

The Works
of
George Whitefield

Additional Sermons

Quinta Press
2000

Quinta Press

Meadow View, Quinta Crescent, Weston Rhyn, Oswestry,
Shropshire, England, SY10 7RN

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S E R M O N S

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS

BY THE

REV. GEORGE
WHITEFIELD, A.M.

LATE OF PEMBROKE COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT
HON. THE COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON.

WITH A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,

BY SAMUEL DREW, A.M.

AND A

DISSERTATION ON HIS CHARACTER, PREACHING,
&c.

BY THE REV. JOSEPH SMITH.

LONDON:

HENRY FISHER, SON, AND P. JACKSON,

38, NEWGATE STREET

This edition only contains those sermons which do not appear in Volumes 5 and 6 of the Works of George Whitefield.

Sermons LVII.-LXXV. are from *Sermons on Important Subjects* (London, Henry Fisher, Son and P Jackson, 1836) which volume includes the sermons from volumes 5 and 6. These eighteen sermons are mentioned by Whitefield and Gillies on pages 409 of volume 3 of the *Works*. Whitefield's executors attempted to suppress them as not being representative of the preacher.

Sermons 76-78 are from *The Revivals of the Eighteenth Century (particularly at Cambuslang)* by D MacFarlan (Edinburgh, Johnston and Hunter, 1847).

CONTENTS

SERMON LVIII. A Faithful Minister's Parting Blessing.
REVELATION 22:21. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, be with you all. Amen.*
.....11

SERMON LIX. Christ the Believer's Refuge.
PSALM 46:1-6. *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof, Selah. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.*25

SERMON LX. Soul Prosperity.
3 JOHN 2. *Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper, and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.*40

SERMON LXI. The Gospel a Dying Saint's Triumph.—A Funeral Sermon.
MARK 16:15,16. *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.*53

SERMON LXII. Repentance and Conversion.
ACTS 3:19. *Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.*
69

SERMON LXIII. Glorifying God in the Fire; or, the Right Improvement of Afflictions.
ISAIAH 24:15. *Wherefore, glorify ye the Lord in the fires.*83

SERMON LXIV. The Beloved of God.

DEUTERONOMY 33:12. *And of Benjamin, he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.* .94

SERMON LXV. The Furnace of Affliction.

ISAIAH 48:10. *I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.* .107

SERMON LXVI. The Lord Our Light.

ISAIAH 60:19,20. *The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee, but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.* .120

SERMON LXVII. Self-Inquiry Concerning the Work of God.

NUMBERS 23:23. *According to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!* .132

SERMON LXVIII. The Burning Bush.

EXODUS 3:2,3. *And he looked, and behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed; and Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.* .145

SERMON LXIX. Soul Dejection.

PSALM 42:5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, for the help of his countenance.* .157

SERMON LXX. Spiritual Baptism.

ROMANS 6:3,4. *Know you not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ, were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* 168

SERMON LXXI. Neglect of Christ, the Killing Sin.

JOHN 5:40. *And ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.* .181

SERMON LXXII. All Men's Place.

ECCLESIASTES 6:6. *Do not all go to one place?* .196

SERMON LXXIII. God a Believer's Glory.

ISAIAH 60:19. *And thy God thy Glory.*211

SERMON LXXIV. Jacob's Ladder.—A Farewell Sermon.

GENESIS 28:12, &c. *And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land: for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*224

SERMON LXXV. The Good Shepherd.—a Farewell Sermon.

JOHN 10:27, 28. *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.*240

SERMON 76. The Duty of a Gospel Minister.

LUKE 4:18,19. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*255

SERMON 77. The Method of Grace

JEREMIAH 6:14. *They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.*272

SERMON 78. The Kingdom of God.

ROMANS 14:17. *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*290

THE CHARACTER, PREACHING, &c. OF THE REV. GEORGE WHITEFIELD,
BY THE REV. JOSEPH SMITH

JOB 31:17. *I said, I will answer also my part; I also will show my opinion.*
.308

THE WORKS OF GEORGE WHITEFIELD

S E R M O N L V I I I .

A Faithful Minister's Parting Blessing.

REVELATION 22:21.

The grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, be with you all. Amen.

IT is very remarkable that the Old Testament ends with the word curse; whereby we are taught, that the law made nothing perfect: but, blessed be GOD, the New Testament ends otherwise, even a precious blessing, that glorious grace put into the heart, and dropped by the pen of the disciple whom JESUS loved.

My brethren, as the providence of GOD calls us now to bid each other a long farewell, can I part from you better than in enlarging a little upon this short but glorious prayer? Can I wish you, or you me, better in time and eternity, than that the words of our text may be fulfilled in our hearts, *the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST be with you all, Amen?* In opening which,

First, It will be proper to explain what we are to understand by the word grace.

Secondly, What by the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and its being with us all; and then to observe upon the word Amen: showing you why it is that every one of us may wish, that the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST may be with us all.

Perhaps there is not a word in the book of GOD, that has a greater variety of interpretations put upon it than this little, this great word grace: I do not intend to spin out, or waste the time by giving you all. It will be enough in general to observe, that the word grace signifies favour, or may imply the general kindness that GOD bears to the world; but it signifies that here, which I pray GOD we may all experience, I mean the grace, the special grace of the blessed GOD communicated to his people; not only his favour displayed to us outwardly, but the work of

the blessed Spirit imparted and conveyed inwardly and most powerfully to our souls, and this is what our church in the catechism calls special grace. For though JESUS CHRIST in one respect is the Saviour of all, and we are to offer (preach) JESUS CHRIST universally to all, yet he is said in a special manner to be the Saviour of them that believe. So that the word grace is a very complex word, and takes in all that the blessed Spirit of GOD does for a poor sinner, from the moment he first draws his breath, and brings him to JESUS CHRIST, till he is pleased to call him by death. And as it is begun in grace, it will be swallowed up in an endless eternity of glory hereafter; this is called the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Why so? because it is purchased (procured) for us by the LORD JESUS CHRIST: the law was given by *Moses*, but grace and truth, in the most emphatical manner, came by JESUS CHRIST the Son of GOD. If it were not for the purchase of a Mediator's blood, if it were not that JESUS CHRIST had bought us with a price, even with the price of his own blood, you and I should never have had, you and I could never have had, the grace of GOD manifested at all to our souls. The covenant of works being broken, our first parents stood convicted before GOD: they were criminals, though they did not care to own it; condemned before GOD, and in themselves, so that like their children they make excuses for their sin. Man by nature had but one neck, and, if GOD had pleased to have done it, he might justly have cut it off at one blow; but no sooner had man incurred the curse of the law, but behold a Mediator is provided, under the character of the Seed of the woman, which should bruise the serpent's head: implying what the Redeemer was first to do without, and afterwards to do in the hearts of all his people. Well, therefore, are we taught in our church collects to end all our prayers with the words, *through JESUS CHRIST our LORD*.

Moreover, brethren, this grace may be called the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, because it is not only purchased (procured) by him, but it is conveyed into our hearts through CHRIST. The federal head of his glorious body, is a head of influence to those for whom he shed his blood. Thus his disciples said, he was full

of grace and truth, and out of his fullness we, all that are true believers, receive grace for grace. Grace upon grace, says Mr *Blackwall*, in his *Sacred Classics*. Grace for grace, that is, says *Luther*, every grace that is in CHRIST JESUS, will be by his blessed Spirit transcribed into every believer's heart, even as the warm wax receives the impress of the seal upon it. As there is line upon line upon the seal left upon the wax, so in a degree, though we come greatly short of what the law requires, the grace that is in JESUS CHRIST is, in a measure, implanted in our souls; but the LORD JESUS CHRIST, blessed be GOD, has our stock in his hands. GOD trusted man once, but never will more. He set *Adam* up, gave him a blessed stock, placed him in a paradise of love, and he soon became a bankrupt, some think in twenty-four hours, however; all agree it was in six or seven days, and that he never had but one sabbath. But now, blessed be GOD, we are under a better dispensation, our stock is put into CHRIST's hands, he knows how to keep it, and us too. So this grace may be said to be the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, secured by his blood, and conveyed to our souls by his being the head of his church and people. This grace has a variety of epithets put to it, and I question whether there is any kind of grace but what the LORD JESUS CHRIST exercises towards his people some way or other, every hour, every moment of the day.

First, His restraining grace; why, if it were not for this, GOD's people would be just as weak and wicked as other folks are. Remember what *David* said when *Abigail* came to him; he was going to kill a neighbour for affronting him, forgot that he was a psalmist, and was only acting as a creature. Blessed be GOD, says he, that has sent thee to meet, and keep me. My brethren, we may talk what we please, and build upon our own stock; we are just like little children, that will walk by themselves. Well, says the father, walk alone then. They tumble down, get a broken brow, and then are glad to take hold of the father. Thus JESUS CHRIST is always acting in a restraining way to his people. If it were not so, by the blindness of their understandings, the corruptions of their hearts and affections, together with the perverseness of their will, alas! alas! there is not a child of GOD

that would not run away every day, if CHRIST did not restrain him!

Secondly, There is convicting grace, which from the LORD JESUS CHRIST acts every day and hour. Oh! it is a blessed thing to be under the Redeemer's convicting grace? A man may speak to the ear, but it is the Spirit of GOD alone can speak to the heart. I am not speaking of convicting grace that wounds before conversion, and gives us a sense of our sin and misery. No, I mean convicting grace, that follows the believer from time to time. If a heathen *Socrates* could say, that he had always a monitor with him to check him when he did amiss, and direct him when he went right, surely the Christian may say, and blessed be GOD for it, that he has got a JESUS that kindly shows him when he goes astray, and by his grace puts him into the way of righteousness, that his feet may not slip. This is what the shepherd does to his sheep, when they have wandered. What does the shepherd do, but sends some little cur, his dog after them, to bring them to the fold again? What does JESUS CHRIST do in temptations, trials, and afflictions? He fetches his people home, and convinces them that they have done amiss.

Then, *Thirdly*, There is the converting grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Oh! what poor unhappy creatures are they, that think they can turn to GOD when they please, to which abominable principle it is owing, that they leave it till they cannot turn in their beds. Satan tells them then, it is too late, their consciences are filled with horror, and they go off in a whirlwind; may this be the case of none here! That is a most excellent prayer in our Communion Office, *Turn us, O good LORD, and we shall be turned.* We can no more turn our hearts than we can turn the world upside-down. it is the Redeemer by his Spirit, must take away the heart of stone, and by the influence of the holy Spirit give us a heart of flesh. I might as well attempt to reach the heavens with my hand. I might as well go to some church-yard, and command the dead to rise. I might as soon shake my handkerchief, and bid the streams divide, and they give way, as to expect a soul to turn to GOD without the grace of the Mediator. Come, my dear hearers, I am of a good man's opinion,

that prayed he might be converted every day. In the divine life, not to go forwards is to go backwards; and it is one great part of the work of the Spirit of GOD, to convert the soul from something that is wrong to something that is right, every day, hour, and moment of the believer's life, so that in short his life is one continued act of converting grace. There is not a day but there is something wrong; there is something we want to have taken away; we want to get rid of the old man, and to get more of the new man; and so the Spirit of GOD works every day. O! my brethren, GOD give us more of this converting grace!

Then there is establishing grace. *David prays, Create in me a new heart, and renew a right spirit within me;* in the margin, it is, constant spirit; and you hear of some that are rooted and grounded in the love of GOD, and the apostle prays, that they may always abound in the work of the LORD. Again, it is good to have the heart established with grace. There is a good many people have some religion in them, but they are not established. Hence they are mere weather-cocks, turned about by every wind of doctrine; and you may as soon measure the moon for a suit of clothes, as some people that are always changing. This is for want of more grace, more of the Spirit of GOD; and as children grow that are got stronger and riper, so as people grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, they will be more settled, more confirmed. On first setting out they prattle, but they will be more manly, more firm, more steady. Young Christians are like little rivulets, that make a great noise, and have shallow water. Old Christians are like deep water, that makes little noise, carries a good load, and gives not way.

What think you, my brethren, of the Redeemer's comforting grace? O! what can you do without it? *In the multitude of my thoughts within me,* says the psalmist, *thy comforts have refreshed my soul.* I believe you will all find what lord *Bolinbroke*, in spite of all his fine learning and deistical principles found when under affliction; he sent a letter, which I saw and heard read to me, at least that part of it in which he says, *Now I am under this affliction, I find my philosophy fails me.* With all our philosophy and striving, it is too hard to work ourselves into a passive state.

Alas! it is commendable to strive, but we shall never be content, we shall never be cheerful under sufferings, but through the assistance of the Redeemer. Even now, in respect of parting from one another, what can comfort friends when separated, but the Spirit of GOD? *Paul*, when going away for *Jerusalem*, said, *What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart?* He also says, *I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the LORD JESUS*, which he could not have said, had he not felt the comforting grace of JESUS CHRIST. Our LORD, when going away, says, *I will send the Comforter*; I will not leave you comfortless and helpless, I will come again: the LORD helps the believer from time to time. We can easily, my brethren, talk when not under the rod ourselves. There is not a physician or apothecary in London, but can give good advice, yet when they are sick themselves, poor souls! they are just like their patients, and many times are more impatient than those they used to preach patience to. To it is with the greatest Christian, we are all men of like passions, there is not one of us, when under the rod, if left to ourselves, but would curse GOD, and, *Ephraim*-like, be as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, and there are many here, I do not doubt, that have said to the Redeemer, *What dost thou?* Or, perhaps, with *Jonah*, we do well to be angry; if the LORD does but take away his gourd from us, if he is pleased to balk us in regard to the creatures, how uncomfortable are we! And there are so many afflictions and trials, that if it were not for the LORD JESUS CHRIST'S comfortings, no flesh could bear them.

In a word, what think you, my brethren, of the quickening grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST? Remember *David* says, *Quicken me according to thy word, quicken me in thy way, quicken me in thy righteousness*. GOD'S people want quickening every day; this is trimming our lamps, girding up the loins of our minds, stirring up the gift of GOD that is in us. It is just with a soul as it is with the plants and trees; how would it be with them, if the LORD did not command quickening life to them after the winter? The believer has his frosty and winter days, and woe be to them that think they have always a summer. The believer at times

can say, *The winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the times of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land, the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell, Canticles 2:12.* What is all this but GOD'S quickening grace, restoring the believer to his blessed joy. Oh! my brethren, I have not time to show you in how many ways the Redeemer's grace is displayed; but wherever this grace is, what reason have you that are partakers of it, and I, to pray that it may be with us all—the *grace of our* LORD JESUS CHRIST, says *John* here, be with you all: it is not said all ministers, it is not said all of this or that particular people, but with all believers. O! my friends, remember what Mr *Henry* said, he desired to be a *Catholic*, but not a *Roman Catholic*. I have often thought since I went to see the water-works, that it was an emblem of CHRIST: there is a great reservoir of water from which this great city is supplied; but how is it supplied from that reservoir? Why, by hundreds and hundreds of pipes: but where does this water go, does it go only to the dissenters or to the church people, only to this or that people? No, the pipes convey the water to all; and I remember when I saw it, it put me in mind of the great reservoir of grace, that living water that is in CHRIST JESUS, and the pipes are the ordinances by which his grace is conveyed to all believing souls. GOD grant we may be of that happy number. O what a mercy it is that CHRIST has said, I will be with you always, even to the end of the world, *Matthew 28:20*, and therefore we must look upon this prayer to be as efficacious now, as it was the moment the words dropped from the apostle's pen. I believe the most minute philosophers, and those that have the greatest skill in astronomy, cannot perceive there has been any abatement in the heat of the sun since GOD first commanded it to rule the day. Then surely, if my GOD can make a sun that for so many thousands of years shall irradiate, enlighten, and warm the world, without losing any of its light and heat, so does the Sun of righteousness, the Son of GOD, arise upon the children of GOD with healing under his wings; he raises, warms, nourishes, and comforts his people, and we have the gospel on the ends

of the earth, as well as those who had the honour of conversing with him in the days of his flesh. I mention this in answer to all those who have wrote against the *Methodists*, and represented them as fanatics. There is no other way of talking against the divine influence, but by allowing it was so formerly, but that it is not so now. They say the primitive Christians had it, but it is not to be so with us now as it was formerly. O my brethren what fools these great men are when they talk about things they know nothing of. Give them a polyglot, give them a lexicon, give them a geographical text, or the chronological part of the Scripture they have something to say; but when they come to talk of the Spirit of GOD they see the word Spirit, and they read the word grace but while they read it, their hearts cry, because their knowledge puffs them up. Surely if it were so we great men that have been in the university should have it. GOD would give it us; and because they find it not in themselves, their abominable pride will not own it may be in any. Pray what was *Peter, James, and John*? I do not mean to speak disrespectfully of them—they were as weak, as blind, as obstinate, and worldly-minded as others till JESUS CHRIST changed their hearts; and that same grace that changed their hearts changes now the hearts of GOD'S people; and blessed be GOD that same grace is with all his people.

It is so in his ordinances. Where is the difference between a formalist and a Christian. The formalist goes to ordinances but then he does not feel the GOD of ordinances and that is the reason most formal people do not care to go to church very often. Who cares to go to the house of a person he does not love? They will only just knock at the door, and ask if such a person is at home, and are very glad to hear the servants say their master or mistress is not at home. The visit is paid: so it is with many people that go to church and meeting; and I do not doubt but there are many *Methodists*, hundreds and hundreds, that have been at the ordinances who never felt the GOD of ordinances converting them to this day.

The grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST is with his people in prayer. Who can pray without grace? They may laugh at it as

they will but GOD give you and I a spirit of prayer. Let them laugh as they please; what profit will it be to us to read this book, without the grace of GOD? What a horrid blunder has the bishop of G_____r been guilty of! What do you think his lordship says, in order to expose the fanaticism of the *Methodists*? Why, says he, they say they cannot understand the Scriptures without the Spirit of GOD.—Can any man understand the Scriptures without the Spirit of GOD helps him? JESUS CHRIST must open our understanding to understand the Scriptures, and the Spirit of GOD must take of the things of CHRIST, and show them unto us. As we are taught to pray, O LORD, thou hast caused thy holy Scriptures to be written, &c. as in the second *Sunday* in *Advent*; and here the bishop pretends to tell us, there is no need of it; here our collect and bishop disagree very much. So with respect to all ordinances, it is the same: what signifies my preaching, and your hearing, if the Spirit of GOD does not enlighten? Formal ministers can steal a sermon, and add a little out of their own heads, but a minister of the gospel cannot preach to purpose without the assistance of the Spirit of GOD, no more than a ship can sail without wind. As for a carnal man, he may take his sermon in his pocket, and you will find his sermons always the same; but spiritual preachers are seldom so. Sometimes they are in darkness, so as to speak to those that are in darkness; sometimes they are tempted, so as to speak to those that are tempted; sometimes they have a full gale, and go before the wind, and this is all by the assistance of the Spirit of GOD, and without this, a man may preach like an angel, and do no good at all. So, in respect to hearing the word of GOD, I declare I would not preach again, if I did not think that GOD would accompany the word by his Spirit. What are we but *sounding brass and tinkling cymbals*? If the word is preached in the strength of the Spirit, it will be attended with convictions and conversions, and the grace of GOD will be both with preacher and hearer.

The grace of GOD is with his people in *his providence*. Oh! says bishop *Hall*, a little aid is not enough for me.—My going on the waters puts me in mind of what I have seen many times. If

the sailors perceive a storm coming, they do not choose to speak to the passengers, for fear of frightening them; they will go quietly on deck, and give orders for proper care to be taken; and if a sailor can tell of storms approaching, by the clouds, why cannot GOD's people tell why GOD does so and so with them? The people of GOD eye him in his providence; the very hairs of their heads are all numbered, and the grace of GOD is with them in the common business of life. Some people think that the METHODISTS preach so and so, to make them neglect their business, and we preach at unseasonable times. We would not preach at this time, but that we are going to part from one another. No, we preach that the grace of GOD may attend them in their counting-houses, and woe be to those persons that do not take the grace of GOD with them into their counting-houses, and in their common business! O what blessed times would it be, if every one made the grace of GOD their employ, that when the LORD comes he may say, LORD, here I am waiting for thee.

The grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST is with his people when sick and when *dying*.—O my dear souls, what shall we do when death comes! What a mercy it is that we have got a good Master to carry us through that time! As a poor converted negro that saw a believer who was dying in comfort, said, Master, do not fear, JESUS CHRIST will carry you safe through the dark valley of the shadow of death.—But the time would fail, if I were to show you in how many respects the grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST helps us; but what I have said will show, that we need all join in a hearty Amen; Amen, I pray GOD it may be so, so it is, so may it be! May be what? Why, that *the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, convicting, restraining, converting, establishing and comforting grace*, may be with us in his ordinances, in his providences, in sickness, and when dying: then, blessed be GOD, we shall carry it with us after time. And now, my dear hearers, by the help of my GOD, in whose strength I desire once more to go upon the waters, I shall pray, wherever I am, that this *grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST may be with you all*.

To whom shall I speak first by way of improvement? Are there any of you here unconverted? No doubt, too many. Are