

### Hurrying to Hear George Whitefield Preach the Gospel

**As you read this, imagine this same thing happening all along the East Coast of the American Colonies from York, ME, to Savannah, GA. The crowds thronging to hear the Gospel in the urban settings were even larger.**

*In this account farmer Nathan Cole described hearing the news of Whitefield's approach to his Connecticut town, as fields emptied and the populace converged: "Now it pleased God to send Mr. Whitefield into this land; and my hearing of his preaching at Philadelphia, like one of the Old apostles, and many thousands flocking to hear him preach the Gospel, and great numbers were converted to Christ; I felt the Spirit of God drawing me by conviction, longed to see and hear him, and wished he would come this way. And I soon heard he was come to New York and the Jerseys and great multitudes flocking after him under great concern for their Souls and many converted which brought on my concern more and more hoping soon to see him but next I heard he was at Long Island, then at Boston, and next at Northampton.*

Then one morning all on a Sudden, about 8 or 9 o'clock there came a messenger and said Mr. Whitefield preached at Hartford and Weathersfield yesterday and is to preach at Middletown this morning [October 23, 1740] at ten of the Clock. I was in my field at Work. I dropt my tool that I had in my hand and ran home and run through my house and bade my wife get ready quick to go and hear Mr. Whitefield preach at Middletown, and run to my pasture for my horse with all my might fearing that I should be too late to hear him. I brought my horse home and soon mounted and took my wife up and went forward as fast as I thought the horse could bear, and when my horse began to be out of breath, I would get down and put my wife on the Saddle and bid her ride as fast as she could and not Stop or Slack for me except I bad her, and so I would run until I was much out of breath, and then mount my horse again, and so I did several times to favour my horse, we improved every moment to get along as if we were fleeing for our lives, all the while fearing we should be too late to hear the Sermon, for we had twelve miles to ride double in little more than an hour and we went round by the upper housen parish.

And when we came within about half a mile of the road that comes down from Hartford, Weathersfield and Stepney to Middletown; on high land I saw before me a Cloud or fogg rising. I first thought it came from the great river [Connecticut River], but as I came nearer the Road, I heard a noise something like a low rumbling thunder and presently found it was the noise of horses feet coming down the road and this Cloud was a Cloud of dust made by the Horses feet. It arose some Rods into the air over the tops of the hills and trees and when I came within about 20 rods of the Road, I could see men and horses Sliping along in the Cloud like shadows, and as I drew nearer it seemed like a steady stream of horses and their riders, scarcely a horse more than his length behind another, all of a lather and foam with sweat, their breath rolling out of their nostrils in the cloud of dust every jump; every horse seemed to go with all his might to carry his rider to hear news from heaven for the saving of Souls. It made me tremble to see the Sight, how the world was in a Struggle, I found a vacance between two horses to Slip in my horse; and my wife said law our cloaths will be all spoiled see how they look, for they were so covered with dust, that they looked almost all of a colour coats, hats, and shirts and horses.

We went down in the Stream; I heard no man speak a word all the way three miles but every one pressing forward in great haste and when we got to the old meeting house there was a great multitude; it was said to be 3 or 4000 of people assembled together, we got off from our horses and shook off the dust, and the ministers were then coming to the meeting house. I turned and looked towards the great river and saw the ferry boats running swift forward and forward bringing over loads of people; the oars rowed nimble and quick, every thing men horses and boats seemed to be struggling for life; the land and banks over the river looked black with people and horses all along the 12 miles. I saw no man at work in his field, but all seemed to be gone.

When I saw Mr. Whitefield come upon the Scaffold he looked almost angelical, a young, slim slender youth before some thousands of people with a bold undaunted countenance, and my hearing how God was with him every where as he came along it solumnized my mind, and put me into a trembling fear before he began to preach; for he looked as if he was Cloathed with authority from the Great God, and a sweet solemn solemnity sat upon his brow. And my hearing him preach gave me a heart wound; by God's blessing my old foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me."



**Statue of George Whitefield at  
The University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia**

### GEORGE WHITEFIELD

**BORN:** December 16, 1714, in Gloucester, (35 miles to the north of Bristol), at the Bell Inn which his parents owned.

**SAVED:** While at Oxford University, 1735. "I know the place: it may be superstitious, perhaps, but whenever I go to Oxford, I cannot help running to that place where Jesus Christ first revealed Himself to me, and gave me the new birth."

**SERVED:** Preached the Gospel in the British Isles and made seven trips to America, preaching in virtually every important town on the Atlantic seaboard. He preached about **1,000 times every year for 30 years. That included at least 18,000 sermons and 12,000 talks and exhortations. He addressed perhaps 10,000,000 hearers.** About 80% of all American colonists heard him preach at least once

**DIED:** Sunday, September 30, 1770, in Newburyport, MA

Known as the "Great Itinerant," "the traveling lightening rod of the Great Awakening," "the greatest preacher England ever produced," "the greatest evangelist of the century," "America's first celebrity," George Whitefield was the only public figure whose name was known to virtually all colonial Americans.

Whitfield visited Mr. Samuel Moody in York, ME, and preached to his people on at least two different occasions. The last time was in October 1744. It is recorded that Mr. Moody called on Whitfield on his arrival at York and said, "*Sir, you are welcome first to America; secondly, to New England; thirdly, to all faithful ministers in New England; fourthly, to all the good people of New England; fifthly, to all the good people of York; and sixthly and lastly, to me, dear sir, less than the least of all.*"

Ben Franklin wrote of him: "*He had a loud and clear voice, and articulated his words in sentence so perfectly that he might be heard and understood at a great distance, especially as his auditories, however numerous, observed the most exact silence. He preached one evening from the top of the [Philadelphia] Court-house steps, which are in the middle of Market Street, and on the west side of Second Street, which crosses it at right angles. Both streets were filled with his hearers to a considerable distance. Being among the hindmost in Market Street, I had the curiosity to learn how far he could be heard, by retiring backwards down the street towards the river; and I found his voice distinct till I came near Front Street, when some noise in that street obscured it. Imagining then a semicircle, of which my distance should be the radius, and that it were filled with auditors, to each of whom I allow two square feet, I computed that he might well be heard by more than thirty thousand. This reconciled me to the newspaper accounts of his having preached to twenty-five thousand people in the fields ... I knew him intimately upwards of thirty years. His integrity, disinterestedness and indefatigable zeal in prosecuting every good work I have never seen equaled and shall never see excelled.*"