

Reformation Series 2011

(Lecture Three: The Rise of Methodism – The Life and Ministry of John Wesley)

- I. Introduction: We've been looking at the continuing work of Reformation in England.
 - A. The Lord advanced the Gospel in England through the Reformation.
 1. Through Luther's quest for truth and rediscovery of the Gospel.
 2. Through Henry's breaking away from Rome for the sake of a male heir.
 3. Through Edward and Elizabeth's embracing of the Protestant faith.
 - B. He continued that work through the Puritans.
 1. Who built on John Calvin's work which built on the shoulders of the stronger strands of Biblical interpretation from Church History and Martin Luther.
 2. Who also promoted holiness in England through their preaching and numerous books, as well as the *Westminster Confession of Faith*.
 - C. That work was set back at the end of the Seventeenth Century:
 1. Through the return of Charles II (1660).
 2. Through the Act of Uniformity (1662) and the subsequent expulsion of the Puritans from their pulpits.
 3. And through the Black Plague.
 4. All of these contributed to the decline of true heart religion.
 - D. But He began to advance it again in the middle of the Eighteenth Century.
 1. He did so through a few men armed with the simple message of the Gospel – the greatest of which were George Whitefield and John Wesley.
 2. Last week, we looked at George Whitefield. This evening, we turn to the second: John Wesley.
 - a. Wesley was better known than his contemporaries because,
 - (i) He lived eighty-eight years, sixty-five of which were in public work.
 - (ii) He founded a new and very large denomination.
 - (iii) His friends and followers wrote many biographies.
 - (iv) And because he left behind many writings that were constantly reprinted.
 - b. Ryle writes, "In fact, if ever a good Protestant has been practically *canonized*, it has been John Wesley! It would be strange indeed if his name was not well known."
- II. The Life and Ministry of John Wesley.
 - A. His birth and early life.
 1. John Wesley was born June 17, 1703, at Epworth, in North Lincolnshire, the parish of which his father was the rector, the ninth of thirteen children - ten daughters and three sons – Samuel, John and Charles.
 2. His father, Samuel, was well educated and creative.
 - a. He was always writing something, either prose or poetry, but nothing of any public interest.

- b. He was a diligent pastor and preacher, but a poor manager of his finances – he once was in prison for debt, and when he died, he left his widow and children almost penniless.
3. Wesley's mother, Susanna, was an extraordinary woman.
 - a. She was the daughter of Dr. Annesley – the promoter of the Morning Exercises at St. Giles, Cripplegate, and one of the Puritans ejected in 1662. It was to her that John would be indebted for his early training.
 - b. In one of her letters to John, she recounts how she educated all her children: “None of them was taught to read till five years old . . . The way of teaching was this: the day before a child began to learn, the house was set in order, every one's work appointed them, and a charge given that none should come into the room from nine to twelve, or from two to five, which were our school hours. One day was allowed the child wherein to learn its letters, and each of them did in that time know all its letters, great and small, except Molly and Nancy, who were a day and a half before they knew them perfectly, for which I then thought them very dull; but the reason why I thought them so was because the rest learned so readily, and your brother Samuel, who was the first child I ever taught, learnt the alphabet in a few hours. He was five years old on the 10th of February; the next day he began to learn, and as soon as he knew the letters, began at the first chapter of Genesis. He was taught to spell the first verse, then to read it over and over till he could read it off-hand without any hesitation; so on to the second, &c., till he took ten verses for a lesson, which he quickly did. Easter fell low that year, and by Whitsuntide he could read a chapter very well, for he read continually, and had such a prodigious memory that I cannot remember ever to have told him the same word twice. What was stranger, any word he had learnt in his lesson he knew wherever he saw it, either in his Bible or any other book, by which means he learned very soon to read an English author well.”
 - c. A mother of such strong character was bound to leave an impression on her children. John and Charles may have inherited their poetic ability from their father, but much in their lives was owed to their mother.
4. Wesley's early years were quietly passed in Lincolnshire.
 - a. The only outstanding event was his escape from a fire that burned down his home when he was six, an event that left an indelible impression on his mind.
 - b. He was pulled through his bedroom window at the last moment by a man who was standing on the shoulders of another man just as the roof fell in.
 - c. John writes of the event, “When they brought me to the house where my father was, he cried out, ‘Come, neighbours, let us kneel down! let us give thanks to God! He has given me all my eight children; let the house go, I am rich enough.’”
5. When Wesley was eleven (1714), he went to Charter-house School in London. He was already grounded in the fundamentals of a classical education and soon was distinguished for his diligence and progress.
6. At sixteen, Samuel, an usher at Westminster, described him as “a brave boy, learning Hebrew as fast as he can.”

7. When he was seventeen, (1720), he went to Oxford as an undergraduate. Ryle writes, “Little is known of the first three or four years of his university life, except that he was steady, studious, and remarkable for his classical knowledge and genius for composition. It is evident, however, that he made the best use of his time at college, and picked up as much as he could in a day when honorary class-lists were unknown, and incitements to study were very few. Like most great divines, he found the advantage of university education all his life long. Men might dislike his theology, but they could never say that he was a fool, and had no right to be heard.”

B. His early ministry and conversion.

1. When he was twenty-two (1725), he turned his attention to which profession he would choose.
 - a. He thought of taking orders, quite naturally, but found the solemnity of that direction quite daunting. His concern turned out to be useful, as it caused him to think more deeply about God, his soul and religion in general.
 - b. He began to study theology and to prepare for the ministry. Ryle writes, “The books which apparently had the greatest influence on him were Jeremy Taylor’s *Holy Living and Dying*, and Thomas a Kempis’s *Imitation of Christ*. Devout and well-meaning as these authors are, they certainly were not likely to give him very clear views of scriptural Christianity, or very cheerful and happy views of Christ’s service. In short, though they did him good by making him feel that true religion was a serious business, and a concern of the heart, they evidently left him in much darkness and perplexity.”
 - c. Wesley opened his heart in his letters to his parents and told them of his spiritual difficulties. One thing they show is the honesty and conscientiousness with which he approached this subject – it’s the kind of spirit the Lord will bless.
 - (i) When he asked his mother her opinion on his taking holy orders, she wrote, “The alteration of your temper has occasioned me much speculation. I . . . hope it may proceed from the operation of God’s Holy Spirit, that by taking off your relish for earthly enjoyments he may prepare and dispose your mind for a more serious and close application to things of a more sublime and spiritual nature. If it be so, happy are you if you cherish those dispositions. And now in good earnest resolve to make religion the business of your life; for, after all, that is the one thing that, strictly speaking, is necessary: all things beside are comparatively little to the purposes of life. I heartily wish you would now enter upon a strict examination of yourself, that you may know whether you have a reasonable hope of salvation by Jesus Christ. If you have the satisfaction of knowing, it will abundantly reward your pains; if you have not, you will find a more reasonable occasion for tears than can be met with in a tragedy. This matter deserves great consideration by all, but especially by those designed for the ministry, who ought above all things to make their own calling and election sure, lest, after they have preached to others, they themselves should be cast away.”
 - (ii) Apparently Jeremy Taylor did not believe anyone could know their sins were forgiven. As Wesley struggled with his own condition, he wrote, “Surely the graces of the Holy Ghost are not of so little force as that we cannot perceive whether we have them or not. If we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, which He

will not do unless we be regenerate, certainly we must be sensible of it. If we never can have any certainty of being in a state of salvation, good reason is it that every moment should be spent, not in joy, but in fear and trembling; and then, undoubtedly, in this life we are of all men most miserable. God deliver us from such a fearful expectation as this.”

- (iii) This correspondence with his parents led him to a closer study of Scripture, a deeper self-examination and more fervent prayer.
- d. Whatever objections he had to taking orders were finally overcome, and he was ordained deacon on September 19, 1725.
2. In 1726, John was elected Fellow of Lincoln College, and during the next eight years (1726-1734), he was resident at Oxford, laboring as a tutor and lecturer in his college. Gradually, he began to lay himself out more and more to do good to others, until he gave himself fully to this work.
 3. The Holy Club.
 - a. In November, 1729, with the help of his brother Charles, who was at the time a student at Christ College, he gathered four like-minded young men – consisting of himself, Charles, Mr. Morgan of Christ Church and Mr. Kirkman of Merton – to study the Greek Testament.
 - b. Later, they were joined by Mr. Ingham of Queen’s, Mr. Broughton of Exeter, Mr. Clayton of Brasenose, James Hervey of Lincoln, and George Whitefield of Pembroke.
 - c. They soon began to consider how they might be of spiritual help to others.
 - (i) In the summer of 1730, they began visiting prisoners in the castle and the poor people in the town; they sent neglected children to school and gave aid to the sick and needy; and they distributed Bibles and Prayer-Books to those who didn’t have them.
 - (ii) They were cautious, and with advice from Wesley’s father, decided not to do anything without the approval of the Bishop of Oxford.
 - d. Though these were relatively “small steps” compared to what they would do, they were too far beyond the ordinary to escape notice.
 - (i) Wesley and his followers began to be called enthusiasts, fanatics and troublers of Israel. They were given the nickname “Methodists” or “Holy Club,” and were ridiculed. Nevertheless they persevered, encouraged by Wesley’s father.
 - (ii) In one of his letters, he writes, “I hear my son John has the honour of being styled the Father of the Holy Club. If it be so, I am sure I must be the grandfather of it, and I need not say that I had rather any of my sons should be so dignified and distinguished than have the title His Holiness.”
 - (iii) Ryle writes, “The real amount of spiritual good that John Wesley did during these eight years of residence at Oxford is a point that cannot easily be ascertained. With all his devotedness, asceticism, and self-denial, it must be remembered that at this time he knew very little of the pure gospel of Christ. His views of religious truth, to say the least, were very dim, misty, defective, and indistinct. No one was more sensible of this than he afterwards was himself, and

no one could be more ready and willing to confess it. Such books as Law's *Serious Call*, Law's *Christian Perfection*, *Theologia Germanica*, and mystical writers, were about the highest pitch of divinity that he had yet attained. But we need not doubt that he learned experience at this period which he found useful in after-life. At any rate he became thoroughly trained in habits of laboriousness, time-redemption, and self-mortification, which he carried with him to the day of his death. God has his own way of tempering and preparing instruments for his work, and, whatever we may think, we may be sure his way is best."

4. His trip to Georgia and conversion.
 - a. In 1734, John's father died and the family was broken up. It was at this time that the Lord opened up a new opportunity for service in Georgia that would have a profound influence on his spiritual condition.
 - b. The trustees of the colony needed clergymen, both to preach the Gospel to the Indians and to minister to the colonists. John Wesley and his friends were recommended to them because of their religious character and willingness to endure hardship. After conferring with his friends and family, John accepted, and along with his brother Charles and friend Mr. Ingham, set out for Georgia.
 - c. He landed in February of 1736, after a long and stormy voyage, and remained in the colony for two years.
 - (i) These years were mainly wasted and resulted in little good, due partly to the fact that he was an English Clergyman in a colony, from the state of disarray that colony was in, and from his lack of tact and discretion in dealing with others.
 - (ii) The main reason was that he didn't yet understand the Gospel.
 - (iii) Ryle writes, "Wesley's expedition to Georgia appears to have been a great failure, and he was evidently glad to get away."
 - d. The fact that he was able to do very little good taught him a great deal.
 - (i) On his way to Georgia, he had become acquainted with some of the Moravians on board and was particularly struck by their seeming fearlessness of death in the midst of a raging storm.
 - (a) After landing, he continued to talk with them and discovered that it was possible to have personal assurance of one's salvation.
 - (b) These things, combined with the trials he encountered in Georgia, showed him more of himself and the Gospel than he had ever known before.
 - (c) The result was that he landed in England, in February of 1738 a humbler and wiser man. The Spirit had converted him through the Gospel.
 - (ii) We have a record of Wesley's experience in his own words:
 - (a) February 7, 1736, "On landing in Georgia I asked the advice of Mr. Spangenberg, one of the German pastors, with regard to my own conduct. He said in reply, 'My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?'—I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it, and asked, 'Do you know Jesus Christ?'—I paused, and said, 'I know he is the Saviour of the world.'—' True,' replied he; 'but do

you know he has saved you ?’— I answered, ‘ I hope he has died to save me.’—He only added, ‘Do you know yourself?’ —I said, ‘I do.’ But I fear they were vain words.”

- (b) On January 24, 1738, as he was headed back to England, he wrote, “I went to America to convert the Indians; but oh, who shall convert me? Who is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion; I can talk well; nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near. But let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled, nor can I say to die is gain.”
- (c) On February 1, 1738, the day he landed in England, he writes, “It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity; but what have I learned of myself in the meantime? Why, what I least suspected, that I, who went to America to convert others, was myself never converted to God I. I am not mad, though I thus speak; but I speak the words of truth and soberness.”
- (d) “If it be said that I have faith—for many such things have I heard from miserable comforters—I answer, so have the devils a sort of faith; but still they are strangers to the covenant of promise. . . . The faith I want is a sure trust and confidence in God that through the merits of Christ my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favour of God. I want that faith which St. Paul recommends to all the world, especially in his Epistle to the Romans; that faith which makes every one that hath it to cry, ‘I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.’ I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it.”
- (e) Ryle comments, “Records like these are deeply instructive. They teach that important lesson which man is so slow to learn—that we may have a great deal of earnestness and religiousness without any true soul-saving and soul-comforting religion—that we may be diligent in the use of fasting, prayers, forms, ordinances, and the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, without knowing anything of inward joy, peace, or communion with God—and above all, that we may be moral in life, and laborious in good works, without being true believers in Christ, or fit to die and meet God. Well would it be for the churches if truths like these were proclaimed from every pulpit, and pressed on every congregation! Thousands, for lack of such truths, are walking in a vain shadow, and totally ignorant that they are yet dead in sins. If anyone wants to know how far a man may go in outward goodness, and yet not be a true Christian, let him carefully study the experience of John Wesley. I am bold to say that it is eminently truth for the times.”
- (f) Wesley continued to learn and was brought to a much clearer view of the Gospel by speaking with Peter Bohler and other Moravians in London, by studying the Scriptures, by reading Luther’s preface to his commentary on Romans, and by praying that the Lord might give him a living, saving, justifying faith.

C. Ministry after conversion.

1. Wesley starts a religious society.

- a. 1738 was a turning point in Wesley's life. In the spring of that year, he formed a religious society at the Moravian Chapel in London that would be the pattern for all subsequent Methodist societies.
 - b. He also began preaching in many of the pulpits in London the new truths he had learned, and soon found, as Whitefield, that the message of salvation by grace and justification by faith were seldom allowed a second time.
2. Begins open air preaching.
- a. In the winter of 1738, he began more aggressive measures in Bristol, following George Whitefield's example by preaching in the open air, in rooms, or wherever a crowd could be gathered.
 - b. This is how he continued to minister the Gospel for the next fifty-three years.
 - (i) Ryle writes, "We have now reached a point at which John Wesley's history, like that of his great contemporary Whitefield, becomes one undeviating uniform narrative up to the time of his death. It would be useless to dwell on one year more than another. He was always occupied in one and the same business, always going up and down the land preaching, and always conducting evangelistic measures of some kind and description. For fifty-three years—from 1738 to 1791—he held on his course, always busy, and always busy about one thing—attacking sin and ignorance everywhere, preaching repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ everywhere—awakening open sinners, leading on inquirers, building up saints—never wearied, never swerving from the path he had marked out, and never doubting of success. Those only who read the Journals he kept for fifty years can have any idea of the immense amount of work that he got through. Never perhaps did any man have so many irons in the fire at one time, and yet succeed in keeping so many hot."
 - (ii) "Like Whitefield, he justly regarded preaching as God's chosen instrument for doing good to souls, and hence, wherever he went, his first step was to preach. Like him, too, he was ready to preach anywhere or at any hour—early in the morning or late at night, in church, in chapel, or in room—in streets, in fields, or on commons and greens. Like him, too, he was always preaching more or less the same great truths—sin, Christ, and holiness—ruin, redemption, and regeneration—the blood of Christ and the work of the Spirit—faith, repentance, and conversion—from one end of the year to the other."
 - (iii) "Wesley, however, was very unlike Whitefield in one important respect. He did not forget to organize as well as to preach. He was not content with reaping the fields which he found ripe for the harvest. He took care to bind up his sheaves and gather them into the barn. He was as far superior to Whitefield as an administrator and man of method, as he was inferior to him as a mere preacher.*"
 - (a) *"A writer in the *North British Review* has well and forcibly described the difference between the two great English evangelists of the last century. 'Whitefield was soul, and Wesley was system. Whitefield was the summer cloud which burst at morning or noon a fragrant exhalation over an ample track, and took the rest of the day to gather again; Wesley was the polished conduit in the midst of the garden, through which the living water glided in pearly brightness and perennial music, the same vivid stream from day to day.

All force and impetus, Whitefield was the powder-blast in the quarry, and by one explosive sermon would shake a district, and detach materials for other men's long work; deft, neat, and painstaking, Wesley loved to split and trim each fragment into uniform plinths and polished stones. Whitefield was the bargeman or the waggoner who brought the timber of the house, and Wesley was the architect who set it up. Whitefield had no patience for ecclesiastical polity, no aptitude for pastoral details: Wesley, with a leader-like propensity for building, was always constructing societies, and with a king-like craft of ruling, was most at home when presiding over a class or a conference. It was their infelicity that they did not always work together; it was the happiness of the age, and the furtherance of the gospel, that they lived alongside of one another.”

- (b) We've already heard what Whitefield thought of Wesley. But what did Wesley think of Whitefield? Ryle writes, “John Wesley did not agree with Whitefield on several theological points of no small importance. But when he preached his funeral sermon, he said: ‘Have we read or heard of any person who called so many thousands, so many myriads of sinners to repentance? Above all, have we read or heard of anyone who has been the blessed instrument of bringing so many sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God?’”
- (iv) “Shut out from the Church of England by the folly of its rulers, he laid the foundation of a new denomination with matchless skill, and with a rare discernment of the wants of human nature. To unite his people as one body—to give everyone something to do—to make each one consider his neighbour and seek his edification—to call forth latent talent and utilize it in some direction—to keep ‘all at it and always at it’ (to adopt his quaint saying),—these were his aims and objects. The machinery he called into existence was admirably well adapted to carry out his purposes. His preachers, lay-preachers, class-leaders, band-leaders, circuits, classes, bands, love-feasts, and watch-nights, made up a spiritual engine which stands to this day, and in its own way can hardly be improved. If one thing more than another has given permanence and solidity to Methodism, it was its founder's masterly talent for organization.”
- (v) “It is needless to tell a Christian reader that Wesley had constantly to fight with opposition. The prince of this world will never allow his captives to be rescued from him without a struggle. Sometimes he was in danger of losing his life by the assaults of violent, ignorant, and semi-heathen mobs . . . Sometimes he was denounced by bishops as an enthusiast, a fanatic, and a sower of dissent. Often—far too often—he was preached against and held up to scorn by the parochial clergy, as a heretic, a mischief-maker, and a meddling troubler of Israel. But none of these things moved the good man. Calmly, resolutely, and undauntedly he held on his course, and in scores of cases lived down all opposition. His letters in reply to the attacks made upon him are always dignified and sensible, and do equal honour to his heart and head.”
- (vi) “I have now probably told the reader enough to give him a general idea of John Wesley's life and history. I dare not go further. Indeed, the last fifty years of his

life were so entirely of one complexion, that I know not where I should stop if I went further. When I have said that they were years of constant travelling, preaching, organizing, conferring, writing, arguing, reasoning, counselling, and warring against sin, the world, and the devil, I have just said all that I dare enter upon."

D. His death.

1. John Wesley died in 1791, at the age of eight-eight, having labored in the ministry for sixty-five years. He had always enjoyed full health and never knew weakness or pain until he was eighty-two.
2. The way he died was consistent with the way he lived.
 - a. He preached within a few days of his death, using texts that were characteristic of his life.
 - (i) The next to last was at Chelsea, on February 18, on the words, "The king's business requires haste" (1 Sam. 21:8).
 - (ii) The last was at Leatherhead, on the 23rd, on the words, "Seek the Lord while He may be found" (Isa. 55:6).
 - (iii) Ryle writes, "He retained his senses to the end, and showed clearly where his heart and thoughts were to the very last."
 - b. Two days before he died he slept most of the time and only said a little. Once he said in a low but distinct voice, "There is no way into the holies but by the blood of Jesus."
 - c. Afterward, he asked what text he had preached at Hampstead. When he was told it was "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:8), he answered, "That is the foundation, the only foundation; there is no other."
 - d. The day before he died, he said suddenly, "I will get up." While they were preparing his clothes, he broke out singing a hymn by Isaac Watts with a strength that amazed all present, "I'll Praise My Maker while I've Breath."

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my noblest powers;
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures."

- e. Not long afterwards, he tried to speak to those with him, but couldn't. When he saw they couldn't understand him, he paused, and then with all his strength cried out, "The best of all is, God is with us." Raising his arm, he again repeated the words, "The best of all is, God is with us."
- f. That night, he attempted to sing Watts' hymn again, but was only able to repeat the opening words, "I'll praise; I'll praise."
- g. At ten the next morning, those present heard him say, "Farewell," and then without another word or expression of pain, he fell asleep in Christ and entered into his rest.

E. His marriage.

1. One thing we didn't look at earlier was the fact that Wesley did marry, but his marriage wasn't a happy one.
2. Ryle writes, "Wesley was once married. At the age of forty-eight he married a widow lady of the name of Vizelle, of a suitable age, and of some independent property, which she took care to have settled upon herself. The union was a most unhappy one. Whatever good qualities Mrs. Wesley may have had, they were buried and swallowed up in the fiercest and most absurd passion of jealousy. One of his biographers remarks, 'Had he searched the whole kingdom, he could hardly have found a woman more unsuitable to him in all important respects.' After making her husband as uncomfortable as possible for twenty years, by opening his letters, putting his papers in the hands of his enemies in the vain hope of blasting his character, and even sometimes laying violent hands on him, Mrs. Wesley at length left her home, leaving word that she never intended to return. Wesley simply states the fact in his journal, saying that he knew not the cause, and briefly adding, 'I did not forsake her, I did not dismiss her, I will not recall her.'"
3. "Like Whitefield, John Wesley left no children. But he left behind him a large and influential communion, which he not only saw spring up, but lived to see it attain a vigorous and healthy maturity. The number of Methodist preachers at the time of his death amounted in the British dominions to 313, and in the United States of America to 198. The number of Methodist members in the British dominions was 76,968, and in the United States 57,621. Facts like these need no comment; they speak for themselves. Few labourers for Christ have ever been so successful as Wesley, and to none certainly was it ever given to see so much with his own eyes."

F. Assessment of his life.

1. Ryle writes, "Has anyone been accustomed to regard the father of Methodism as a mere fanatic, as a man of moderate abilities and superficial education, as a successful popular preacher and leader of an ignorant sect, but nothing more? I ask such an one to examine carefully the specimens I have given of Wesley's mind, and to reconsider his opinion. Whether men like Methodist doctrine or not, I think they must honestly concede that the old Fellow of Lincoln was a scholar and a sensible man. The world, which always sneers at evangelical religion, may please itself by saying that the men who shook England a hundred years ago were weak-minded, hot-headed enthusiasts, and unlearned and ignorant men. The Jews said the same of the apostles in early days. But the world cannot get over facts. The founder of Methodism was a man of no mean reputation in Oxford, and his writings show him to have been a well-read, logical-minded, and intelligent man. Let the children of this world deny this if they can.
2. "Finally, has anyone been accustomed to regard Wesley with dislike on account of his Arminian opinions? Is anyone in the habit of turning away from his name with prejudice, and refusing to believe that such an imperfect preacher of the gospel could do any good? I ask such an one to remould his opinion, to take a more kindly view of the old soldier of the cross, and to give him the honour he deserves.
3. "What though John Wesley did not use all the weapons of truth which our great Captain has provided? What though he often said things which you and I feel we could not say,

and left unsaid things which we feel ought to be said? Still, notwithstanding this, he was a bold fighter on Christ's side, a fearless warrior against sin, the world, and the devil, and an unflinching adherent of the Lord Jesus Christ in a very dark day. He honoured the Bible. He cried down sin. He made much of Christ's blood. He exalted holiness. He taught the absolute need of repentance, faith, and conversion. Surely these things ought not to be forgotten. Surely there is a deep lesson in those words of our Master, "Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part" (Mark ix. 39, 40).

4. "Then let us thank God for what John Wesley *was*, and not keep poring over his deficiencies, and only talking of what he *was not*. Whether we like it or not, John Wesley was a mighty instrument in God's hand for good; and, next to George Whitefield, was the first and foremost evangelist of England a hundred years ago."

G. Lessons to learn: Ryle writes, "When God puts special honour on any of his servants, it is well to analyze their gifts, and to observe carefully what they were. What, then, were the peculiar qualifications which marked John Wesley?"

1. "The first thing which I ask the reader to notice is his extraordinary *singleness of eye and tenacity of purpose*. Once embarked on his evangelistic voyage, he pressed forward, and never flinched for a day. 'One thing I do,' seemed to be his motto and constraining motive. To preach the gospel, to labour to do good, to endeavour to save souls,—these seemed to become his only objects, and the ruling passion of his life. In pursuit of them he compassed sea and land, putting aside all considerations of ease and rest, and forgetting all earthly feelings. Few men but himself could have gone to Epworth, stood upon their father's tombstone, and preached to an open-air congregation, 'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' Few but himself could have seen fellow-labourers, one after another, carried to their graves, till he stood almost alone in his generation, and yet preached on, as he did, with unabated spirit, as if the ranks around him were still full. But his marvellous singleness of eye carried him through all. 'Beware of the man of one book,' was the advice of an old philosopher to his pupils. The man of 'one thing' is the man who in the long run does great things, and shakes the world.
2. "The second thing I ask the reader to notice is his extraordinary *diligence, self-denial, and economy of time*. It puts one almost out of breath to read the good man's Journals, and to mark the quantity of work that he crowded into one year. He was to all appearance always working, and never at rest. 'Leisure and I,' he said, 'have taken leave of one another. I propose to be busy as long as I live, if my health is so long indulged to me.' This resolution was made in the prime of life; and never was resolution more punctually observed.
 "'Lord, let me not live to be useless,' was the prayer which he uttered after seeing one, whom he once knew as an active and useful man, reduced by age to be a picture of human nature in disgrace, feeble in body and mind, slow of speech and understanding. Even the time which he spent in travelling was not lost. 'History, poetry, and philosophy,' said he, 'I commonly read on horseback, having other employment at other times.' When you met him in the street of a crowded city, he attracted notice not only by his bands and cassock, and his long silvery hair, but by his pace and manner; both

indicating that all his minutes were numbered, and that not one was to be lost. ‘But though I am always in haste,’ he said, ‘I am never in a hurry, because I never undertake any more work than I can go through with perfect calmness of spirit.’ Here, again, is one secret of great usefulness. We must abhor idleness; we must redeem time. No man knows how much can be done in twelve hours until he tries. It is precisely those who do most work who find that they can do most.

3. “The last thing which I ask the reader to notice is his marvellous *versatility of mind and capacity for a variety of things*. No one perhaps can fully realize this who does not read the large biographies which record all his doings, or study his wonderful Journals. Things the most opposite and unlike—things the most petty and trifling—things the most thoroughly secular— things most thoroughly spiritual,—all are alike mastered by his omnivorous mind. He finds time for all, and gives directions about all. One day we find him condensing old divinity, and publishing fifty volumes of theology, called the ‘Christian Library;’—another day we find him writing a complete commentary on the whole Bible;—another day we find him composing hymns, which live to this day in the praises of many a congregation;—another day we find him drawing up minute directions for his preachers, forbidding them to shout and scream and preach too long, insisting on their reading regularly lest their sermons became threadbare, requiring them not to drink spirits, and charging them to get up early in the morning;— another day we find him calmly reviewing the current literature of the day, and criticizing all the new books with cool and shrewd remarks, as if he had nothing else to do. Like Napoleon, nothing seems too small or too great for his mind to attend to; like Calvin, he writes as if he had nothing to do but write, preaches as if he had nothing to do but preach, and administers as if he had nothing to do but administer. A versatility like this is one mighty secret of power, and is a striking characteristic of most men who leave their mark on the world. To be a steam-engine and a penknife, a telescope and a microscope, at the same time, is probably one of the highest attainments of the human mind.”
4. Any questions?

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