was "roughly attacked in a large company as an enthusiast, a seducer and a setter-forth of new doctrines."⁸⁰ Mrs Hutton was very offended and she said, "if you were not a Christian ever since I knew you, you were a great hypocrite for you made us all believe you were one."⁸¹ This attitude of his friends did not deter him at all. Dr Plumb says that following his conversion he had "a burning determination to bring to others what he himself had felt."⁸²

One biographer says, "It was the warmed heart that made Wesley an evangelist. The fire could only be spread as first of all it was kindled. The flame was lit in Aldersgate Street. Then Dr Bett said 'There came to him a spiritual energy, an evangelical zeal, an unction of the holy one that he had never before possessed.'"⁸³

Earlier Wesley had been concerned for what he could do for God. Now at a stroke all the strain had gone. All was now grace through faith. In all his earlier disciplined life of holiness and the good works to which he set his hand writes Edwards, "his primary concern was on what he could do for God. But after that Aldersgate Street heartwarming he asked only

what God could do for him and through him. Thus at a stroke the old sense of strain and effort had gone. The ecclesiastical of Georgia could now become the evangelist of the open road."⁸⁴

However church after church now excluded Wesley because he preached evangelical doctrines. This exclusion had already begun even before Aldersgate. He had begun to preach justification earlier in the year and it was justification by faith that was the doctrine that caused such offence. On 5 February 1738, at St John the Evangelist, Westminster, he preached on those strong words "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." "I was afterwards informed, many of the best in the parish were so offended that I was not to preach there any more."⁸⁵ He didn't preach there again. On 26 February he preached three times — at St Lawrence Jewry, St Catherine Cree, and St John Wapping.

"I believe it pleased God to bless the first sermon most," he wrote, "because it gave most offence."⁸⁶ Then after Aldersgate yet more churches refused Wesley to preach in their pulpits. Again and again he was excluded.

PRAYER

Lord, we pray for the raising up of another wave of evangelists with the spiritual energy and the evangelical zeal and the unction of the Holy Spirit that was on John Wesley. Although the preaching of the Gospel be a 'sign spoken against' and 'a reproach to our neighbours', give us the courage and fiery determination to keep going. Set a fire deep down in our soul. We want more of you, Lord, more passion to preach the Good News of grace to a lost and dying world.

⁸⁰ Wesley, J. Journal, Vol 1,476, May 24, 1738.

⁸¹ Benham, D. The memoirs of James Hutton, 34.

⁸² Plumb, England in the Eighteenth Century, 92.

⁸³ Bett, H. The Spirit of Methodism, 33 quoted in Skevington-Wood, A. The burning heart, 73-74.

⁸⁴ Edwards, M. A history of the Methodist church in Great Britain, Vol 1, 51.

⁸⁵ Wesley, J. Journal, Volume 1, 5th February, 1738.

⁸⁶ Wesley, J. Journal, Volume 1, 126th February, 1738.



TUESDAY 10 MARCH // PSALMS 47-49

Psalm 48:12 "Walk about Zion, go round her ..."

TRAVEL TO HERRNHUT

After Wesley's Aldersgate experience he made a trip to Herrnhut. It was an 'intentional study tour of Pietist centres'⁸⁷ in Germany. He did not want to learn about Moravianism⁸⁸ but he was concerned "to recapture the life of faith of the primitive Christian community ... It was the koinonia, the spirit, the message and the sense of mission of that community"⁸⁹ that Wesley sought, and he returned to England from Herrnhut with his vision renewed by what he had seen.

Some weeks after Wesley returned from Herrnhut he expressed his appreciation for the Moravians. He said, "We are endeavouring here also, by the grace which is given us, to be followers of you, as ye are of Christ. Fourteen were added to us since our return, so that we have now eight bands of men, consisting of

fifty-six persons (at Fetter-Lane); all of whom seek for salvation, only in the blood of Christ... Though my brother and I are not permitted to preach in most of the churches in London, yet (thanks be to God!) there are others left wherein we have the liberty to speak the truth as it is in Jesus."⁹⁰

Now that Wesley had seen Herrnhut he had certainly been impressed and appreciated Moravian faith and piety. However, he did not like what he called their 'quietism'. There was a tendency toward spiritual contemplation, and he felt that there was something approaching a 'personality cult' around Count von Zinzendorf. Wesley now gave all his energies to be a travelling evangelist and caring for those that were converted in and around London.⁹¹

PRAYER

Lord, open our eyes to see what you are doing in our day. We long for a fresh visitation today Lord. Thank you for the example of the Early Church. As you stirred Wesley to consecrate himself to you, as you gave him vision and faith for a restoration of early Christianity in his day, do it on ours, Lord. Do not pass us by. Come Lord Jesus.

87 Stoeffler, Tradition and renewal in the ecclesiology of John Wesley, 305

88 Snyder, H. The Radical Wesley, 29,30.

89 Stoeffler, Tradition and renewal, 305

90 John Wesley, Works X11, 55.

91 Snyder, H. The Radical Wesley, 29,30

WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH // PSALMS 50-52

Psalm 50:5 *"Gather to me my consecrated ones."*

THE METHODIST PENTECOST

In December 1738 the news that George Whitefield had returned from America reached Wesley. These friends who had both been part of the Holy Club in Oxford met together on 12 December. Whitefield had been the main instrument the Lord had begun to use in a spiritual revival in England. However, Whitefield was Wesley's junior and he was still in awe of him.⁹² It was a wonderful reunion and they were overjoyed that in London there seemed (as Whitefield said) "to be a great pouring out of the Spirit, and many who were awakened by my preaching a year ago are now grown strong men in Christ, by the ministrations of my dear friends and fellow-labourers John and Charles Wesley." In an upper room belonging to Mrs West they spent much time together praying and singing and discussing. On 31 December Wesley preached to a large congregation at Whitechapel and George Whitefield preached at Spitalfields.

Wesley describes what happened when he and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield gathered together on Monday 1 January 1739. "Mr Hall, Kinchin, Ingham, Whitefield Hutchins,

and my brother Charles were present at our love-feast in Fetter-Lane with about 60 of our brethren. About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his Majesty we broke out with one voice, 'We praise thee; O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.'⁹³

If 24 May 1738 was the day at Aldersgate when Wesley was born again by the Spirit of God, then 1 January 1739 certainly seemed to be something very similar to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This seems to have been a time of separation unto the Lord for those God was to use in the Methodist awakening that was about to break out across England and North America. John Wesley and George Whitefield had still not ventured to preach outdoors. The Lord was gathering his consecrated ones and he poured out his Spirit on them in power. As the brethren dwelt in unity the Lord commanded a powerful blessing.

PRAYER

Lord, gather together your consecrated ones, for another outpouring of your Spirit. We long to see this country turn back to you. Pour out your Spirit again as you did at Fetter Lane. We pray for the servants you are preparing. Send your fire down on those altars, Lord. Ignite them with a fresh baptism in your Holy Spirit. Fan the flames of your Gospel. By your grace let that candle never go out, let it burn brightly up and down our land once again!

92 Pollock, J. The preacher, 108-109.

93 Wesley, J. Journal, Vol 1, 170.



WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH // PSALMS 53–55

Psalm 53:2 *"God looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God."*

A DESPERATE PLACE

In 1738 in the time of the evangelical awakening, immorality and indecency was everywhere. One historian said that Britain was one large casino. Gambling dominated and violence filled the streets. Every sixth house was a pub. In a contemporary satire,⁹⁴ George Crabbe, a poet,⁹⁵ described the effects of drunkenness on every class of society. He refers to the "staggering peer", the "humble pensioner", the "slow-tongued Bishop", the "easy chaplain" and the "convivial vicar".

One historian says, "a religious languor fell over England".⁹⁶ Vibrant Christianity was hardly seen. "Some of the population continued to perform what the philosopher Immanuel

Kant called the court-duties of religion, but comparatively few had experienced the glowing reality of personal communion with Christ."⁹⁷ Rationalism was strong and revelation was given no place; the clergy were ineffective as a result.⁹⁸ Vital Christianity had been side-lined.

This was the context that John Wesley found himself in 1739 as he travelled around churches engaging in itinerant evangelism. Another historian says "Wesley did not waste his time deploring the evils of his day, he attacked them; and he attacked them by preaching repentance and conversion. He knew that the only hope of the corrupt heart was a new birth."⁹⁹

PRAYER

Lord, we pray that as you look down from heaven you would have mercy on us. We are in a desperate place. We pray that salvation would come to our nation again in our day. Give us the courage to preach repentance and conversion in our day. Open the eyes of those who do not know, those who do not understand. Give us the perseverance and tenacity to call out to you, to seek your face until your salvation comes. Listen to our prayer, O God, do not ignore our plea, hear us and answer us. Lord, have mercy on us, today.

⁹⁴ Skevington-Wood, *The burning heart*, 10.

⁹⁵ Crabbe, G. *The poetical works of George Crabbe* ed A.J. and R.M. Carlyle (1908) *Inebriety* 3, 4.

⁹⁶ Lecky, W.E.H. *A history of England in the eighteenth*

Century, Vol 1., 479, 481.

⁹⁷ Skevington-Wood, 12.

⁹⁸ Skevington-Wood, 15.

⁹⁹ Pyke, R. *John Wesley Came This Way*, 19.



THURSDAY 12 MARCH // PSALMS 56–58

Psalm 56:13 *"You have delivered me from death."***"WE WERE SURPRISED..."**

Just a few weeks after the power of God had come mightily upon Wesley and his friends as they were continuing in prayer at three o'clock in the morning, Wesley was surprised at the response of a well-dressed woman during his exposition, on a Sunday in February 1739. He told the story in his Journal:

Sunday 21 February

We were surprised in the evening, while I was expounding in the Minories. A well-dressed, middle-aged woman suddenly cried out as in the agonies of death. She continued so to do for some time, with all the signs of the sharpest anguish of spirit. When she was a little recovered, I desired her to call upon me the next day. She then told me that about three years before, she was under strong convictions of sin, and in such terror of mind, that she had no comfort in any thing nor any rest, day or night:

That she sent for the Minister of her parish,

and told him the distress she was in: Upon which he told her husband, she was stark mad, and advised him to send for a Physician immediately. A Physician was sent for accordingly, who ordered her to be blooded, blistered, and so on. But this did not heal her wounded spirit. So that she continued much as she was before: Till the last night, He whose word she at first found to be 'sharper than any two-edged sword,' gave her a faint hope, that He would undertake her cause and healed the soul which had sinned against him.¹⁰⁰

Wesley does not give undue importance to these manifestations, but he does relate throughout his Journal (particularly in the early years when the conviction of sin was very strong following his preaching), the anguish that listeners felt when individuals were 'cut to the heart' through his preaching.

PRAYER

Lord, we pray that you would raise up anointed evangelists across our land who would preach the Gospel with power and signs following. We pray that you would begin by convicting us of our sin. Begin with us, Lord. Deliver me from my sin. Show me where I have neglected to share my faith, show me where I need to repent, show me where I have neglected the discipline of prayer. Come and have your way in me.

¹⁰⁰ Wesley, J. Journal, Vol 1, 172.



THURSDAY 12 MARCH // PSALMS 59–61

Psalms 61:2 *“Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”*

WESLEY’S VIEW OF THE CHURCH

Jesus said, “You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church.” (Matthew 16:18). Psalm 61 reminds us that Christ alone is our rock and refuge. While focusing on John Wesley and his mission to re-evangelise England, it is helpful to investigate the understanding of ‘church’ that was at stake in his reforming ‘mission’.

Frank Baker, an expert on Wesleyan Methodism, says, “Throughout his adult life Wesley responded with varying degrees of enthusiasm to two fundamentally different views of the church. One was that of an historical institution, organically linked to the apostolic church by a succession of bishops and inherited customs, served by a priestly caste who duly expounded the Bible and administered the sacraments in such a way as to preserve the ancient traditions on behalf of all who were made members by baptism. According to the other view, the church was a fellowship of believers who shared both the

apostolic experience of God’s living presence and also a desire to bring others into this same personal experience by whatever methods of worship and evangelism seemed most promising to those among whom the Holy Spirit had endowed with special gifts of prophecy and leadership. The first view saw the church in essence as an ancient institution to be preserved, the second as a faithful few with a mission to the world: the first was a traditional rule, the second a living relationship.”¹⁰¹

Wesley’s perspective of the Church of England was that although the structures and liturgy were still indicative that it was in a formal sense a true church, the spirit of the true church was essentially the small groups within the Anglican church of faithful believers. He seems to have viewed the Methodist societies as being the true visible church within Anglicanism. Later he realised that even many Methodists were not true believers.¹⁰²

PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, that you are building your church, that your kingdom is coming more fully. Breathe upon us your life-giving Holy Spirit. We pray that you would lead us by your Spirit and show us the part you would have us play. You are our rock and fortress. Lord Jesus, when our challenges and difficulties seem insurmountable, lead us back to yourself—lead us to “the rock that is higher than I”.

101 Baker, F. John Wesley and the Church of England, Nashville Abingdon, 1970, 137 quoted in Snyder, H. The Radical Wesley, 71.

102 Snyder, H. The Radical Wesley, 76.



FRIDAY 13 MARCH // PSALMS 62–64

Psalm 63:2 *"I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory."*

A SURPRISING INSTANCE OF HIS POWER

The Lord continued to move powerfully through Wesley's preaching, but also through direct answer to prayer. In March 1739 when he found strong resistance to his message he prayed and saw the Lord immediately soften the heart of one who was initially so resistant. Wesley wrote in his Journal:¹⁰³

Friday 2 March

One of the most surprising instances of his power which I ever remember to have seen was on the Tuesday following; when I was visiting one who was above measure enraged at this new way, and zealous in opposing it. Finding arguments to be of no other effect, than to inflame her more and more, I broke off the dispute and desired we might join in prayer, which she so far consented to as to kneel down.

In a few minutes she fell into an extreme

agony, both of body and soul; and soon after cried out with the utmost earnestness, "Now I know that I am forgiven for Christ's sake." Many other words she uttered to the same effect, witnessing a hope full of immortality. And from that hour God has set her face as a flint to declare the faith which before she persecuted.

Thursday 8 March

I entered directly into a controversy touching both the cause and the fruits of justification. In the midst of the dispute one who sat at a small distance felt as it were the piercing of a sword, and before she could be brought to another house, wither I was going, could not avoid crying out aloud even in the street. But no sooner had we made our request known to God, than he sent help from his holy place.¹⁰⁴

PRAYER

Lord, we earnestly seek you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Lord, we pray that you would move in power as you have done before. This land we live in has seen you move in power in the past. We pray for a restoration of the cutting edge of the Gospel in our nation, that it would go forth like a two-edged sword once again.

¹⁰³ Wesley, J. Journal , Vol 1, 174–5.

¹⁰⁴ Wesley, J. Journal , Vol 1, 175.



FRIDAY 13 MARCH // PSALMS 65–67

Psalm 65:12 "You brought us to a place of abundance."

"THIS STRANGE WAY OF PREACHING IN THE FIELDS..."

George Whitefield had returned from America and was now hoping that the churches would be open for him to preach in Bristol, but he was not given permission. He would not allow the delay to stop him. He was aware that there were colliers in Bristol who needed to hear his message. One Saturday afternoon he walked to a village, climbed a hill, and preached to 200 colliers. In his Journal he wrote, "Blessed be God that I have now broken the ice!"¹⁰⁵ A few weeks later he was preaching to 20,000. He wrote, "The fire is kindled in the land and I know all the devils in hell shall not be able to quench it."¹⁰⁶

Wesley wrote in his Journal how he was invited by Whitefield to join him in Bristol:¹⁰⁷

Saturday 15 March

During my stay [in London] ... I had no thought of leaving London, when I received, after several others, a letter from Mr Whitefield and another from Mr Seward entreating me, in the most pressing manner, to come to Bristol without delay. This I was not at all forward to do ... we at length all agreed to decide it by lot. And by this it was determined I should go.

Thursday 29 March

In the evening I reached Bristol and met Mr Whitefield there. I could scarcely reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the

fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday; I had been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church.

Sunday 1 April

In the evening (Mr Whitefield being gone) I began expounding our Lord's Sermon on the Mount (one pretty remarkable precedent of field-preaching, though I suppose there were churches at that time also), to a little society that was accustomed to meet once or twice a week in Nicholas Street.

Monday 2 April

At four in the afternoon, I submitted to be more vile and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people. The Scripture on which I spoke was this (is it possible anyone should be ignorant that it is fulfilled in every true minister of Christ?): "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." [see Isa. 61:1, 2; Luke 4:18, 19].

PRAYER

Wesley stepped out of his comfort zone to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation and 3,000 gathered to hear him. Bring us to that place of abundance, Lord. Open up a spacious place for us to preach the Gospel here today. Help us to yield every bit of fear and reticence and to step out of our comfort zones to proclaim the Gospel in our day, however strange and embarrassing it may feel at first. Kindle the fire of your Gospel in us, and use us, even us, we pray.

¹⁰⁵ George Whitefield's Journals ed Iain Murray 216, 17 Feb 1739

¹⁰⁶ George Whitefield's Journals 216, March 1739

¹⁰⁷ Wesley, J. Journal, Vol 1, 176.



MONDAY 16 MARCH // PSALM 68

Psalm 68:7 "You went out before your people, O God."

AN OPEN-AIR EVANGELIST

Wesley's biographer, Skevington-Wood, says, "It was an unpredictable providence which led John Wesley to become an open-air evangelist. Field preaching was not congenial to him. Some men might have felt themselves to be in their element as they stood beneath the canopy of heaven. Not so Wesley. To him this seemed a strange way indeed. It was certainly not his own choice. He endured it only because God called him to adopt such a means of approach to the people. There is something ironical that such a man as Wesley should expose himself to the four winds like this. Nor did he shrink from the uncouth mob, which always surrounded him with filth and foul odours and often with heckling and violence. Wesley was a dapper little don. He was finical about his personal appearance. In company he was always as neat as a tailor's model. He was so very particular that he could not bear the slightest speck of dirt on his clerical attire. He hated noise and disturbance. He was accustomed to the academic calm of Oxford or a country rectory. That he should venture into the highways and byways and face the great unwashed is nothing

short of a miracle. Only grace could have turned Wesley into a missionary to the common people."¹⁰⁸

God went ahead of Wesley and chose him for this task and the next week, on the following Sunday after his first experience of open-air preaching he tried it another time. In his journal, John Wesley wrote:¹⁰⁹

Sunday, 8 April

At seven in the morning I preached to about a thousand persons at Bristol, and afterward to about fifteen hundred on the top of Hannam Mount in Kingswood. I called to them, in the words of the evangelical prophet, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; ... come, and buy wine and milk without money and without price" [Isa. 55:1]. About five thousand were in the afternoon at Rose Green (on the other side of Kingswood); among whom I stood and cried in the name of the Lord, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." [John 7:38]

PRAYER

We live in a desperate generation that still thirsts for life. By grace you led Wesley to preach in the highways and byways. You turned him into a missionary to the masses. Show us your strength, Lord, as you have done before. Go before us and choose men and women to be your vessels once again in our day to preach your Gospel to the lost in our nation, that many in their thousands would come to the waters and come and buy wine and milk without money and without price.

¹⁰⁸ Skevington-Wood, A. The burning heart, 94.¹⁰⁹ Wesley, J. Journal, April 8th 1739, Vol 1, 186.



MONDAY 16 MARCH // PSALMS 69-70

Psalm 69:9 *"Zeal for your house consumes me."*

AN ENTHUSIAST

Many of Wesley's contemporaries saw him as a fanatic. He was frequently called in a mocking way, 'an enthusiast'. Howard Snyder suggests that although Wesley never left the Church of England and he was strongly committed to the institutional church, his approach and values were in almost every respect those of what he calls a "Radical Protestant". These are some of the hallmarks of Radical Protestants, as Snyder defines them:¹¹⁰

- 1 Voluntary adult membership based on a covenant-commitment to Jesus Christ, emphasising obedience to Jesus as a necessary evidence of faith in him.
- 2 A community or brotherhood of discipline, edification, correction and mutual aid, in conscious separation from the world, as the primary visible expression of the church.
- 3 A life of good works, service and witness as an expression of Christian love and obedience expected of all believers.
- 4 The Spirit and the Word as comprising the sole basis of authority implying a de-

emphasis on or rejection of church tradition and creeds.

- 5 Primitivism and restitutionism.
- 6 A pragmatic functional approach to church order and structure.
- 7 A belief in the universal church as the body of Christ, of which the particular visible believing community is but a part.

The first hallmark, "Voluntary adult membership", was very important to Wesley. Often adult baptism and a rejection of infant baptism has been considered the key feature that identifies a "Radical Protestant". However 'volunteerism' is really the issue. Wesley knew that a conscious adult commitment and obedience to the Gospel was what mattered and in his preaching this was paramount. Wesley demonstrated how important it was to him, by building a committed community of discipline and edification. Although the Methodist classes and bands were effectively a sub-community within the Church of England, they never became a distinct or separate sect.¹¹¹

PRAYER

Set us on fire, Lord, with a burning passion for you and your house, we pray. We pray for another awakening in our nation with many flames going up and down our land, lighting such candles as by God's grace would never be put out. Remove the 'dread asbestos of other things' that would distract us from the 'one thing' that is needful — lives laid down, devoted to you, Lord Jesus.

110 Snyder, H. The Radical Wesley, 113-114.

111 Snyder, H. The Radical Wesley, 116-117.



TUESDAY 17 MARCH // PSALM 71-72

Psalm 72:12 "He will deliver the needy who cry out."

SIGNS FOLLOWING

Wesley continued to preach to the poor, and God continued to confirm his word with signs following, as Wesley relates in his Journal:¹¹²

Tuesday 17 April 1739

At five in the afternoon I was at a little society in the Back Lane. The room in which we were was propped beneath, but the weight of people made the floor give way; so that in the beginning of expounding, the post which propped it fell down with a great noise. But the floor sank no farther; so that, after a little surprise at first, they quietly attended to the things that were spoken. Thence I went to Baldwin Street and expounded, as it came in course, the fourth chapter of the Acts. We then called upon God to confirm his word. Immediately one that stood by (to our no small surprise) cried out loud with the utmost vehemence, even as in the agonies of death. But we continued in prayer till "a new song was put in her mouth, a thanksgiving unto our God." Soon after, two other persons (well known in this place, as labouring to live in all good conscience towards all men) were seized with strong pain, and constrained to roar for the

disquietness of their heart. But it was not long before they likewise burst forth into praise to God their Saviour. The last who called upon God as out of the belly of hell, was a stranger in Bristol. And in a short space he was overwhelmed with joy and love, knowing that God had healed his backslidings. So many living witnesses hath God that his hand is still "stretched out to heal," and that "signs and wonders are even now wrought by his holy child Jesus."

Wednesday 18 April 1739

In the evening ... A Quaker and a few others were admitted into the society. .. But (another) was scarcely able either to speak or look up ... The sorrows of death compassed her and the pains of hell got hold upon her. We poured out our complaints before God, and showed him of her trouble. And he soon showed he is a God "that heareth prayer". She felt in herself that being justified freely, she had peace with God, through Jesus Christ. She rejoiced in hope of the glory of God, and "the love of God was shed abroad in her heart."

PRAYER

Thank you for your promise, Lord, that you will deliver the needy who cry out, and that you do hear our prayers. Lord, bring to birth another spiritual awakening in our land. Confirm your word with signs following as you have done before, as we see so clearly in the book of Acts and as you did in England in the Methodist revival of 1739. Deliver the needy who cry out. Let there be a bursting forth of praise to God on their lips. We pray for salvation and deliverance! Open up deep wells of salvation in our land once again!

¹¹² Wesley, J. Journal, April 8th 1739, Vol 1, 187.



TUESDAY 17 MARCH // PSALM 73-74

Psalm 73:20 *"As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them as fantasies."*

HUMAN LIFE: A DREAM

Summary of Sermon preached by John Wesley
(on Psalm 73:20)¹¹³

"Anyone that considers these verses (in Psalm 73), will easily observe that the Psalmist is speaking directly of the wicked that prosper in their wickedness. It is very common for these utterly to forget that they are creatures of a day; to live as if they were never to die; as if their present state was to endure forever... how miserable a mistake is this... but I would at present carry this thought further. I would show how near a resemblance there is between human life and a dream. What is a dream? It is a series of persons and things presented to our mind which have no being but in our imagination. It seems to be an echo of what was said or done when we were awake... a fragment of life, broken off at both ends, having no connexion with the real things which either precede it or follow it.

Let us illustrate rather than prove the resemblance between transient dreams and the dream of life. Suppose we have before us someone who has just passed into the world of spirits. We talk to this person, before us and we say to them "You have been living on earth for 40, 50 or 60 years." God has just spoken and said to you, "Awake you who have been sleeping." Look around you. What is the difference? Where is your body. Where are your limbs, your hands, your feet, your head. They lie cold, insensible. How different now you are thoroughly awake, are the objects around you? Where are the houses

and gardens and fields and cities which you lately saw?

Now suppose this to be the case with any of you and that you are now present before God. It may be so tomorrow; perhaps tonight. Perhaps this night your soul "may be required of you;" the dream of life may end and you may wake into broad eternity.

See there lies the poor inanimate carcass shortly to be sown in corruption and dishonour. But where is the immortal incorruptible spirit? There it stands, naked before the eyes of God! What profit have you reaped of all your labour and care? Does your money follow you? Do your clothes follow you? Where is the honour, the pomp, the applause that surrounded you? All are gone; all are vanished away, "like as a shadow they depart."

See on the other hand, the mansions which were prepared for you before the foundations of the world! O what a difference between the dream that is past and the real scene that is now before you! Look up! See Jesus! Look down! What a prison is there, its inhabitants gnashing their teeth at Him! We might wish that we had a friend with us always whispering in our ear, "Wake up O sleeper rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you." Soon you will awake into real life. You will stand a naked spirit, in the world of spirits, before the face of the great God! See that now you hold fast to that "eternal life which he has given you in his Son!"

PRAYER

Lord, we know that this world of shadows will pass away. Open our eyes, Lord. Where so many in our celebrity-focused, consumerist nation today are lost in temporal fantasies and have no thought of the age to come, Lord Jesus, wake us up out of our slumber. We long for your appearing, Lord. Rend the heavens and come down.



WEDNESDAY 18 MARCH // PSALMS 75-77

Psalms 77:14 *"You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among peoples."*

A MORE EXCELLENT WAY

Summary of Sermon preached by John Wesley
114

"1 Corinthians 12:31 says 'Covet earnestly the best gifts; And yet I show unto you a more excellent way.' In the previous verses, St Paul has been speaking of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit: such as healing the sick; prophesying in the proper sense of the word, that is foretelling things to come; speaking with strange tongues, such as the speaker had never learned; and the miraculous interpretation of tongues. These gifts the apostle allows to be desirable; yea he exhorts the Corinthians, at least the teachers among them to covet them earnestly, that they might be qualified to be more useful either to Christians or Heathens. 'And yet,' says he, 'I show unto you a more excellent way,' far more desirable than all these put together.

It does not appear that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were common in the Church for more than two or three centuries. We seldom hear of them after that fatal period when the Emperor Constantine called himself a Christian; and from a vain imagination of

promoting the Christian cause and heaped riches and power and honour upon the Christians in general but in particular upon the Christian clergy. From this time they almost totally ceased; very few instances of the kind were found. The real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian church was because the Christians were turned Heathens again, and had only a dead form left."

Tuttle, a historian, comments regarding Wesley and spiritual gifts:¹¹⁵ "Some argue that Wesley sounded somewhat ambivalent at times with regard to some of the more 'extraordinary' gifts as they surfaced within the 18th century Evangelical Revival (no doubt concerned about the charges of 'enthusiasm' against the people called Methodist). However, on at least one occasion Wesley defended the gifts of the Spirit. In a letter to Conyers Middleton,¹¹⁶ Wesley defined, described, and defended a whole host of spiritual gifts, including casting out demons, speaking with new tongues, healing the sick, prophecy, visions, divine dreams and discerning of spirits."

PRAYER

Lord, help us to make love our aim and to earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, particularly the gift of prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:39). Help us to fan into a flame the gift of God within, we pray. If vain imagination riches and power side-lined the church in the past, rescue us today from the same fate. Breathe your breath on us again. Breathe on the dry bones and call forth your Church into that more excellent way, that it might accomplish your purposes in the power of your Holy Spirit.

114 Wesley, J. Sermons Volume 7, 'The more excellent way', 26,27.

115 Tuttle, R.G John Wesley and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

116 Wesley, J. Sermons Volume 10, 1-79.



WEDNESDAY 18 MARCH // PSALM 78

Psalm 78:4 *"We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord."*

YOUTH AWAKENING

As the awakening began to gather momentum in April 1739, many more people responded to Wesley's preaching with signs following. Wesley wrote in his journal entries how some young people were impacted:¹¹⁷

Tuesday 21 April 1739

...a young man was suddenly seized with a violent trembling all over and in a few minutes, the sorrows of his heart being enlarged, sunk down to the ground. But we ceased not calling upon God, till he raised him up full of "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." On Easter-day it being a thorough rain, I could only preach at Newgate at eight in the morning and two in the afternoon; in a house near Hannah Mount at eleven, and in one near Rose-Green at five. At the society in the evening many were cut to the heart and many comforted.

Tuesday 23 April 1739

...In the evening at Baldwin Street, a young man, after a sharp (though short) agony but both of body and mind, found his soul filled with peace, knowing in whom he had believed.

April 25 1739

To above 2000 at Baptist mills I explained that glorious scripture (describing the state of every

true believer in Christ — everyone who by faith is born of God) Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry "Abba, Father."

April 26 1739

While I was preaching at Newgate on these words, "He that believeth hath everlasting life," I was insensibly led, without any previous design, to declare strongly and explicitly, that God willeth "all men to be" thus "saved" and to pray that "if this were not the truth of God, he would not suffer the blind to go out of the way; but if it were, he would bear witness to his word." Immediately one and another, and another sunk to the earth: They dropped on every side as thunderstruck. One of them cried aloud. We besought God in her behalf, and he turned her heaviness into joy. A second being in same agony, we called upon God for her also, and he spoke peace into her soul. In the evening I was again pressed in spirit to declare that "Christ gave himself a ransom for all." And almost before we called upon him to set his seal, he answered. One was so wounded by the word of the Spirit, that you would have imagined she could not live a moment. But immediately his abundant kindness was showed, and she loudly sang of his righteousness.

PRAYER

Lord, we pray for the youth and the students in our land — the next generation. Let them hear the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord. Violently apprehend them with your deep and enduring love. Show them tangible evidence of your abundant kindness. Set them free from bondage, adopt them into your family, the family of God, that they might receive a spirit of adoption, crying "Abba, Father." You did it in the Methodist awakening. Do it again, we pray!

¹¹⁷ Wesley, J. Journal, April 21-26th 1739, Vol 1, 187-189.



THURSDAY 19 MARCH // PSALMS 79–81

Psalms 79–81 *"Restore us, O God, make your face shine upon us; that we may be saved."*

CUT TO THE HEART

Wesley continued to preach and travel around the country at a breath-taking pace, seeing the Holy Spirit bring conviction of sin and salvation wherever he went, and much rejoicing as a result. Wesley wrote in his Journal:¹¹⁸

Tuesday April 27 1739

All Newgate rang with the cries of those whom the word of God cut to the heart. Two of whom were in a moment filled with joy, to the astonishment of those that beheld them.

Sunday April 29 1739

I declared the free grace of God to about 4000 people... I then went to Clifton, a mile from Bristol... and thence returned to a little plain, near Hannam-Mount, where about 3000 were present. After dinner I went to Clifton again. From

Clifton we went to Rose Green where were...near 7000 and thence to Gloucester Lane Society. After which was our first love-feast in Baldwin Street. O how has God renewed my strength who used ten years ago to be so faint and weary with preaching twice in one day?

Tuesday 1 May 1739

Many of those who had been long in darkness, saw the dawn of a great light; and ten persons, I afterwards found, then began to say in faith "My Lord and my God." A Quaker who stood by... and was biting his lips and knitting his brows, when he dropped down as thunderstruck. The agony he was in was even terrible to behold. We besought God not to lay folly to his charge. And he soon lifted up his head, and cried aloud, "Now I know thou art a prophet of the Lord."

PRAYER

Pierce our hearts with the cutting edge of your word. May our towns and cities ring with the cries of those whom the word of God has cut to the heart. Shine your face on our land that we may be saved. We pray for a new dawn, a new day to break. Restore us, O God, we pray.

¹¹⁸ Wesley, J. Journal, April 27th - May 1st 1739, Vol 1, 189, 190.



THURSDAY 19 MARCH // PSALMS 82–85

Psalm 84:5 *"Blessed are those whose strength is in you ... who have set their hearts on pilgrimage."*

INCESSANT PACE

It is difficult to believe, but Wesley was once criticised for taking life too easily. The one who accused him was clearly not in touch with reality. She said that he was "laying up treasures on this earth". His reply was fitting: "I told her, God knew me better, and if he had sent her, he would have sent her with a more proper message."¹¹⁹

The main reason for Wesley's incessant pace he made very apparent. In 1781 when he was still travelling constantly even in his old age, he said, "I must go on; for a dispensation of the gospel is committed to me; and woe is me if I preach not the gospel."¹²⁰ He knew that the Lord had commissioned him to preach the Gospel. Revival was sweeping the land as he preached, and that the Lord himself was renewing his strength was his powerful

testimony.

John Fletcher, who travelled with John Wesley on many journeys, paid him this tribute that he kept on going "with unwearied diligence through the three kingdoms, calling sinners to repentance and to the healing fountain of Jesus' blood. Though oppressed with the weight of near 70 years, and the cares of nearly 30,000 souls, he shames still, by his unabated zeal and immense labours, all the young ministers in England, perhaps in Christendom. He has generously blown the gospel trumpet and rode 20 miles before most of the professors who despise his labours have left their downy pillows. As he begins the day, the week, the year, so he concludes them, still intent on extensive services for the glory of the Redeemer and the good of souls."¹²¹

PRAYER

My strength is in You, Lord, and I have set my heart on pilgrimage. I pray for Your resources and Your enabling to restore the Gospel to England. I cannot do it in my strength. You are mighty to save and to deliver the captives. I look to You, Lord. Bring revival to our land, a fresh breath of your Holy Spirit that renews, restores and refreshes and brings revelation from above. My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh cry out to you, Lord, the living God!

¹¹⁹ Wesley, J. Journal, Vol IV, January 1760, Vol 4, 364, quoted in Skevington-Wood, The burning heart, 115.

¹²⁰ Wesley, J. Journal, Vol XIII, A Plain account of Kingswood School, 1781, Vol 4, 267.

¹²¹ MacDonald, F.W, John W. Fletcher, 118. quoted in Skevington-Wood, The burning heart, 124.



FRIDAY 20 MARCH // PSALMS 86-88

Psalm 88:1 "The God who saves me."

RESCUED FROM THE ENEMY'S OPPRESSION

Wesley saw many individuals come to saving faith and many delivered and set free from deception. He tells the story in his Journal ¹²² of a weaver who was very sceptical at first, but who was powerfully delivered from the oppression of the enemy.

Tuesday May 2 1739

I did not mention ... a weaver who was at Baldwin-Street the night before. He was (I understood) a man of a regular life and conversation, one that constantly attended the public prayers and sacrament, and was zealous for the Church, and against Dissenters of every denomination. Being informed ... that people fell into strange fits at the societies he came to see and judge for himself but he was less satisfied than before insomuch that he went about to his acquaintance one after another, till one in the morning, and laboured above measure to convince them it was a delusion of the devil. We were going home when one met us in the street and informed us that (the weaver) was fallen raving mad.

It seems he had sat down to dinner, but had a mind first to end a sermon he had borrowed

on "Salvation by faith." In reading the last page he changed colour, fell off his chair, and began screaming terribly and beating himself against the ground. The neighbours were alarmed, and flocked together to the house. Between one and two I came in, and found him on the floor, the room being full of people, whom his wife would have kept without; but he cried aloud, "No; let them all come; let all the world see the just judgment of God." Two or three men were holding him as well as they could. He immediately fixed his eyes upon me and, stretching out his hand cried, "Ay, this is he who I said was a deceiver of the people. But God has overtaken me. I said, it was all a delusion; but this is no delusion." He then roared out, "O thou devil! Thou cursed devil. Yea thou legion of devils! Thou canst not stay. Christ will cast thee out. I know his work is begun. Tear me to pieces, if thou wilt; but thou canst not hurt me." He then beat himself against the ground again; his breast having at the same time as in the pangs of death and great drops of sweat trickling down his face. We all betook ourselves to prayer. His pangs ceased and both his body and soul was set at liberty.

PRAYER

Come and save and deliver me, Lord. Show me where I am bound and set me free. Ignite a revival that saves us from sin and selfishness and drives out every bit of darkness in our land. Bring strong conviction of sin. Open up your wells of salvation and deliverance, that the bodies and souls of the oppressed might be set at liberty. Lord, hear our cry!

¹²² Wesley, J. Journal, Tuesday May 2nd 1739, Vol 1, 190, 191.



FRIDAY 20 MARCH // PSALM 89

Psalm 89:1 *"I will sing of the Lord's great love for ever."*

CHARLES WESLEY

Charles Wesley, brother of John and raised in the same household by Susanna, their mother, was overshadowed in many ways by his more well-known and more 'forward' brother. While John was attracted to the limelight, Charles retreated from it.¹²³ However it was Charles Wesley who was responsible for the starting of the Holy Club in Oxford and it was Charles who first received the derisive nickname "Methodist" and used it as a badge of honour.¹²⁴

It was Charles who composed the songs of the Methodist awakening and it was the hymns that he wrote that provided the means for the new converts to "express their new-found joy to the Lord ... Charles Wesley wrote an astonishing number of hymns, 400 of which are still used by various Christian groups today. He wrote about 9000 hymns in total and composed a hymn a day every day for nearly 25 years of his adult life. The Methodist hymns were composed of the life experiences of their author's ministry and they also told of his ministry. The hymns

were also aids in Charles personal devotions."¹²⁵

One historian has commented that if the Bible were lost it might be possible to extract it from Charles Wesley's hymns. Within his hymns the Bible is contained "in solution". "Charles' language in poem, pulpit and in everyday speech was both shaped and informed by biblical expressions. His hymns are mosaics of biblical allusions."¹²⁶ There have been attempts to excavate the biblical source of the fragments of the Bible that are contained in Charles Wesley's hymns.

For example, if one line were to be analysed:

"O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great redeemer's praise
The glories of my God and King
The triumphs of his grace,"

it is clear that dozens of echoes of scriptural applications lie within just this one line.¹²⁷

PRAYER

We pray for the breaking of a new wave of worship and devotion to you, Lord Jesus, over our land. We will sing of your great love forever, Lord. May the composition of a fresh new wave of songs to you, Lord, expressing the newfound joy of brand new believers, be one of the hallmarks of the national awakening that sweeps our nation. Come, Lord Jesus, come.

¹²³ Tyson, J.R, Charles Wesley: A reader(1999), 3.

¹²⁴ Tyson, J.R, Charles Wesley: A reader(1999), 5.

¹²⁵ Tyson, J.R, Charles Wesley: A reader(1999), 21, 22.

¹²⁶ http://churchsociety.org/issues_new/history/wesleychas/iss_history_wesleychas_Colquhoun-evangelist.asp

¹²⁷ Charles Wesley, A reader, 34.



MONDAY 23 MARCH // PSALMS 90-92

Psalm 92:4 "For you make me glad by your deeds, O Lord."

WHITE FURROWS DOWN TEAR-STAINED FACES

Charles Wesley was a songwriter, but he was also a powerful preacher of the gospel. He preached energetically and the gospel burned like a fire in his heart as both he and his brother enthusiastically proclaimed the Good News in open-air services throughout the land.¹²⁸ Of all the places where the power of the Gospel transformed lives, the most striking effect was demonstrated at the colliery in Kingswood.

In Bristol, as thousands of miners listened to the message of Christ's redeeming love preached by John Wesley, tears of penitence and gratitude made white furrows down their coal-stained faces.

John Wesley described the change which took place in their lives. "Kingswood does not now, as a year ago, resound with cursing and blasphemy. It is no more filled with drunkenness and uncleanness, and the idle diversions that

naturally lead thereto. It is no longer full of wars and fightings, of clamour and bitterness, of wrath and envyings; peace and love are there. Great numbers of the people are mild, gentle, and easy to be entreated. They 'do not cry, neither strive,' and hardly is their 'voice heard in the streets,' or, indeed, in their own wood; unless when they are at their usual evening diversion, singing praise unto God their Saviour."¹²⁹ One hymn that was written by Charles Wesley especially for these Kingswood colliers clearly illustrates this transforming experience which was theirs in Christ:

"Thou only, Lord, the work hast done, And bated Thine arm in all our sight; Hast made the reprobates Thine own, And claimed the outcasts as Thy right."¹³⁰

PRAYER

You have made us glad by all you have done powerfully on our behalf, Lord, rescuing us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Just as you stirred those Kingswood colliers over 250 years ago, stir us again. As white furrows streamed down coal-stained faces let tears of penitence and gratitude flow again. Transform our streets from places of drunkenness and uncleanness into places of praise and thankfulness to you, once again. Open up the wells of salvation we pray, O Lord.

¹²⁸ http://churchsociety.org/issues_new/history/wesleychas/iss_history_wesleychas_Colquhoun-evangelist.asp

¹²⁹ Wesley, J. Journal, November 27, 1739, Vol 1, 251.

¹³⁰ The Hymn Book of the Modern Church, 194.



MONDAY 23 MARCH // PSALMS 93–94

Psalm 94:16 "Who will take a stand for me?"

"IS NOT YOUR NAME NASH?"

A well-known rich gentleman, Mr Nash, who lived in the city of Bath was strongly opposed to John Wesley. In June 1739 the two of them met and had a short conversation, which Wesley relates in his Journal:¹³¹

Tuesday 5 June 1739

There was great expectation at Bath of what a noted man was to do to me there; and I was much entreated not to preach because no one knew what might happen. By this report I also gained a much larger audience, among whom were many of the rich and great. I told them plainly the Scripture had concluded them all under sin — high and low, rich and poor, one with another. Many of them seemed to be a little surprised and were sinking apace into seriousness, when their champion appeared and, coming close to me, asked by what authority I did these things. I replied, "By the authority of Jesus Christ, conveyed to me by the (now) Archbishop of Canterbury, when he laid hands

upon me and said, 'Take thou authority to preach the gospel.'" He said, "This is contrary to Act of Parliament: this is a conventicle." I answered, "Sir, the conventicles mentioned in that Act (as the preamble shows) are seditious meetings; but this is not such; here is no shadow of sedition; therefore it is not contrary to that Act." He replied, "I say it is: and beside, your preaching frightens people out of their wits." "Sir, did you ever hear me preach?" "No." "How, then, can you judge of what you never heard?" "Sir, by common report." "Common report is not enough. Give me leave, Sir, to ask, is not your name Nash?" "My name is Nash." "Sir, I dare not judge of you by common report: I think it not enough to judge by." Here he paused awhile and, having recovered himself, said, "I desire to know what this people comes here for": on which one replied, "Sir, leave him to me: let an old woman answer him. You, Mr. Nash, take care of your body; we take care of our souls; and for the food of our souls we come here." He replied not a word, but walked away.

PRAYER

Our food is to do your will and to finish your work. Help us, Lord, to put shoulder to the plough and not to look back, to cleave to and yield to your purposes. Show us how and when to take a stand against opposition to the preaching of your Gospel and give us the grace to preach your word in and out of season and to put it into practice in our lives, diligently and devotedly.

¹³¹ Wesley, J. Journal, June 5, 1739, Vol 1, 198.



TUESDAY 24 MARCH // PSALMS 95–97

Psalm 97:10 "He guards the lives of his faithful ones."

LIKE LAMBS AMONG WOLVES

John Wesley often faced persecution. In 1743, the vicar of Eggington, the curate at Darlaston and the vicar of Walsall spread word among the people that cockfighting, bullbaiting and prize-fights were in danger because of the preaching of the Methodists. As a result Methodists had windows broken and houses, shops and workshops ransacked.¹³²

When Wesley returned to this area and was staying in Wednesbury in Birmingham in October 1743, a mob surrounded the house where he was staying. Wesley could hear the cry, "Bring out the minister. We'll have the minister!"¹³³ Wesley managed to slip out the back door, but while this mob had calmed down, another mob roared out of Walsall. The determined mob was led by Honest Munchin, the prize-fighter, and Wesley found himself cornered in front of a door at the edge of the town.

Wesley stood at the door and asked, Are you willing to hear me speak? Many cried out "No, no knock his brains out; down with him, kill him at once." Wesley's strength and his voice returned. He raised his voice and prayed to the

Lord, and then the prize-fighter turned to him. "Sir I will spend my life for you; follow me and not one soul shall touch a hair of your head."¹³⁴ Some other members of the mob did likewise, following their leader, but although the mob went away, it returned later crying out yet again, that it wanted to kill him. There was one man who had been escorting Wesley whose arm was broken.

The curate of Darlaston sent a message of apology the very next day, when he heard of the courage of Wesley when faced with the mob. When John met Charles in Nottingham shortly afterwards, he wrote "'My brother came ... delivered out of the mouth of the lion. He looked like a soldier of Christ. His clothes were torn to tatters."

Charles Wesley went immediately to Wednesbury (as they had planned) and the young man with the broken arm and the prize-fighter were received into the Methodist society as probationary members ... Honest Munchin became a pillar of the Methodists of Wednesbury and Walsall, until his death 46 years later aged 86.¹³⁵

PRAYER

We pray for the raising up of an army of soldiers of Christ, willing to face opposition for your sake, Lord, and to preach the Gospel regardless of the cost. You send us out like lambs among wolves, but you are the Good Shepherd who leads us in paths of righteousness. Give us that peace that the world cannot give, that boldness and courage to share and live out our faith, meekly and humbly even in the face of arrogant hostility. Help us to live more Christlike lives, Lord, and give us a deeper trust in you that you truly do guard the lives of your faithful ones.

¹³² Pollock, J. Wesley: The Preacher, Kingsway, 176

¹³³ Wesley, J. Journal, October 20, 1743, Vol 2,436.

¹³⁴ Wesley, J. Journal, October 20, 1743, Vol 2,436.

¹³⁵ Pollock, J. Wesley: The Preacher, 181.



TUESDAY 24 MARCH // PSALMS 98-101

Psalm 100:1 "Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth."

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

The coal miners of Newcastle upon Tyne, in the far north-east of England, were illiterate, rough and godless. On 27 May 1742 Wesley arrived in Newcastle and was surprised at "so much drunkenness, cursing and swearing (even from the mouths of little children)".¹³⁶ Wesley wrote:

About seven o'clock I walked down to Sandgate, the poorest and most contemptible part of the town, and standing at the end of the street with John Taylor, began to sing Psalm 100. Three or four people came out to see what was the matter, who soon increased to four or five hundred ... I applied those words ... He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed.

...Observing the people when I had done, to stand gaping and staring upon me, with the most profound astonishment, I told them, "If

you desire to know who I am, my name is John Wesley. At five in the evening, with God's help, I design to preach here again." At five the hill on which I designed to preach was covered, from the top to the bottom. I never saw so large a number of people together, either at Moorfields, or at Kennington Common. I knew it was not possible for the one half to hear, although my voice was then strong and clear; and I stood so as to have all in view, as they were ranged on the side of a hill ... After preaching, the poor people were ready to tread me underfoot, out of pure love and kindness. It was some time before I could possibly get out of the press. I then went back another way than I came; but several were got to our inn before me; by whom I was vehemently opportuned to stay with them, at least a few days or however, one day more. But I could not consent having given my word to be at Birstall, with God's leave, on Tuesday night.¹³⁷

PRAYER

Lord, we pray that just as the Good News was preached to the poor in Newcastle in 1742 and the poor were ready to tread Wesley underfoot out of pure love and kindness, we pray for a hunger and thirst for the Good News in our land once again. There is deep need, there are deep unmet longings in the poor and impoverished in our land today. Let the thirsty come and drink, let them come and drink from the waters of life, let them come and be satisfied we pray.

136 Wesley, J. Journal, May 27, 1742, Vol 1, 373.

137 Wesley, J. Journal, May 30, 1742, Vol 1, 373-374.



WEDNESDAY 25 MARCH // PSALMS 102-103

Psalm 103:5 *"He satisfies your desires with good things."*

THE DANGER OF RICHES

Summary of Sermon preached by John Wesley,¹³⁸

"They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful desires which drown men in destruction and perdition." 1 Timothy 6:9

The apostle does not here speak of they that will be rich by evil means, by theft robbery, oppression or extortion; simply they that will be rich. What it is to be rich? The preceding verse says, "Having food and raiment (literally coverings: including lodgings as well as clothes) let us be content." They that will be rich are those who will have more than these, more than the necessities and conveniences of life. In other words "they that will be rich" are those that endeavour to "lay up treasures on earth".

In fact is not the laying up of treasures on earth expressly and clearly forbidden by our Lord as either adultery or murder? The text says they that will be rich enter into temptation, a snare of the devil which he purposely put in their way ... Riches either desired or possessed naturally lead to some or other foolish desires, the desire of the eyes, that is seeking happiness in gratifying the imagination, the desire of honour, the desire of ease. All these in the proportion as they prevail, "pierce men through with many sorrows."

I ask then in the name of God who of you desire to be rich? Who of you desires to have more than the plain necessities and conveniences of life? Stop! Consider! What are

you doing? Evil is before you! Will you rush upon the point of a sword! By the grace of God, turn and live! By the same authority I ask of you, "Who of you are endeavouring to be rich?" To procure for yourselves more than the plain necessities and conveniences of life? Lay each of you, your hand to your heart and inquire seriously "Am I of that number?" May the spirit of God say to everyone whom it concerns "Thou art the man!"

Are not you who have been successful in your endeavours to increase in substance, insensibly sunk into softness of the mind, if not of body too? You no longer rejoice to "endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." You no longer rush into the kingdom of heaven, and take it by storm. You do not cheerfully and gladly "deny yourselves and take up your cross daily." You cannot deny yourself the poor pleasure of a little sleep, or a soft bed, in order to hear the word that is able to save your souls! Indeed you "cannot go out so early in the morning; besides it is dark, nay cold, perhaps rainy too. Cold, darkness, rain, all these together I can never think of it." You did not say so when you were a poor man. It is the change of circumstances which has occasioned this melancholy change in your body and mind: You are but the shadow of what you were! What have riches done for you?

But, you say, "it cannot be expected, I should do as I have done, for I am now grown old." Am not I grown old as well as you? Am not I in my 78th year? Yet by the grace of God, I do not slack my pace yet."

PRAYER

All our riches are found in you, and in doing your will, Lord. If we are endeavouring to be rich and to procure more than the plain necessities of life, show us, Lord, show us our hearts. You, Lord, are the one who satisfies all our desires with good things!

¹³⁸ Wesley, J. Sermons Volume 7, 'The danger of riches,' 1,2.



WEDNESDAY 25 MARCH // PSALM 104

Psalm 104:30 *"When you send your Spirit ... you renew the face of the earth."*

HEARTS TOUCHED, LIVES CHANGED

It is abundantly clear from reading the Journal of John Wesley that the Holy Spirit, particularly during the beginning of the Methodist awakening, was moving in power. Frequently there were outward manifestations during the delivery of his messages. There would be conviction, convulsions, sighs and sobs, some crying out apparently in agony, until within a short while they were praising God. Frequently individuals would find Wesley after the meeting was over, if they were in spiritual need, but sometimes Wesley had to wait till the next day before he knew what had happened as a result of his preaching.

Wesley was preaching to a company of soldiers in Athlone and one soldier gave his testimony immediately afterwards: "I was going to a woman last night when one of my comrades met and asked me if I would go to the watch night. Out of curiosity I came; but for half the sermon I minded nothing that was said then God struck me to the heart, so that I could not

stand, but dropped down to the ground. I slept none last night and came to you [Wesley] in the morning; but I could not speak. I went from you to a few brethren, and they prayed with me till my burden dropped off. And now, by the grace of God we will part no more. I am ready to go with you all over the world."¹³⁹

A significant indication that the Lord had really begun a work in the hearts of those who had heard him preach was their presence at the meeting that Wesley frequently organised early the next morning. If those had been spiritually impacted the previous day were sufficiently motivated to come the following day, he felt that this was a good indication that they would find the Lord Jesus, the lover of their souls. On one occasion in Rye he said in his Journal that the next day: "The number of those who came at five in the morning showed that God had touched many hearts."¹⁴⁰

For Wesley it was not enough for hearts to be touched, he wanted to see lives changed too.

PRAYER

Send your Spirit, Lord. Renew me by your Spirit and change me. Change me into your image, Lord Jesus Christ. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me. Melt me, mould me, fill me, use me, Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

¹³⁹ Wesley, J. Journal, July 3, 1750, Vol 3, 483

¹⁴⁰ Wesley, J. Journal, October 13, 1758, Vol 4, 288 quoted in Skevington-Wood, A. The burning heart, 164, 165.



THURSDAY 26 MARCH // PSALM 105

Psalm 105:1 "Make known among the nations what he has done."

"I LOOK UPON ALL THE WHOLE WORLD AS MY PARISH"

John Wesley described early in the Methodist revival the reason why he preached the Gospel and the nature of his commission:¹⁴¹

June 1739

I do not think it hard to justify whatever I do. God in Scripture commands me, according to my power, to instruct the ignorant, reform the wicked, confirm the virtuous. Man forbids me to do this in another's parish; that is, in effect, to do it at all, seeing I have now no parish of my own, nor probably ever shall. Whom then shall I hear, God or man? ... I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work which I know God has called me to; and sure I am that His blessing attends it. Great encouragement have I, therefore, to be faithful in fulfilling the work He hath given me to do. His servant I am,

and, as such, am employed according to the plain direction of His Word, "As I have opportunity, doing good unto all men"; and His providence clearly concurs with his Word; which has disengaged me from all things else, that I might singly attend on this very thing, "and go about doing good".

When he was nearly 70 Wesley wrote to John Fletcher. Wesley had expected that Fletcher might be his successor. He wrote, "What an amazing work has God wrought in these kingdoms in less than forty years. And it not only continues but increases throughout England, Scotland and Ireland; nay it has lately spread into New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland and Carolina."¹⁴²

However Fletcher's health worsened and he died before John Wesley. The Lord would raise up others to further the work.¹⁴³

PRAYER

Thank you for calling us to this task of going into all the world to make disciples. We ask you for the nations. They are your inheritance. Help us according to your power to instruct the ignorant, reform the wicked, confirm the virtuous, to make the glad tidings of salvation known among the nations, to make known what you have done, Lord, in all the world.

¹⁴¹ Wesley, J. Journal, June 11th 1739, Vol 1, 189, 190.

¹⁴² Wesley, J. Letter to John Fletcher January 1773, Vol 12, 163.

¹⁴³ Pollock, J. Wesley, 247.



THURSDAY 26 MARCH // PSALM 106

Psalm 106:6 *"We have sinned, even as our fathers did ... yet he saved them for his name's sake."*

CLASSES AND BANDS

At the Holy Club in Oxford and at the Fetter Lane Society in London, practical holiness and openly confessing sin was a strong value for John Wesley. He saw that this practical holiness was the experience of the Primitive Church. From the very beginnings of Methodism Wesley developed a system of classes and bands, where confession of sin in small groups became a lifestyle.

The classes consisted of a meeting once a week in the evening for about an hour. At these meetings the group members would report back to the other group members how they were doing spiritually, tell each other any needs or spiritual problems that they were facing and receive prayer.¹⁴⁴ "Advice or reproof was given as need required, quarrels were made up, misunderstandings were removed. And after an hour or two spent in this labour of love they concluded with prayer and thanksgiving."¹⁴⁵

The bands were groups organised according to age, sex and marital status and they were usually smaller than class meetings.¹⁴⁶ Wesley described them as follows:

The design of the band meeting is to obey that command of God, "confess your thoughts one to another, and pray for one another that you may be healed." To this end, we intend —

- 1 To meet once a week at least.
- 2 To come punctually at the hour appointed, without some extraordinary reason.
- 3 To begin (those of us who are present) exactly at the hour, with singing or prayer.
- 4 To speak each of us in order, freely and plainly the true state of our souls, with the faults we have committed in thought, word or deed, and the temptations we have felt, since our last meeting.
- 5 To end every meeting with prayer suited to the state of each person present.
- 6 To desire some person among us to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest in order as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state, sins and temptations.¹⁴⁷

PRAYER

I John 1:9 says "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Lord, I forsake all known sin: in thought — convict me of any past sin; in word — I choose to confess this past sin; in deed — show me, where appropriate, how I should correct this past sin. Thank you for your forgiveness and your cleansing. I follow you on your highway of holiness.

¹⁴⁴ Snyder, H. *The Radical Wesley*, 55,

¹⁴⁵ Wesley, J. *Letter to Mr Perronet 1748*, Vol VIII, 253, 254.

¹⁴⁶ Snyder, H. *The Radical Wesley*, 59,

¹⁴⁷ Wesley, J. *Rules of the Band-societies*, Vol VIII, 272.



FRIDAY 27 MARCH // PSALM 107

Psalm 107:7 "He led them by a straight way."

A NEW AND LIVING WAY

Throughout June 1739, The Holy Spirit continued to move powerfully as John Wesley preached, as he wrote in his Journal:¹⁴⁸

Friday 15 June 1739

In the evening I went to a society at Wapping, weary in body and faint in spirit ... I begged God to direct and (I) opened the book at Hebrews 10:19, "Having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus; by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil that is to say, his flesh, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

While I was earnestly inviting all sinners to "enter into the holiest" by this "new and living way", many of those that heard began to call upon God with strong cries and tears. Some sunk down, and there remained no strength in them; others exceedingly trembled and quaked: Some were torn with a kind of convulsive motion in every part of their bodies, and that so violently, that often five persons could not hold one of them. I have seen many hysterical and many epileptic fits but none of them were like these in many respects.

I immediately prayed that God would not suffer those who were weak to be offended. But one woman was offended greatly; being sure they might help it if they would; no-one should persuade her to the contrary; and was got three or four yards when she also dropped down in as violent agony as the rest. Twenty-six of those who had been thus affected (most of whom, during the prayers which were made for them were in a moment filled with peace and joy) promised to call upon me the next day but only eighteen came; by talking closely with whom, I found reason to believe that some of them had gone home to their house justified. The rest seemed to be waiting patiently for it.

Friday 22 June 1739

While I was speaking, one before me dropped down as dead and presently a second and third. Five others sunk down in half an hour, most of whom were in violent agonies. "The pains as of hell came about them: the snares of death overtook them." In their trouble we called upon the Lord and he gave us an answer of peace. One indeed continued an hour in strong pain; and one or more for three days. But the rest were greatly comforted in that hour and went away rejoicing and praising God.

PRAYER

Direct our paths, Lord! You have opened up a new and living way into the Holy of Holies. We would follow hard after you on that narrow way, that straight way unto salvation. Rescue us from that broad way that leads unto destruction. Pour out your Holy Spirit in power and through the conviction of your Spirit-anointed word. Rend the heavens and come down, that we might be saved from hell and saved from a Christless eternity. So help us, God!



FRIDAY 27 MARCH // PSALMS 108-109

Psalm 109:4 *"... but I am a man of prayer."*

WESLEY ON PRAYER

Wesley wrote about prayer in his Journal:

"Thanksgiving is inseparable from true prayer; it is almost essentially connected with it. One who always prays is ever giving praise, whether in ease or pain, both for prosperity and for the greatest adversity. He blesses God for all things, looks on them as coming from Him, and receives them for His sake — not choosing nor refusing, liking or disliking anything, but only as it is agreeable or disagreeable to His perfect will."

"The end of your praying is not to inform God, as though he knew of your wants already; but rather to inform yourselves; to fix the sense of those wants more deeply in your hearts, and the sense of your continued dependence on Him who only is able to supply all your wants."

It is not so much to move God who is always more ready to give than you to ask, as to move yourselves, that you may be willing and ready to receive the good things he has prepared for you."

"I continue to dream and pray about a revival of holiness in our day that moves forth in mission and creates authentic community in which each person can be unleashed through

the empowerment of the Spirit to fulfill God's creational intentions."

"When therefore we pray, that the will of God may be done in earth as it is in Heaven, the meaning is, that all the inhabitants of the earth, even the whole race of mankind, may do the will of their Father which is in heaven, as willingly as the holy Angels; that these may do it continually, even as they without any interruption of their willing service; yea and that they may do it perfectly, — that "the God of peace, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, may make them perfect in every good work to do his will and work in them all which is well-pleasing in his sight". In other words we pray that we and all mankind may do the whole will of God in all things; and nothing else, not the least thing but what is the holy and acceptable will of God: We pray that we may do the whole will of God as he willeth, in the manner that pleases him: And lastly, that we may do it because it is his will; that this may be the sole reason and ground, the whole and only motive of whatsoever we think, or whatever we speak or do."

PRAYER

Where my prayer life has been dry and routine and where I have been preoccupied with other things, draw me back to you, Lord. Teach me to pray, to see prayer as the highest part of the work entrusted to me. Cultivate in me that spiritual thirst and hunger that I lack. I have been dulled by the power of sin in my life. Wake me up out of my lethargy and draw me back to you, O Lord.



MONDAY 30 MARCH // PSALMS 110–113

Psalm 110:2 *"You will rule in the midst of your enemies."*

WHITEFIELD AT MOORFIELDS

While John Wesley was travelling around the country preaching the Gospel, so was George Whitefield, Wesley's friend and fellow labourer.

Every Easter week the London poor gave themselves to fun at Moorfields. Strolling players, bears that were taught to dance using cruelty, clowns and 'merry-andrews', and a whole host of conjurers and troupers would converge on the capital. For weeks beforehand in the spring of 1742 George Whitefield had been summoning his courage to "lift up a standard among them in the name of Jesus Christ".

As he stood up to preach, he felt a tug at his gown and looked down. Elizabeth his wife had her eyes firm upon him. "George," she called, "play the man for God!" Strengthened, encouraged, he felt a surge of compassion for those who would hear. He called out across the fairground: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes." Whitefield preached

for three days over the Easter weekend.

Sometimes he was silenced for a moment when a rotten egg or tomato hit him in the mouth. If the contemporary account is read between the lines, one man went so far as to urinate towards the pulpit. Even Whitefield was shaken at such beastly behaviour. The jeering section of the crowd loved it. Whitefield quickly recovered. His voice boomed above the uproar. "Now," he cried, "am I wrong when I say ... that man is half a devil and half a beast?" At that, the jeerers quietened. Whitefield followed up his advantage and said: ... "A half devil, half beast must be born again to become wholly a child of God." As the dusk fell at Moorfields this great mass evangelist preached and pleaded and prayed and men and women listened in silence and knew that another stood there too, and were born again by the Spirit. George Whitefield had won this battle at Moorfields in London at Easter in 1742. He was just 27 years and four months.¹⁴⁹

PRAYER

Lord, help not us to shrink back out of fear, but to step up to the task of sharing our faith despite the mockery, the disdain and the resistance. Help us to play the man and woman of God today. Give us your courage and your compassion for the lost. Let the candle of the Gospel blaze across our land once again. Let your troops be willing on your day of battle. Rule and reign in the midst of the enemies of the Gospel today in our land, we pray.

¹⁴⁹ Pollock, J Whitefield: the Evangelist, summary, 203–209.



MONDAY 30 MARCH // PSALMS 114–115

Psalm 114:7 *"Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord."*

THE RESULTS OF WESLEY'S GOSPEL PREACHING

One of the key features of Wesley's preaching that emerges from a study of his Journal is that although he most often finished with an appeal, he did not have a standard way of finishing his messages. The presence of the Holy Spirit was frequently so strong that there was often just silence as he closed.¹⁵⁰ About the meeting at Miller's Barn in Rossendale on the 27 August 1748, he wrote, "When I had finished my discourse, and even pronounced the blessing, not one person offered to go away, but every man woman and child stayed just where they were till I myself went away first."¹⁵¹

He left the results of his preaching to the Lord. At Birstall he said, "I have declared the whole counsel of God."¹⁵² At Grimsby, "I spoke as plainly as possibly I could ... but God only can speak to the heart."¹⁵³ Wesley was not concerned with externals. He did not jump to

conclusions, expecting optimistically that God had spoken through his preaching. It was a deep work of God that he looked for, and he expected the Lord to take the initiative in evangelism. He wrote from Ireland, "He can work, even among these dry bones."¹⁵⁴ Another time he said, "I believe God applied His Word. Some trembled, others wept. Surely some of these shall know there is balm in Gilead."¹⁵⁵

Wesley was surprised when some "dropped down as dead" or "burst into strong cries and tears", or "exceedingly trembled and quaked". These responses did not happen after Whitefield's preaching. Although Wesley never encouraged these responses, neither did he discourage them, and so when rumours exaggerated these manifestations, Whitefield was concerned until he found out what really happened after Wesley preached.¹⁵⁶

PRAYER

Lord, we pray that you would restore the honour of your name in our land and with works of sovereign power, and that you would shake the earth again. Rend the heavens and come down. Let your word not return empty. Let it accomplish that which you have purposed. We long for you to come and presence yourself amongst us. Come, Lord Jesus.

¹⁵⁰ Skevington-Wood, *The burning heart*, 160, 161

¹⁵¹ Wesley, *J. Journal*, Volume 2, 27 August 1748, 113.

¹⁵² Wesley, *J. Journal*, Volume 4, 4 May 1788, 416.

¹⁵³ Wesley, *J. Journal*, Volume 4, 1 July 1788, 416.

¹⁵⁴ Wesley, *J. Journal*, Volume 3, 16 June, 1760.

¹⁵⁵ Wesley, *J. Journal*, Volume 3, 27 June, 1760.

¹⁵⁶ Pollock, *J. Wesley, The Preacher*, 120.



TUESDAY 31 MARCH // PSALMS 116–118

Psalm 116:6 *"The Lord protects the simple-hearted; when I was in great need he saved me."*

HIS MISSION TO THE POOR

John Wesley was primarily concerned for the poor. The working classes of the 18th century lived barely above subsistence level. An expert on the 18th century writes, "It is difficult today to imagine how low the standard of life of the average worker was ... how brutish, ignorant and violent the poor, especially the urban poor, were ... Conditions made it difficult for the mass of the people to live by any strict moral code. Overcrowding made every kind of sexual laxity almost normal. Extreme poverty made thieving and bullying the only alternatives to starvation ... it was a hard, harsh world for the mass of the English people and one singularly devoid of pity."¹⁵⁷

Wesley believed that his main mission was to the poor, and he clearly had the ear of the working man. He said, "I bear the rich and love the poor ... therefore I spend almost all of my time with them. I love the poor ... in many I find pure, genuine grace, unmixed with paint, folly and affectation."¹⁵⁸ At the time, there was no Welfare State or Social Services, there was nobody to care for this whole segment of society in England. The Church seemed unconcerned for them.

Skevington-Wood says, "They were as sheep without a shepherd. Wesley pressed them to his heart. There, more than anywhere, lies the key to his evangelistic success. That is why he has been called the St Francis of the 18th century. His first concern was for the coal miners of Kingswood. This was his introduction to the plight of the poor. Those grimy faces haunted him. He longed to tell them of One whose hands were hardened with toil before they were pinned to a cross. Conditions in the pits were unbelievably crude and dangerous. Coal was still hewn manually, and the Davy lamp had not yet been invented to bring a measure of safety. The men themselves were coarse in the extreme, and even the rest of the poor were afraid of them because they were so black and rough. When Wesley was led to offer Christ to the colliers, he was touching the most unlikely group in the kingdom. But they listened, and many of them turned to the Lord. If the Gospel could move them it could move anyone. This initial encounter in April 1739 convinced Wesley that the good news was meant for the outcasts of men."¹⁵⁹

PRAYER

Lord, you came to bring Good News to the poor and the outcasts, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners. Give us your heart for the poor and outcasts of our day, just you did for Wesley in his day, so that in their great need they might be saved.

¹⁵⁷ Marshall, H. *The Eighteenth Century*, 243.

¹⁵⁸ Wesley, J. *Letters to Anne Foard*, 29 September 1764, Vol IV, 266.

¹⁵⁹ Skevington-Wood, *The burning heart* 141, 142



TUESDAY 31 MARCH // PSALM 119:1-32

Psalm 119:32 "... for you have set my heart free."

FREEDOM AND LIBERTY FOR MANY

Both John Wesley and George Whitefield saw outward signs following the preaching of the Gospel that brought freedom and liberty to many people.

Monday 6 July 1739

In the afternoon I was with Mr Whitefield, just come from London, with whom I went to Baptist-Mills, where he preached concerning "the Holy Ghost, which all who believe are to receive".¹⁶⁰

Tuesday 7 July 1739

I had an opportunity to talk with him of those outward signs, which had so often accompanied the inward work of God. I found his objections were chiefly grounded on gross misrepresentations of matter of fact. But the next day he had an opportunity of informing himself better. For no sooner had he begun (in the application of his sermon) to invite all sinners to believe in Christ, than four persons sunk down close to him, almost in the same moment. One of them lay without either of sense or motion. A second trembled exceedingly. The third had strong convulsions all over his body but made

no noise unless by groans. The fourth, equally convulsed called upon God with strong cries and tears. From this time, I trust, we shall all suffer God to carry on his own work in the way that pleaseth Him.¹⁶¹

Monday 30 July 1739

Two more were in strong pain, both their souls and bodies being well nigh torn asunder. But though we cried unto God, there was no answer; neither did He as yet deliver them all. One of these had been remarkably zealous against those that cried out and made a noise; being sure that any of them might help if they would. And the same opinion she was still in, till the moment she was struck through, as with a sword, and fell trembling to the ground. She then cried aloud though not articulately, her words being swallowed up. In this pain she continued twelve or fourteen hours, and then her soul was set at liberty. But her master (for she was a servant till that time at a gentleman's in town) forbade her returning to him, saying, he would have none in his house who had received the Holy Ghost.¹⁶²

PRAYER

As we follow the path of your commands, set us free, Lord. Thank you that you give rest to the weary and heavy-laden. We desperately cry out to you, Lord, for another outpouring of your Holy Spirit, that sets the captives free, that heals the oppressed, that revives the lowly and feeds the spiritually hungry. Set our hearts alight again, on fire for you, Lord Jesus.

¹⁶⁰ Wesley, J. Journal, Vol 1, 210,

¹⁶¹ Wesley, J. Journal, Vol 1, 213,

¹⁶² Wesley, J. Journal, Vol 1, 226.



WEDNESDAY 1 APRIL // PSALM 119:33-72

Psalm 119:54 "... wherever I lodge."

ALMOST PERPETUAL MOTION

A biographer writes, "In order to fulfill his mission throughout the land, John Wesley had to resign himself to incessant travel. He became the great itinerant. For the sake of the gospel, he was prepared to lead a gypsy life. We have caught something of the energetic momentum of the man as we have dipped into his Journal. He was in almost perpetual motion."¹⁶³ He writes later in his life that while in Oxford he had wondered, 'how any busy man could be saved ... God taught me better by my own experience.'¹⁶⁴

In 1781, when he was very old, he wrote, "I must go on; for a dispensation of the gospel is committed to me; and woe is me if I preach not the gospel."¹⁶⁵ In 1777 he said, "I have travelled all roads by day and by night, for these forty years, and never was interrupted yet."¹⁶⁶ At one point he was nearly in a shipwreck, but was saved from disaster when travelling by sea to Guernsey. Throughout his 50 years of itinerant

ministry he was preserved from serious accidents.

He travelled with John Nelson for a short while. At one point at St Ives, while sleeping on the floor, Wesley was using Nelson's coat as a pillow and Nelson was using Burkitt's notes on the New Testament as his pillow. At 3am, one morning after suffering this hard bed for a fortnight, Wesley turned over, dug Nelson in the ribs and joked, "Brother Nelson, let us be of good cheer ... for the skin is off but on one side yet."¹⁶⁷

Duncan Wright tried to accompany Wesley, but it was too gruelling an experience. He could not keep up: "As the exercise was too much I gave it up."¹⁶⁸ In Wesley's Journal there is an account of the perilous quicksands of the Solway Firth. This may have been too much for Duncan Wright, but at this date Wright was just 30 years of age, while Wesley was 63.

PRAYER

Thank you for the inspiration and example of our spiritual forefathers. Unleash a new wave of firebrands, of young zealots who have the energy, the perseverance and the tenacity to complete the dispensation of restoring the Gospel, to whomsoever they are sent, wherever you call them, whatever the cost.

¹⁶³ This devotional is drawn from Skevington-Wood, A. The burning heart, 115-124.

¹⁶⁴ Wesley, J. To Miss March, 10 December 1777, 292.

¹⁶⁵ Wesley, J. A Plain Account of Kingswood School, Vol XIII, 267.

¹⁶⁶ Wesley, J. 16th December 1777, 177.

¹⁶⁷ Telford, J. Wesley's Veterans, Vol 3, 80-81.

¹⁶⁸ Telford, J. Wesley's Veterans, Vol 2, 39.



WEDNESDAY 1 APRIL // PSALM 119:73-104

Psalm 119:74-75 *"I have put my hope in your word. I know, O Lord, that your laws are righteous."*

CHRIST OUR WISDOM, RIGHTEOUSNESS, SANCTIFICATION AND REDEMPTION

Wesley was sure of his message and his message was rooted in the Bible. He said, "My ground is the Bible. Yes, I am a Bible bigot. I follow it in all things."¹⁶⁹ His advice was, "Believe nothing they say, unless it is confirmed by plain passages of holy writ."¹⁷⁰ One sermon that Wesley frequently preached had the title 'Christ Our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption'. He wrote in his Journal:¹⁷¹

Sunday 5 August 1739

Six persons at the New Room were deeply convinced of sin; three of whom were a little comforted by prayer but not yet convinced of righteousness. Having frequently been invited to Wells particularly by (one man) who begged me to make his house my home, on Thursday the ninth I went thither and wrote him word the night before; upon which he presently went to one of his friends, and desired a messenger

might be sent to me, and beg me to turn back: "Otherwise," said he, "we shall lose all our trade." But this consideration did not weigh with him so that he invited me to his own house, and at 11, I preached in this ground on 'Christ Our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption' to about 2000 persons. Some of them mocked at first, whom I reprov'd before all; and those of them who stayed were more serious. Several spoke to me after, who were, for the present, much affected. O let it not pass away as the morning dew.

Tuesday 14 August 1739

I preach to Bradford to about 3000 on "one thing is needful". Returning through Bath, I preached at a bridge to a small congregation, on "The just shall live by faith." Three at the new-room, this evening, were cut to the heart.

PRAYER

Lord, we pray that the foundation of the word of God would be firmly established like a rock in our lives, that we might be cut to the heart when we hear it, and that we would be a people who live by faith in you and your word. Help us to hear your word and put it into practice like that wise builder. Let the word of God be preached that you, Lord Jesus, are our "wisdom our righteousness, our sanctification and our redemption" so that your kingdom might come and your Church be built in our nation. Let your word be preached in power across our land once again.

¹⁶⁹ Wesley, J. Journal, Vol 3, 5 June 1766, 251.

¹⁷⁰ Wesley, J. Sermons, Vol XXVII, The sermon on the Mount, 20.

¹⁷¹ Wesley, J. Journal, Vol 1, 217,8.



THURSDAY 2 APRIL // PSALM 119:105–144

Psalm 119:105 "Your word is a lamp to my feet."

OPEN-AIR EVANGELISM UNTO THE NATIONS

Throughout his lifetime, Wesley travelled up and down the British Isles by horse, by carriage and by foot. Open-air evangelism may have been unfamiliar to his contemporaries in the 18th century, and was resisted by the religious authorities of his day, but pedestrian evangelism in England had many precedents.¹⁷²

There was no alternative but to preach in the open-air for the church originally. In England the church was probably planted through Roman soldiers but there would not have been many buildings. In the fifth century Ninian and Patrick and then in the sixth century Colomba would have preached in the open air. Paulinus and Aidan would have preached in the open in Northumbria when it was converted. In the 13th century the friars also used outdoor preaching, and itinerant preachers brought the truths of the Reformation to our land. They would go to wherever they might be heard and this was

more often on the village green or by the road than in the local churches. George Fox and the Quakers used the same approach too. Wesley was in good company.

Wesley followed a triangular path, from London to Bristol and to Newcastle, which also was his place of retreat and rest. He also travelled to Wales in 1739 and Scotland in 1751. As he began to travel all over the world, leading people to Christ was his sole desire. He wrote: "wherever I see one or a thousand men running into hell, be it in England, Ireland, or France yea, in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America, I will stop them if I can; as a minister of Christ, I will beseech them in His name to turn back and be reconciled to God. Were I to do otherwise, were I to let any soul drop into the pit, whom I might have saved from everlasting burnings, I am not satisfied God would accept my plea, 'Lord, he was not of my parish.'" ¹⁷³

PRAYER

We pray for our nation, that it would be reconciled to God. Thank you for the history of your word being preached in the open air across our country. Let your word be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, as we continue to take the Gospel across the length and breadth of our land. Give us your heart for the lost, that we would have a greater urgency to share our faith, a greater fear of God and a greater desire to carry the flame of the Gospel wherever we go. Do not let the candle go out on our watch, Lord, let it burn even more brightly, we pray.

¹⁷² Skevington-Wood, A. The burning heart, 107, 108, 113.

¹⁷³ Wesley, J. Letters, To John Smith, Vol 2, 137.



THURSDAY 2 APRIL // PSALM 119:145–176

Psalm 119:166 "I wait for your salvation, O Lord."

SALVATION BY FAITH

Summary of Sermon preached by John Wesley ¹⁷⁴

All the blessings which God has bestowed upon man are undeserved favour. I begin by asking so that we do not fall short of this grace, this undeserved favour ... What is this faith through which we are saved? My answer—it is NOT the faith of a heathen, it is NOT the faith of the devil and it is NOT the faith of the apostles when Christ was with them. Christian faith IS NOT ONLY an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ to trust in the merits of his life, death and resurrection, as given for us and living in us — IT IS OUR SALVATION—a present salvation ... from sin ... from the guilt of all past sin ... and consequently you are saved from fear ... And from the power of sin ...

BUT you may object ... Doesn't preaching this "salvation by faith" lead men into pride? I answer, "We should be cautioned", but it should not lead to pride, because salvation is a free undeserved gift of God.

BUT you say ... Doesn't preaching this "salvation by faith" drive men to despair that they cannot be saved by all that he can do? I answer "Yes" and "so it ought—despair of being saved by their own works, their own merits or righteousness."

BUT you say ... Isn't preaching this "salvation by faith" an uncomfortable doctrine. I say "It is THE ONLY comfortable one". Here is comfort high as heaven, stronger than death. What mercy this is for us all—yes for Zaccheus a public robber, yes for Mary Magdalene a common harlot.

I think I hear you say "... then I even I may hope for mercy". And so you may afflicted one, whom none has comforted! God has not cast out your prayer. Never was this doctrine more in season than it is today. Nothing but this can prevent the immorality that has overspread the land like a flood. Can you empty the great deep drop by drop? You may get rid of particular sins, but the righteousness which is by faith will "stay" the proud waves of immorality. Nothing but this can stop the mouths of those that openly deny the Lord.

Surely this is the case, salvation by faith is a strong and firm foundation of the Christian religion—these objections are completely unfounded—as you stand on this firm foundation though you be as weak and helpless as an infant, the strongman shall not be able to stand before you. You will prevail over him, and subdue him under your feet.

PRAYER

Thank you that we have been saved by faith in you, Lord Jesus. We have been saved from the guilt of all past sin and we have been saved from fear and the power of sin. Come and build your house, Lord Jesus, and let this strong and firm foundation not be moved.



FRIDAY 3 APRIL // PSALMS 120–125

Psalm 122:7 *"I lift up my eyes to the hills; where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."*

KENNINGTON COMMON

From the Lord comes our help. He is our Saviour and Deliverer. The message that Wesley preached at Kennington in September was "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved." In his Journal we read how the Lord granted peace and rest to the weary who cried to him to be saved:¹⁷⁵

Monday 3 September 1739

Several persons who were then convinced of sin came to me to the next morning. One came also, who had been mourning long, and desired earnestly us to pray with her. We had scarce begun, when the enemy began to tear her so that she screamed out as in the pangs of death. But his time was short; for within a quarter of an hour she was full of the "peace that passes all understanding".

Sunday 9 September 1739

I declared to about ten thousand in Moorfields

what they must do to be saved. My mother went and with this about five others to Kennington where were supposed to be twenty thousand people. I again insisted on that foundation of all our hope "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved."

Tuesday 18 September 1739

A young woman came to us at Islington, in such an agony as I have seldom seen. Her sorrow and fear were too big for utterance; so that after a few words, her strength as well as heart failing, she sunk down to the ground. Only her sighs and her groans showed she was yet alive. We cried out unto God in her behalf. We claimed the promises made to the weary and heavy-laden, and he did not cast out our prayer. She saw the Saviour as it were, crucified before her eyes. She laid hold on him by faith and her spirit revived.

PRAYER

Lord, we look to you, we lift our eyes to you. You are the one from whom our help comes. May the Gospel go out to the poor in our nation once again. We pray that the thirsty would come to you and drink. May they believe on you, Lord Jesus, and be saved. We pray for today's poor — the oppressed, the neglected, the elderly, the fatherless, the single parents and the lonely. Melt their hearts and revive them with your love today, we pray.

¹⁷⁵ Wesley, J. Journal, Vol 1, 225.



FRIDAY 3 APRIL // PSALMS 126–131

Psalm 126:5 *“Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.”*

DELIVERED FROM DISTRESS

Wesley wrote in his Journal:

Thursday 27 September, 1739

I ... at six came to Turner's Hall; which holds (about) two thousand persons. The press both within and without was very great. In the beginning of the expounding, there being a large vault beneath, the main beam which supported the floor broke. The floor immediately sunk, which occasioned much noise and confusion among the people. But two or three days before a man had filled the vault with hogsheads of tobacco. So that the floor after sinking a foot or two rested upon them and I went on without interruption.

Thursday 11 October 1739

One of these showed the agony of her soul by crying aloud to God for help, to the great offence of many, who eagerly “rebuked her that she should hold her peace.” She continued in great torment all night, finding no rest of either of soul or body. But while a few were praying for

her in the morning, God delivered her out of her distress.

Wednesday 17 October 1739

The frost was sharper than before. However five or six hundred people stayed, while I explained the nature of that salvation which is through faith, yea faith alone. About noon I came to Usk, where I preached to a small company of poor people, on those words, “The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.” One grey-headed man wept and trembled exceedingly. When I came to Ponty-Pool in the afternoon, being unable to procure any more convenient place, I stood in the street, and cried aloud to five or six hundred attentive hearers, to “believe in the Lord Jesus,” that they might “be saved.” In the evening I showed his willingness to save all who desire to come unto God through Him. Many were melted into tears. It may be that some will bring forth fruit with patience.¹⁷⁶

PRAYER

Lord, teach us how to pray for revival to sweep our land, to sow in prayer that we might reap abundantly. May the word of God take root in receptive hearts and may many believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that they might be saved.



MONDAY 6 APRIL // PSALMS 132–135

Psalm 133:1 *"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity."*

WESLEY AND WHITEFIELD RECONCILED

It became clear a few years after the Methodist revival had begun in 1841 that George Whitefield and John Wesley had differences of opinion on a number of matters. "Wesley knew that Whitefield would never put friendship before principle: He was immovable ... wherever his conscience was concerned. Both men were distressed. Whitefield probably showed it more openly, for as (Wesley said) 'he had a heart susceptible of the most generous and the most tender friendship.'"¹⁷⁷

"The heart of Wesley's annoyance, however was that Whitefield had revealed a private matter. To underline his point that the drawing of a lot might be false guidance, Whitefield had told the public about Wesley's lot at Deal in February 1738."¹⁷⁸

"All through the summer of 1741 they were estranged. Whitefield toured Scotland, where he preached to great audiences, was bullied by extreme Calvinists who were affronted he would not leave the Church of England. Wesley toured the Midlands, preached before the University of Oxford, and worked in London and Bristol. He made no move towards Whitefield."¹⁷⁹

"In November 1741 their seven-month breach was healed and affection returned, yet the close unity of the early days never was fully restored: the theological divisions which two centuries earlier had weakened the Reformation were dividing their minds though not their hearts, and each believed he was right. 'I spent an agreeable hour with Mr Whitefield' wrote

Wesley in April 1742. 'I believe he is sincere in all he says concerning his desire of joining hands with all that love the Lord Jesus Christ. But if (as some would persuade me) he is not, the loss is all on his side. I am just as I was: I go on my way, whether he goes with me or stays behind.'"¹⁸⁰

"Together they could have done even more for Britain and America — Whitefield the incomparable preacher, Wesley the patient organizer. Instead the evangelical revival would flow in two channels, although leaders and friends would often support each other. Both Wesley and Whitefield sought a more formal unity from time to time, but their differences were not overcome."¹⁸¹

At George Whitefield's funeral, John Wesley gave the address and his final words were: "Oh that thou wouldst cause the mantle of thy prophet, whom thou has taken up, now to fall upon us that remain! 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' Let his spirit rest upon these thy servants! Show thou art the God that answerest by fire! Let the fire of thy love fall on every heart! And because we love thee, let us love one another with a 'love stronger than death!' Take away from us 'all anger and wrath, and bitterness; all clamour and evil-speaking!' Let thy spirit so rest upon us, that from this hour we may be 'kind to each other, tenderhearted forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.'"¹⁸²

PRAYER

When brothers live together in unity you command a blessing, Lord. Show us where there is an offence in our hearts, Lord. If there is pride in my heart, show me, Lord, and give me the grace to repent and to forgive.

¹⁷⁷ Pollock, J Wesley: the Preacher, 149

¹⁷⁸ Pollock, J Wesley: the Preacher, 150

¹⁷⁹ Pollock, J Wesley: the Preacher, 151

¹⁸⁰ Pollock, J Wesley: the Preacher, 153.

¹⁸¹ Pollock, J Wesley: the Preacher, 153.

¹⁸² Wesley, J. Journal, Volume 6, 181–2



MONDAY 6 APRIL // PSALMS 136–138

Psalm 138:3 *"You made me bold and stout-hearted."*

CORNWALL TRANSFORMED

The West Country was testament to the change that Methodism had brought to the country. In his old age, the Bishop of Exeter invited him to a meal at his palace. A previous Bishop of Exeter had been violently opposed to Wesley and had written pamphlets denouncing him. This meeting was very different. After the meal was over the Bishop said, "Mr. Wesley, I hope I may sit at your feet in the kingdom of heaven."

When Wesley was 86 he visited Cornwall for the last time. He wrote in his Journal:¹⁸³ "The last time I was here, about forty years ago, I was taken prisoner by an immense mob, gaping and roaring like lions; but how is the tide turned. High and low now lined the street from one end of the town to the other, out of stark love and kindness, gaping and staring as if the king

were going by. In the evening I preached on the smooth top of the hill, at a small distance for the sea to the largest congregation I have ever seen in Cornwall, except in or near Redruth ... God moved wonderfully on the hearts of the people, who all seemed to know the day of their visitation." As Wesley left Cornwall on Friday August 28, 1789, he wrote, "So there is a fair prospect in Cornwall, from Launceston to Land's End."¹⁸⁴

The final sermon that Wesley preached was in the open air at the age of 87. He was beneath an ash tree at Rye in Kent in a churchyard. Now his voice was very feeble "but his reverend countenance, especially his long white locks, formed a picture never to be forgotten."¹⁸⁵

PRAYER

We pray for the turning of the tide in Britain. We pray that the Gospel would be restored to our land, once again. Raise up bold and stout-hearted evangelists to preach the Gospel in the highways and byways, today. We pray for another day of visitation from you Lord—a "planting of the Lord for the display of your splendour." Radically transform the morality of our nation from the grassroots up and change the spiritual landscape beyond recognition through the powerful proclamation of your word, with signs following.

¹⁸³ Wesley, J. Journal, Vol 4, 468.

¹⁸⁴ Wesley, J. Journal, Vol 4, 470.

¹⁸⁵ Pollock, J. Wesley: the Preacher, 257.



TUESDAY 7 APRIL // PSALMS 139–140

Psalm 139:9 "... if I settle on the far side of the sea."

ANOTHER WAVE TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

The Methodist Conference commissioned two lay preachers in 1769 to go to the American colonies. In a sense they would be doing nothing new, as they would be working like itinerant Methodist preachers in Britain. In 1789 another itinerant from the Midlands, Francis Asbury, volunteered and set sail for Philadelphia to join them.¹⁸⁶

Asbury is credited for recruiting and organising a band of selfless and radical riders of whom the world was not worthy, that would change America's future forever. This group of rough yet broken men would travel the frontiers of America for decades, taking the Gospel to the most remote places in America. In a time of American history where it was easier to stay in one place and live in the comfort of the few cities that existed, these men refused comfort and were driven by the ancient dream of Eden to see man and God live in intimate fellowship. They rode on. Over half of them died before reaching the age of 33 and their annual pay, if any, was around 50 dollars. "No family was too poor, no house too filthy, no town too remote, and no people too ignorant to receive the good news that life could be better."

They did not do it for the love of money,

fame nor an affinity towards human comfort. They were marked by the same determination as Asbury that every home in America would hear and believe the Gospel. When Asbury arrived in America there were a few hundred Methodist followers and a few dozen preachers, but by the time he died there were over 210,000 followers and over 4,000 preachers. America would never be the same because of these wild-eyed revivalists.

Wesley was encouraged that the Gospel was spreading in America. Their vision was his vision that if Christians were to live out the Gospel and to live pure and holy lives the message of the Gospel would be irresistible to those that had not heard the Good News. Wesley wrote to Asbury: "God of love will then prepare his messengers and make a way into the polar regions, into the deep recesses of America and into the interior parts of Africa; yea into the heart of China and Japan, with countries adjoining to them. And 'their sound' will then 'go forth into all lands, and their voice to the ends of the earth.'"¹⁸⁷

Asbury and the early American circuit riders are the inspiration for a new youth movement of radical evangelists in the USA at present.¹⁸⁸

PRAYER

Lord, raise up a new breed of wild-eyed revivalists in our day. We thank you for Francis Asbury and the early Methodist circuit riders and we say, "Lord, do it again"! Unleash another wave of passionate young evangelists with neither love of money nor love of comfort but a passionate desire to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Do it again in our day we pray, Lord!

¹⁸⁶ Pollock, J. Wesley: The preacher, 250–251.

¹⁸⁷ Wesley, J. Letter to Asbury, 1788.

¹⁸⁸ www.thecircuitrider.com/about-us/history



TUESDAY 7 APRIL // PSALMS 141-143

Psalm 141:4 "Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil."

DELIVERANCE IN KINGSWOOD

Wesley wrote in his Journal:¹⁸⁹

Tuesday 23 October, 1739

Returning in the evening I was exceedingly pressed to go back to a young woman in Kingswood ... I went. She was 19 or 20 years old, but it seems could not write or read. I found her on the bed, two or three persons holding her. It was a terrible sight. Anguish, horror and despair above all descriptions, appeared in her pale face. The thousand distortions of her whole body showed how the dogs of hell were gnawing her heart. The shrieks intermixed were scarce to be endured. But her stony eyes could not weep. She screamed out as soon as words could find their way, "I am damned, damned lost for ever. Six days ago you might have helped me but it is past. I am the devil's now." We interrupted her by calling upon God. On which she sunk down... and another young woman began to roar as loud as she had done. My brother came in, it being about 9 o'clock. We continued in prayer until past

eleven, when God in a moment spoke peace into the soul, first of the first tormented and then the other and they both joined in singing praise to him who had "stilled the enemy and the avenger."

Saturday 27 October 1739

I was sent for to Kingswood again to one of those who been so ill before. A violent rain began ... when I was come I was quite cold and dead, and fitter for sleep than prayer. She burst out into a horrid laughter, and said "No power, no power, no faith, no faith. She is mine, her soul is mine, and I have and will not let her go." We begged God to increase our faith. Meanwhile her pangs increased more and more; so that one would have imagined, by the violence of the throes her body must have been shattered to pieces. We betook ourselves to prayer again, and ceased not again, till she began about 6 o'clock with a clear voice, and a cheerful look, [to sing] "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

PRAYER

Lord, we pray for those in our country who are trapped in sin, who do not know that there is a free gift of salvation that does not need to be earned, that has been paid for at a price. You are our Deliverer, who rescues us from all our troubles who saves us from all despair. Rescue, save us and deliver us from evil we pray.



WEDNESDAY 8 APRIL // PSALMS 144–146

Psalm 144:4 *“man is like a breath his days like a fleeting shadow.”*

“NOTHING LEFT BUT A LIBRARY OF BOOKS, A CLERGYMAN’S GOWN AND THE METHODIST CHURCH”

Wesley travelled to Leatherhead in a two-horse chaise to what was his last preaching engagement at 7am on Wednesday 23 February, 1791. His health deteriorated afterwards and as he lay on his bed during his last moments on this earth, he once cried out in a remarkably strong voice, “The best of all is, God is with us!” He died at 10 o’clock on Wednesday, 2 March. Memorial services were held in numerous cities and villages across the British Isles.¹⁹⁰

On his tombstone in Wesley’s Chapel on City Road, London, the inscription reads. “Rev John Wesley ... a man in learning and sincere piety scarcely inferior to any in zeal, ministerial labours and extensive usefulness superior perhaps to all men since the days of St Paul. Regardless of fatigue, personal danger and disgrace he went out into the highways and hedges calling sinners to repentance and publishing the Gospel of Peace. He was the founder of the Methodist societies and the chief promoter and patron of the plan of itinerant preaching which extended to Great

Britain and Ireland, the West Indies and America with unexampled success. He was born 17 June, 1703 and died 2 March, 1791, in sure and certain hope of eternal life through the atonement and mediation of a crucified Saviour. He was 65 years in the ministry and 52 an itinerant preacher. He lived to see, in these kingdoms only, about 300 itinerant and 1000 local preachers raised up in the midst of his own people and 80,000 persons in societies under his care. His name will be ever had in grateful remembrance by all who rejoice in the universal spread of the gospel of Christ.”¹⁹¹

Because of his charitable nature he died poor. It has been said that when John Wesley was carried to his grave, he left behind him “a good library of books, a well-worn clergyman’s gown and the Methodist Church”. He had lived up to those challenging words that he had often given to his itinerant preachers: “The church has nothing to do but save souls; therefore spend and be spent in this work.”

PRAYER

Lord, you set John Wesley apart to be your vessel to see a national awakening unto revival in the 18th century. We thank you for our godly heritage and all that you did in the past, but we call out to you today, “Set your chosen vessels apart for a national awakening today. Do not let the candle go out. Let your Church in this land catch the vision to do nothing but save souls, To spend and be spent for this work. Restore the Gospel once again we pray!”

¹⁹⁰ Pollock, J. Wesley: The Preacher, 257–260.

¹⁹¹ Wesley, J. Volume 5, 45



WEDNESDAY 8 APRIL // PSALMS 147–150

Psalm 149:4 "He crowns the humble with salvation."

KINGSWOOD IN ONE SHORT YEAR: 1739

In one short year, 1739, much had been done among the poor colliers of Kingswood. Wesley wrote in his Journal:¹⁹²

27 November 1739

Few persons have lived long in the west of England, who have not heard of the Colliers of Kingswood; people famous from the beginning hitherto, for neither fearing God nor regarding man: So ignorant of the things of God, that they seemed but one remove from the beasts that perish; and therefore utterly without desire of instruction, as well as without the means of it.

...Many last winter used tauntingly to say of Mr Whitefield, "If he will convert Heathens, why does he not go to the Colliers of Kingswood? In spring he did so. And as there were thousands who resorted to no place of public worship, he went after them into their own wilderness, "to seek and save that which was lost". When he was called away, others went into the highways and hedges to compel them to come. And by the grace of God, their labour was not in vain. The scene is already changed. Kingswood does not now as a year ago, resound with cursing and blasphemy. It is no more filled with drunkenness and uncleanness, and the idle diversions that naturally lead thereto. It is no longer full of wars and fightings, of clamour and bitterness, of wrath

and envyings. Peace and love are there. Great numbers of the people are mild, gentle and easy to be intreated. They do not cry, neither strive and hardly is their voice heard in the streets.

Years later after Wesley's death, one secular journal, and The Gentleman's Magazine a secular magazine that had scored Wesley, wrote years later:¹⁹³

"The great point in which his name and mission will be honoured is this: he directed his labours towards those who had no instructor, to the highways and hedges; to the miners in Cornwall and the colliers in Kingswood ... By the humane and active endeavours of him and his brother Charles, a sense of decency, morals and religion was introduced into the lowest classes of mankind; the ignorant were instructed; the wretched relieved; and the abandoned reclaimed. Though his taste was classic and his manners elegant, he sacrificed that society in which he was particularly calculated to shine; gave up those preferments, which his abilities must have obtained and devoted a long life in practising and enforcing the plainest duties. Instead of being 'an ornament to literature', he was a blessing to his fellow creatures; instead of 'the genius of the age,' he was the servant of God!"

PRAYER

We thank you, Lord, for the huge legacy that John Wesley left, one that was recognised even by his enemies. As you "crowned the humble" Kingswood miners "with salvation" in one short year, the year of 1739, we cry out to you, Lord, do it again. Just as a fire was lit in this land 275 years ago, we pray do it again! Lord, do not let the fire go out! Light the fire again, we pray!

¹⁹² Wesley, J. Journal, Vol 1, 251–252.

¹⁹³ Pollock, J. Wesley: The preacher, 261.

THANK YOU!

**With thanks to the Churches and ministries at the heart
of the Wildfires vision, including:**

24-7 Communities / 24-7 Prayer / Armed Forces Christian Union
Arun Church / Ashford Vineyard / Awaken Retford
Barnabas Nottingham / Barton Church Canterbury & Faversham
Bless Community Church / Bridge Church Bolton
Broadwater Parish Worthing / Canterbury Vineyard
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