

The Testimony of Jesus (Part 11)

Let's have another word of prayer:

Lord, we are thankful that we gather this morning as the found ones. Lord, we are so blessed. You found us, You stayed with us, and You have given us a great promise and a hope that we have in Christ. And Lord, we are thankful too for the heritage we have of how we got here today. We know it is all by Your grace. We are thankful, Lord, that there were earthen vessels that were willing to be used by You throughout the years to preserve that testimony of Jesus. As we continue considering them today, we pray that they will touch our hearts and our lives that we could be strengthened to continue to press on in You. There is a phrase that came out in the Ezra Bible Study: The time is late, but it is not too late," and we want to be encouraged that it is not too late to still be learning of You, Lord. In Jesus name. Amen.

Galatians 3:27-28: "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

As we look at these verses, the beauty there is the oneness we have in Christ. We are not separated by race, whether Jew or Greek, we are not separated by economic conditions or social status between slave or free man, we are not separated by our sex, male or female. In Christ there is a oneness and a great unity that we have, and we are very thankful for that.

Revelation 5:9-10: "They sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation and made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon this earth.'

Again there is that thought of how we have been purchased for God from every tribe, tongue and nation. It is with a purpose that He would make us that kingdom of priests unto Him, not living for ourselves but unto Him, manifesting His life and reigning upon this earth both now and the days to come.

In Matthew 25:34 our Lord is sharing on one of the parables and He says: "The King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'"

"Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You?' The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'"

The 18th Century

We have been looking at the 18th century the last couple of times, and really this is a century of awakening. It was an awakening not only to the Lord, but to one another, and also to the conditions of the people upon the earth. So it was an awakening to the conditions, and it was an awakening to a care and concern for not only our brothers and sisters but for our fellowman, believers and unbelievers. The awakening was far more than just salvation related. That was a tremendous part of it. But that awakening opened ones 'eyes to see the conditions that people were having to live in because they were very dreadful at that point in time. There was a very elite class, and then there was the poor, the have-nots. Tragically throughout this time in general many of those in the elite, the upper class really did not care much for the poor. They were looked down upon, they were disregarded, they were disrespected, nobody cared for them. But praise God, during these times of awakening, the

believers' hearts were opened to really try to come alongside man and raise them up out of that pit of despair and bring them into seeing the Lord. And we will see some of that today.

The Golden Age of Hymns

One of the other things that was awakened during this time I call the Golden Age of Hymns. It was an awakening of worship to the Lord, recognizing who He is. Now before this time, they had only sung basically the Psalter. They took all the Psalms and put them to music, but actually, they did not do that great of a job. If you have ever seen a Psalter or ever tried to sing it, it is challenging. If you are very musically gifted, you can make it through okay, but it is challenging. The words are great because they are the Psalms, but the music and the tune just do not provoke worship when I listened to it. Through the Spirit the Lord awakened ones to really have a heart for worshiping the Lord, declaring who He is, declaring what He has done for us. There were over 12,000 hymns that were written during this century. It is an amazing thing.

A lot of it was started by brother Isaac Watts. He is called the Father of Hymnody, and he complained to his father when he was a young man about singing the Psalter. So his father challenged him and said, "Okay, you think you can do better, do it." Well, he did. He started writing songs that really revolutionized worship, and he ended up writing over 600 hymns. I am not going to go through all the hymns that he and Charles Wesley wrote which was about 9,000 hymns. It is just tremendous what was done. Two other dear brothers, John Newton and William Cowper grouped together and wrote "The Olney Hymns" because that was where they lived. Also, another famous one who was used by the Lord was Anne Steele or Theodosia. She was the first sister to start writing English hymns. And we have many of their hymns included in Christ in Song.

As we look at this matter of hymns, we see too that we do not have very many of them today because we will find out that even though there was a great volume written, the test of time showed which ones were

really lasting. Some of them were for a specific moment, some may not have been that great of a hymn. Just because it is a hymn does not make it great. There are good hymns, and there are not so good hymns. During that time of the 18th century there were 12,000 hymns written, and we think “Christ in Song” is a pretty good hymn book. Well, there are less than a hundred in there from that time. So there are just a few hundred maximum 500 of that 12,000 that are still around today being sung. They have stood the test of time, and there is a value to them. So when we are singing these older hymns, may the Lord give us a good perspective to really appreciate them because they are ones that for a few centuries various saints have come into an appreciation of them. Some of us are not as hymn oriented as others, so I think that can be a challenge for us to really see the beauty of what we have from some of these hymns.

There were also some other 18th century hymn writers, and we are familiar with many of these hymns, The Doxology, Holy, Holy, Holy, and the one I thought was really kind of interesting by Edward Perronet, “All Hail the Power of Jesus ’Name.” What a great hymn! You would think this guy was a great hymn writer, but basically this is the only hymn he ever wrote, but that is good enough. When you do that, you stop while you are ahead because there is no way to go after that. He wrote it and that was it. Praise God for that!

Here are some tidbits to get some appreciation of how it was done. Much of this was done in fellowship. John Wesley was the theologian, but Charles Wesley wrote a lot of hymns; he was the hymn writer. He wrote this first hymn, “Hark! How all the Heaven Rings”. And as he was fellowshiping with Whitefield who was looking in the Scriptures, he said, “Really, it should be “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.” So they adjusted that.

Another example is Charles ’first draft of “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” which had the phrase, “Pure and sinless let us be.” And John, the theologian, said, “No, pure and spotless let us be. The blood of the

Lamb will cleanse us and make us spotless.” On this earth we are not going to be sinless, but we can be spotless. Praise God!

Also, during this time when the hymns were coming out during the time of the Psalter and during the hymns, the singing was led by a precentor or cantor (different words got used at different times) because they did not have hymn books. So one person would sing a line, and then the people would sing. He would sing another line and then the people would sing. And that is how it went on through much of the original hymn singing until later on when hymn books became more and more available, and the people started learning these hymns. This is what was going on at the English time.

Also in Germany the Moravians did thousands of hymns as well as Gerhard Tersteegen, and we have his hymns in our Christ in Song also. Another thing that occurred hymn-wise during this 18th century was Christmas hymns. The first significant Christmas hymns that came about. We even sang one this morning, “O Come All Ye Faithful.” There is “Silent Night,” “Joy to the World,” “Angels from the Realms of Glory.” They were really coming into appreciating Christ’s birth. Also, from a secular point of view we have “The 12 Days of Christmas” during this time and “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.” They were into it, but you can see what was breaking out; there was an overflow.

The Resistance to Hymns

But as with anything that the Lord does, there was resistance. And this was probably one of the things that I learned the most in looking at this about the hymns was the resistance that came forth against hymns. The resistance came forth from the establishment, the Anglican Church, the so-called religious elite. There was a great resistance to hymns.

As I was thinking about this, I would like for us to look at this matter of resistance to hymns in the context of the days that we are living in, with the resistance to choruses. Some people love hymns, some people love choruses. Many of us grew up in the Jesus movement, and there

was a great resistance at that point in time to this new movement that came out in the sixties and seventies. What happened back in the 18th century had a similar resistance throughout the days we have lived in. They said, “These hymns are written by man not God” because the Psalter was written by God. They did not have much of an argument with that one. They said, “Most hymns were actually written by dissenters outside the Anglican Church who were not the religious elite.” And back in the Jesus movement in the sixties and seventies, remember who was writing these songs? It was those who had never been heard of before. Keith Green, Barry McGuire, Darrel Mansfield, Randy Stonehill. Do these names ring a bell to anybody in this room? Chuck Gerard, Love Song, Second Chapter of Acts with Annie Herring and Matthew Ward, Nancy Honeytree. There were different ones used of the Lord, and you could go on and on. They had a tremendous impact upon the way that believers were worshipping the Lord, but they felt a great resistance because they were nobodies. They were not the approved hymn writers; they were not the elite religious class. These were a group of ones outside of the established group, and they met so much resistance.

But praise God, at that time there were a few, particularly in California, who accepted them. There was Chuck Smith from Calvary Chapel, there was Jack Hayford, and others who really accepted them in. During the Jesus movement when ones were saved, they did not wash up but they went as they were, and they were not accepted by some places. But praise God, through Chuck Smith and Jack Hayford (actually it was their wives) who were encouraging them to accept these ones and bring them in. Finally, there was an acceptance there, but at first they met great resistance.

As we said not all hymns were of the Lord and stood the test of time, and not all choruses are great choruses. But there is a balance there, and what is the attitude? What is the spirit and the essence of the worshipping?

They complained about hymns because they used common everyday words and some used familiar tunes. They were not holy enough for them. Also, they said these hymns were for the unwashed, the uneducated, and the common people. Wesley and Whitefield and others were ministering to the coal miners. They were ministering to the unaccepted ones.

And who was swept in by the Jesus movement? It was the unaccepted ones. There are a lot of parallels that have gone on in our lifetime. And they also said that the hymns led to too much “enthusiasm.” Remember, enthusiasm was a bad word back then. These hymns were not of the Spirit; they were soulical and emotional. Imagine singing “Rejoice the Lord is King,” “Joy to the world,” oh, how soulical is that?! It is not the Spirit of God. And ones will talk about choruses; oh, they are just soulical. We need to have that spirit of discerning of who the Lord is. What is He doing? And allow Him to move in this day and time. It revolutionized the way worship was done in the 18th century, and the Lord has done a revolution in our day and time also. And we want to be those who are staying in tune with Him, not accepting everything carte blanche but really hearing from the Lord, and knowing what is of Him and what is not.

A lot of times you will notice in history when the Lord moves, there is an alternative in the world, a counterfeit or something like that. But if you look in the 18th century, there were some pretty famous composers that even us nonmusical people know. We recognize names like Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Handel, Haydn, Schubert, Paganini, and others. You do not have to be an expert to recognize these names. All of these people were there during this same time writing their music and composing their operas and concerts and things like that. You can see that over all there was a lot going on in the whole musical realm, both within the church, the people of God and also in the world. And a lot of times when things are going on with the people of God, there is something similar in the world, similar in the sense of it being music, but not having the Spirit

of it. It is trying to draw us away and have an alternative. So this is just to be aware that this was going on, but it was a tremendous time. It truly was the golden age of hymns, and we sit here today in the good of it. Thank the Lord we are also able to experience what we could call the golden age of choruses if you want to draw a parallel. And we can sit in the good of that also. It is not an either-or, but it is really allowing the fulness of what God has on His heart to come forth so that we can be those who are accepting what is of Him and just encouraging one another in that.

The Second Great Awakening—New England

The Second Great Awakening was predominantly in the U.S. The awakening with Wesley and Wakefield continued in England. But this awakening in the U.S. was not only the awakening to the Lord but the awakening to fellow man because this was a tremendous time in the U.S.. Population in the U.S. from 1790 to 1840 grew from four million to seventeen million. That is a pretty big chunk of people in a short period of time, and it went from thirteen states to twenty-six states. Obviously, this was after the Revolutionary War. There was a lot of joy over that, but there was also a lot of uncertainty and insecurity. “We are free now, what do we do? And what is going on here?” And because of this growth the Lord moved in a wonderful way, and they started having large evangelistic meetings, which were the more popular ones.

There was a movement throughout New England with Charles Finney and Timothy Dwight. Throughout the middle colonies, at that time there were colonies all the way to Kentucky. When I was reading about these frontiers in the West, it was talking about Kentucky. There was a frontier out in Illinois, and then the ones in the South. It is interesting that they called Kentucky, Illinois and up through that section the middle colonies, and a lot of the circuit riders went there. They would get on their horses and just ride around. Francis Asbury is probably the most famous one. He rode for years from place to place, encouraging people, spending

nights in homes, encouraging families, and sharing the Gospel. When he died, he did not own anything except a horse, his saddle and two saddle bags. That was his earthly belongings, but he was perfectly content to be burned out for the Lord.

Then there was Peter Cartwright. How do we know him? Peter Cartwright is the only man in history that ever defeated Abe Lincoln in an election when they ran for the House in Illinois. But when Lincoln ran for the U.S. Congress, he defeated Cartwright. He was also a tremendous evangelist and also a great circuit rider. Nevertheless, he did defeat Lincoln that one time, but he and Lincoln ended up being great friends.

In the South there was Devereux Jarratt and Barton Stone, and we will look at them in a little more detail later.

As we come to New England, the main brother there that was really used of the Lord was Charles Finney who was a lawyer. At the age of twenty-nine he had not settled in his heart whether he was a Christian or not. He knew about the Lord, but he would waver. So he went out in the woods one day very determined, and said, "I am not leaving these woods until I know I am saved." He knelt down by a log, and as he was praying the Lord came in a wonderful way, touched his heart, warmed his heart, and he knew then that he was wonderfully saved. He went back to his law office. He had an appointment with someone he was supposed to defend and the man said, "I am here for you to defend me." Finney said, "No, I do not have any other clients right now but Jesus Christ. I am defending Him. He is my Client for the rest of my life." He closed his law office and served the Lord. I do not know what happened to the guy he was supposed to defend.

He went up through New York where a lot of revivals were going on in New York City. He initiated a lot of changes in the way that revivals were going on. You can see how they have carried down even to today. He created the inquiry room for people who were seeking the Lord. They could go off to the side and meet with some brothers or sisters and have

some counseling. He initiated the mourner's bench at the front where people who were responding to the gospel could go forward. He also initiated the invitation, calling ones to come forward, and he organized choirs, of which George Beverly Shea was a part. He even began advertising meetings in advance. And it is estimated that over 500,000 were saved through his ministry. He was a tremendous brother who burned out for the Lord; he really gave himself.

These are a couple of quotes by him, and I appreciated this one: "Ministers often preach about the Gospel instead of preaching the Gospel. They often preach about sinners instead of preaching to them." There is a lot of truth in those statements.

He said, "Revival is a renewed conviction of sin and repentance, followed by an intense desire to live in obedience to God. It is giving up one's will to God in deep humility." Finney gave up his life to the Lord, and we are thankful for that.

One of his coworkers there was Timothy Dwight who was Jonathan Edwards' grandson and president of Yale from 1795-1817. One of the ways he was used, because of his position and prominence at Yale, was that he was a strong advocate against the popularity of Deism in America. Some of the founding fathers were involved in Deism which was a very prominent philosophy during the 17th and 18th centuries, basically during the age of Reason. They believed in the existence of a supreme being. That is why we often see them using the name God specifically as Creator, but one who does not intervene in the universe. There is a separate deity up there, and He created everything and then he just let it go. You can get into a lot more subsets of various Deisms and all this stuff, but in a broad general way that is what Deism is. Some of our founding fathers, one of our most famous Virginians predominantly, Thomas Jefferson, was a famous Deist.

When Dwight got to Yale, which was a very immoral place, he started preaching sermons weekly to the student body. Then he paused

preaching sermons weekly, but he continued for seven years preaching. Talk about persistence; he had a burden on his heart to continue preaching even after seven years with basically no response. But after that seven years, there was a revival that came to Yale, and at least half the student body was saved and came to Christ. One of the tutors there has this comment: “Yale is a little temple; prayer and praise seem to be the delight of the greater part of the students while those who were still unfeeling are awed with the respectful silence.” There was an impact upon ones, and it ended up spreading through Dartmouth, Bennington and other universities in the Northeast. But we can see how the Lord was waking up people throughout this country.

Second Awakening—The South

In the south we meet Devereux Jarratt. He was born in New Kent County, Virginia. When he came to the Lord and began preaching, he discovered that many churches in Virginia were lifeless. He settled down in a community called Bath near McKenny in Dinwiddie County, and this was his assessment of the church that he moved into.

He said, “At Bath I found the principles of the Gospel, the nature and condition of man, the plan of salvation through Christ, and the nature and necessity of spiritual regeneration, as little known and thought of, as if the people had never heard a sermon on it in their whole lives.”

This was in an established church, but there was no preaching of the Gospel. According to the response from the people, the parishioners generated a perplexed response: “We have had many ministers, but we have never heard anything till now of conversion, the new birth, and other things. This new man of ours brings strange things to our ears.”

Praise God for the strange things, and his faithfulness there. He continued to preach a circuit all throughout Virginia and Eastern North Carolina, and there were many revivals. In 1776, a couple of weeks before they declared independence, there was a meeting going on, and it said that “the power of the Lord came down on the assembly like a

rushing, mighty wind; and it seemed as if the whole house was filled with the presence of God. A flame kindled and ran from heart to heart." Throughout the awakening there were various moves of the Holy Spirit. It was displayed in a lot of different ways. Sometimes it was very solemn, sometimes it was very emotional and a lot of outbursts, but the Lord moved in many different ways.

Also unrelated to what Jarratt was doing, a couple of students at Hampton-Sydney got saved. Now we do not picture Hampton Sydney as one of the most religious universities. But a great revival broke out among some of the students there, and it spread throughout other schools in Virginia. It was so encouraging, and the main tool that was used throughout this time were camp meetings for the spreading of the Gospel, and they were literally camping meetings. They had their tents, and they would eat together. And in those days you would still have the women on one side and the men on the other side. Ones would be sitting around, others would be cooking and having their meals together. One of the beautiful things about the camp meetings was that it really brought about and had a sense of oneness and unity among all the believers.

The camp meeting that kicked it all off was in Cane Ridge, Kentucky outside of Lexington. A couple of brothers there gathered annually for a communion meeting together, and they would also have preaching and it would last a week. There would be about 10-20 thousand people who would come. Many people showed up after the second or third day because the first couple of days everything was normal, but on the third day, the Holy Spirit powerfully moved, and it ended up lasting a whole week and more and more came. This testimony from Cane Ridge came from one of the brothers that was sharing: "The power of God seemed to shake the whole assembly. Towards the close of the sermon, the cries of the distressed arose aloud. After the congregation was dismissed the solemnity increased, till the greater part of the multitude seemed engaged in the most solemn manner. No person seemed to wish to go

home. Hunger and sleep seemed to affect no one. Eternal things were the vast concern. This awakening and converting work was to be found in every part of the multitude; even some things strangely being expressed and wonderfully new to me.”

Praise God for that! The Word of God was put forth, and it was put forth with a straightness and a power. Then the Holy Spirit took that Word and used it to really change and work within many lives. Because of this, Camp Meetings became the focus for sharing the Gospel and holy living. They normally went from Friday afternoon to Monday noon, and occasionally they would go longer. But there was such a unity among believers of all various backgrounds that would come, but when they were there they noticed they were experiencing “one mind and soul: the salvation of sinners was the one object.” They “all engaged in singing the same songs, all were united in prayer, and all preached the same things.” Praise God, it was wonderful the way they worked! There were over 400 camp meetings annually through the early 1800’s, and they spread throughout the South on up into the North and Northeast. Many used them in wonderful ways to share the Gospel with this ever increasing population that was expanding. So we are very thankful for that.

First Black Church in America

During the Great Awakening many blacks were saved also, but there was a section where they rejected the “Negro Pew.” If you look at the history of the blacks during the Great Awakening there were many both free and slaves who were saved. Many were saved from African Spiritism and Islam. I do not know how many are aware but when many of the slaves were brought over from Africa, and they were settling down through the low country in South Carolina, Georgia and different places, they were called Gullah in South Carolina, and in Georgia they were called Geechee. There were also many Muslims who came, and thank the Lord the Gospel went forth and changed them, and it still has an influence. If you go to the cemeteries down there, the Muslims believed

you had to bury people facing East west, so the cemeteries were arranged East/West, and some of the areas still carry Islamic names. But praise God they were saved!

It is interesting when you read a perspective of how things are, sometimes the writer can cover up things. Many will talk about how the believers, the blacks and whites, worshipped together, and that is a true statement. But if you read a little deeper into the story you find out that they were segregated. Most of the facilities at that time had areas reserved in the back called the “Negro Pew” or the “African Corner.” In open air meeting the blacks were in the back, so because of this discrimination some blacks started meeting separately. It is sad because particularly in the South they were greatly opposed because they thought they would be Abolitionists or insurrectionists. They actually passed laws in the States that blacks could not meet together unless there were at least two or three white people there overseeing. That law varied by states.

There was a brother in Philadelphia, Richard Allen, who was part of the Methodist Church. He was an ordained Methodist preacher along with another one, and they grew more and more popular. But tragically, as it sometimes occurs, whites became more and more jealous of him because many of them appreciated his preaching. They did not appreciate him, and in 1787 he and some other black people in that church were forced to leave, and it brought about a great division. Eventually, the group that he was with became known as the AME. It is still around today, and they are a very large group of African Methodist, Episcopal Church.

I bring this out because as we consider the body of Christ, the greatest division within the body of Christ is racial. It always has been, Jew and Gentile in the New Testament throughout history. It is sad today that the comment is that the most segregated time in the U.S. is Sunday morning at 10:00 o’clock. The black people go to predominantly black churches and the white people go to predominantly white churches. There are Chinese, Korean, Brazilian, all going to different places. It is a great

challenge for us to see that we might not be able to change everything, but our hearts need to be open. We need to be those who are standing for the oneness of the body of Christ whether they are slave or free, Jew or Gentile, male or female. There is a great oneness that we need to be standing into. This bread we share at the Lord's table speaks of one body, one loaf. And thank the Lord we can be those who are standing for that and not judging or evaluating ones as they walk through the door as to who they are. We want to see Christ in them and accept one another as we have been accepted. It is a great challenge today because we see the tension caused by hatred. It is obvious that it is out there, and it is sad. As you look at all the various divisions within the body of Christ, tragically the greatest division is the racial one. He has made us one. We do not want division. We want to experience the oneness we have in Christ with all our brothers and sisters.

Historically, the first black church in America was in Virginia in 1758. It was in Mecklenburg County on William Byrd III's plantation. Both free and slaves met together in the Bluestone Church. It is no longer there; it was torn down. It was in an area near Clarksville, VA on route 58 between South Hill and South Boston. So Virginia has another first.

In looking at the impact of the awakening, it not only focused on salvation but also sanctification, holy living, and it was created in an experiential unity among believers. There was not the Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, but as ones came together it was a living experience of the oneness that they had. Tragically, that wore off but there was that experience. It awakened the in hearts of ones, concern for their fellowman. Also it awakened them to the evil of slavery, the need for reforms to the prisons, child labor and orphanages. It also awakened the need for mission work both inner city and foreign. And it also awakened believers to see the diverse way that God works. So often we think this is the way God works. You have a Jonathan Edwards who sat there and read the sermon very unemotionally and thousands would get saved. You have a Whitefield and others with very dramatic presentations, and people got saved. You have some revivals that after

the Word of God, people fell very quietly on their faces and they gave their lives to the Lord. There were other revivals that after the Word was preached, there was a great response either in tongues or dancing or emotional outbreaks, but there was an awakening to the different ways God works. You know, we love to put Him in a box and get very comfortable with our box. But these ones were seeing that God works in a multitude of ways. It is like if we went around this room and everybody shared their testimony on how they were saved, they would all be different. He touched us in all different ways. Praise God for that!

In these awakenings, which were also going on in England, one of the things that began in England and carried on to the U.S. were the many social reforms that occurred during the 18th century. Why do we even mention social reforms? That in itself says, “What’s that?” But the great difference between social reforms then and social things that are trying to go on now is that they saw Christ as the answer. The only answer to any problem in this world is Christ. It is first getting men saved, teaching them to know the Lord, bringing them to Him because there was so much evil in the world at that time, and slavery had increased greatly. The latter part of the 18th century was the era known as the Industrial Revolution which created child labor. There was the abuse of people, but ones did not have a concern for their fellowman. The wickedness and evil of men was coming out along with the greed of man. But praise God, the Lord touched certain ones to be able to take a stand and bring about some changes in these things.

The Abolition of Slavery in England

The first one we will look at is John Newton. We know that he was a former slave trader and was gloriously saved. We have His wonderful hymn of “Amazing Grace.” These are two of the quotes I always appreciated by Newton. He said:

“I am not the man I ought to be, I am not the man I wish to be, and I am not the man I hope to be, but by the grace of God, I am not the man

I used to be.” Praise God! That is for all of us. That is where we are heading. As I got a little bit older, I appreciated this one too.

“Although my memory is fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior.” Praise God! Those are the essential things of remembering.

He also had a great influence and encouragement upon William Wilberforce in the whole abolition of slavery in England. He encouraged Wilberforce to pursue changes in the law. Wilberforce worked with many other prominent ones, prominent believers throughout England. There was this group called, “The Clapham Group.” That was just the town that they lived in, but they worked to address many of the social issues. One of the first things that Wilberforce did was to commission Josiah Wedgwood to have a little cameo made. It was popular to wear cameos in those days. It was a cameo on slavery, and it asked the very piercing question: “Am I not a man and a brother? How can you enslave me?”

He introduced his first bill in 1789 to abolish the slave trade, but it was defeated. It was close, but it was defeated. However, John Wesley wrote him a letter to encourage him because he was really discouraged. He had put his whole heart in introducing this bill. Then Wesley wrote him a letter: “Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? Oh, be not weary of well-doing! Go on in the name of God and in the power of His might till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.”

He received that letter, and it encouraged him to keep pressing on. And from 1790-1806, about twenty-six years, he continued fighting for the abolition of slavery and other social justices. One of the things he did was to write a tract to awaken people, and the tract that they wrote did not have a very concise title. It is called “The Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christianity in the Higher and Middle Classes of This Country Contrasted With Real Christianity.”

That would not work today in this little blip; you have to get their attention quick. But these are a couple of quotes from it. He says,

“True Christians consider themselves not as satisfying some rigorous creditor, but as discharging a debt of gratitude.”

“In the Christian world in the West, we settle for a cultural version of Christianity that is far from the real thing.”

It is sad that when you meet so many people in the world, they know what Christianity is in their eyes. There is a cultural view of Christianity.

Wilberforce went on to try to awaken people at that time. “It makes no sense to take the name of Christian and not cling to Christ. Jesus is not some magic charm to wear like a piece of jewelry we think will give us good luck. He is the Lord. His name is to be written on our hearts in such a powerful way that it creates within us a profound experience of His peace and a heart that is filled with His praise.” Praise God for that!

He said, “Carefully studying the Bible will challenge us to reject a superficial understanding of Christianity and impress on us that it is imperative not to simply be religious or moral, but also to integrate its principles into our lives, and put into action what we have learned practically.”

He was trying to awaken the people of God and bring them back. As he continued to press on, finally in 1807 the slave trade was finally abolished in England. Then he also saw that just eliminating slave trade did not eliminate slavery. He pushed on and finally in 1833 in England the Emancipation Act that freed all the slaves in the British Empire was made a law. France and Spain had already liberated their slaves. Later on in 1865 the U.S. made the proclamation and Brazil in 1888. Now the only country that had to fight over it was the U.S. Everywhere else was peaceful. We were the only place that got into a fight over it.

A couple of quotes from Wilberforce when he was speaking to ones about the whole issue of slavery and the social issues in life that were going on, he said, “You may choose to look the other way, but you can never say again that you did not know.” You can make a choice and look

the other way, but you will be held accountable, you cannot say you did not know.

I appreciated his testimony here: “If to be feelingly alive to the sufferings of my fellow creatures is to be a fanatic I am one of the most incurable fanatics every permitted to be at large.” How about being an incurable fanatic for Christ!!

Other Social Reforms

Robert Raikes

Other social reforms that went on were brought about by Robert Raikes. He was for education for the urban poor because many of them were having to work in the factories throughout the week, and they were not getting any education. Robert Raikes started the schools for children who lived in the slums on Sunday. Actually the Anglican Church had its Sunday Schools already going, but the people from the urban poor could not go to those churches or facilities. So he had to hold the school on Sundays because most of them worked in the factories the other six days. The text book was the Bible and the teachers he contracted were laymen and laywomen. And this was the schedule: “The children were to come in at ten in the morning and stay to twelve; they were to go home and return at one; after reading a lesson, they went to church, repeated the catechism till five, and then they had to go home without making a noise.” He was trying to bring some discipline to their lives also.

And by 1831 he had taught over 1,250,000 children. It had a great impact upon him. But as with most things, there was opposition. Basically again because the upper class did not have any concern for the poor. They derisively called them “Raikes Ragged School” and said he was desecrating the Sabbath by having them go to school, you are hiring people to make them work on the Sabbath. They said that it would weaken home-based education. Well, in the slums there was no home-based education. In the upper society there was.

It is always interesting when people who do not know the Lord can spot the things of the Lord. Adam Smith who was an unbeliever in the Age of Reason and an economist, wrote, "The Wealth of Nations." He said, "No plan has promised to affect the change of character and manners with equal ease and simplicity since the days of the apostles." He saw the Word of God going into these kids, which was their text book; and that is what they were learning. It was impacting their character and nature, and you could see the impact of it in the world. Praise God for him! This eventually started the whole thing of public education for everyone in general and not just the elite.

Elizabeth Fry (Prison Reform)

Also, the prisons were in pretty bad shape at that time. There was a dear sister, Elizabeth Fry, who had a great ministry in the prisons. She was from a very prominent banking family, and she was a Quaker. She married in 1800 and had eleven children. Did that stop her from serving the Lord? Not a bit. By 1813 she had been married thirteen years and probably had a good number of those eleven by then. She visited Newgate Prison and found terrible squalid conditions. It is probably hard for us to imagine the nature of the prisons back at that time, but they were extremely overcrowded. They slept in filth on dirt floors, men, women and children all housed together in cells. All types of criminals were housed together, whether you were a shop lifter, rapist, or murderer, you were all there together. The daily food ration was a loaf of bread. There was no medicine and lice swarmed everywhere. They only had male guards, and just like the guards today they sold things to prisoners that they were not supposed to. They sold amenities, booze and other things, making a fortune out of it. Basically, the bullies, or today we would call them the gangs, ran the jail. There was much fighting, and many were abused. Tragically, the common punishment was being put to death. They would either put you to death or ship you to Australia, and the ships that went to Australia were just like the

prisons. There was no segregation; everybody was just lumped in a hole together, and many died along the way.

The Lord raised up Elizabeth Fry, Betsy as she is known, and she began visiting the prison. It so touched her heart that she started going there every day. She would take food, she would gather clothing and medicine from all of her friends. She would get supplies and take them down to them. She would also read the Bible to them every day, praying with them, giving Biblical encouragement and counseling. She began to be called “the angel of Newgate Prison.” It is a wonderful testimony of this tiny lady. Think about the hardened ones and the atmosphere within that prison. It says, “She could project such pathos in her voice that even hardened criminals melted and cool observers found themselves in tears.” That is the power of God being able to share with the hungry ones.

Slowly she was able to bring about some changes. Prisoners were segregated, males and females were separated, they had women matrons over the women, hardened criminals were separated from the lesser ones. The training programs were set up to teach the women how to learn a trade such as sewing and doing other things so they could earn a living. Then the women began conducting their own Bible studies daily with prayers and worship. Many similar reforms were made on the ships going to Australia. The change that she made in the prisons was so significant that actually the kings from various countries and royalties from Russia, France, and Germany were all coming over. They wanted to see this prison so that they could change their own systems. These are a couple of quotes from Betsy:

“It is an honor to appear on the side of the afflicted.” Praise God! She had everything going for her in life but she felt it was the greatest honor to be on the side of the afflicted. And for those who are building prisons she had this little piece of advice.

“When thee builds a prison, thee had better build it with the thought ever in thy mind that thee or thy children may occupy the cells.” You

never know where you might end up so build it in case you have to be there.

The next time we will look at the Brethren and we will cover Mueller then. Also various child labor and safety things in work places were carried out by the Clapham Group.

Tom Jones and Mary Jones

One of my favorite stories is about Mary Jones. Tom Charles and Mary Jones founded the British and Foreign Bible Society which made Bibles affordable to everybody in the country. This was the very first Bible Society, and there was a great Bible distribution. We see how the Bible was available then and how it impacted the people as it was made available. Thomas Charles was part of the religious tract society.

Mary Jones was saved when she was eight years old, and she had always wanted a Bible, but the nearest Bible to her house was two miles away. She knew that one of the neighbors had a Bible, but she also knew that twenty-six miles away there lived a man named Thomas Charles who had Bibles for sale. So she saved for eight years, selling eggs, doing errands, and all her little chores around and saved for eight years to be able to afford a Bible. Finally, at the age of sixteen she had saved enough money, and she walked twenty-five miles, and the way the story goes, she was always barefooted—twenty-five miles barefooted to get a Bible. And today we have so many.

There are actually two versions of the story. One version which is the most popular one is that Thomas Charles told her that all the Bibles were already sold because they had been promised to people. But he was so touched by her heart's desire for the Bible that he gave one to her that was already promised. The second story goes that all the Bibles were sold, but there were more coming in two days, and she had to wait two or three days to get a Bible. That detail does not really matter. The issue is her heart for the Bible.

Thomas Charles was able to perceive or to be sensitive enough to see that there was a great need out there for Bibles. So he went back, and the ones who had been part of the Religious Tract Society changed and formed the British and Foreign Bible Society to open the Word of God and make it available to everyone throughout Britain and the world either free or at an affordable price. It had a tremendous impact upon the world obviously as the Bible began to circulate more and more. We have copies of Mary Jones' books here; it is a great little quick read, and she is one of my favorite people.

I mentioned about Adam Smith, and it is always interesting how nonbelievers perceive Christianity. And thanks to a sister, I got a quote this week from a historian and atheist by the name of Tom Holland. He has shows on BBC and also writes books. This is an interesting quote, but just remember that he is an atheist. He said:

"While he was studying the ancient world, he realized the ancients were cruel and their values were utterly foreign to him. They murdered imperfect children, slaves were treated horribly, they were poor and weak and had no rights, and neither did the women. Marriage was not valued at all. It was a pretty accurate picture of what happened during that time. Then he asked the question: 'If that is the way it was there, how did we get from there to here? How did we go from what it was like in that early society of nobody caring for one another and taking advantage, how did we get here?'" Now this is an atheist who said, "It was Christianity. It revolutionized marriage, prohibited all forms of rape, elevated women, and showed concern for all mankind. In short, Christianity utterly transformed the world. In fact, without Christianity and its values the western world would not exist today. Without Christianity man would have self-destructed."

An atheist could see that, but he never came to the Lord. Nevertheless, he saw the impact that Christianity has had. Far more than just improving social conditions, the impact was changing lives, and when we can come to that awakening and really allow the Lord to meet

us in that way, we can really enter into being the testimony that we are called to be.

Summary

So to summarize some of the things we have been saying: We are thankful throughout history there have been ones that realized they were there for such a time as this and responded. As we look today, we need that balance of appreciating what has gone before, but also embracing what is of Him in this generation. And may there be a fresh awakening among the Lord's people in this hour and increased care and concern for one another and the lost. There is so much unrest in this world today. It is easy just to leave it and say, "That's the world." But God has a heart and a care for each one. And may we allow the Lord to continue to work in us, expressing in a real living way the oneness and unity of the body of Christ. While we cannot solve all the racial and social problems in the world, we can in our hearts and lives display the love of Christ to believers and unbelievers, and be the testimony of Jesus that He has called us to be by His grace. So may the Lord help us.

Let's pray:

Lord, we do come and offer ourselves unto You. We are thankful that ones did not just look out and see things as impossible, but they looked up and they saw the God of the impossible. And Lord, we want to be those who keep our eyes looking up and seeing You. Lord, we do not know what we can do today, but we know what You can do and we want to be available to You in this hour to be the testimony of Jesus that You are calling us to be, not just in name but in deed and in truth in our lives. So Lord, encourage us to press on in You, encourage us to be open to You, encourage us to continue seeking You and standing for You and Your interest in this day and time. In Jesus' name. Amen.