

doctrine, could never fail to understand what he meant. His style of speaking was easy, plain, and conversational. He seemed to abhor long and involved sentences. He always saw his mark, and went directly at it. He seldom troubled his hearers with abstruse argument and intricate reasoning. Simple Bible statements, apt illustrations, and pertinent anecdotes, were the more common weapons that he used. The consequence was that his hearers always understood him. He never shot above their heads. Here again is one grand element of a preacher's success. He must labour by all means to be understood. It was a wise saying of Archbishop Usher, "To make easy things seem hard is every man's work; but to make hard things easy is the work of a great preacher."

For another thing, Whitefield was a singularly *bold and direct* preacher. He never used that indefinite expression "we," which seems so peculiar to English pulpit oratory, and which only leaves a hearer's mind in a state of misty confusion. He met men face to face, like one who had a message from God to them, "I have come here to speak to you about your soul." The result was that many of his hearers used often to think that his sermons were specially meant for themselves. He was not content, as many, with sticking on a meagre tail-piece of application at the end of a long discourse. On the contrary, a constant vein of application ran through all his sermons. "This is for you, and this is for you." His hearers were never let alone.

Another striking feature in Whitefield's preaching was *his singular power of description*. The Arabians have a proverb which says, "He is the best orator who can turn men's ears into eyes." Whitefield seems to have had a peculiar faculty of doing this. He dramatized his subject so thoroughly that it seemed to move and walk before your eyes. He used to draw such vivid pictures of the things he was handling, that his hearers could believe they actually saw and heard them. "On one occasion," says one of his biographers, "Lord Chesterfield

was among his hearers. The great preacher, in describing the miserable condition of an unconverted sinner, illustrated the subject by describing a blind beggar. The night was dark, and the road dangerous. The poor mendicant was deserted by his dog near the edge of a precipice, and had nothing to aid him in groping his way but his staff. Whitefield so warmed with his subject, and enforced it with such graphic power, that the whole auditory was kept in breathless silence, as if it saw the movements of the poor old man; and at length, when the beggar was about to take the fatal step which would have hurled him down the precipice to certain destruction, Lord Chesterfield actually made a rush forward to save him, exclaiming aloud, 'He is gone! he is gone!' The noble lord had been so entirely carried away by the preacher, that he forgot the whole was a picture."

Another leading characteristic of Whitefield's preaching was his *tremendous earnestness*. One poor uneducated man said of him, that "he preached like a lion." He succeeded in showing people that he at least believed all he was saying, and that his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, were bent on making them believe it too. His sermons were not like the morning and evening gun at Portsmouth, a kind of formal discharge, fired off as a matter of course, that disturbs nobody. They were all life and fire. There was no getting away from them. Sleep was next to impossible. You must listen whether you liked it or not. There was a holy violence about him which firmly took your attention by storm. You were fairly carried off your legs by his energy before you had time to consider what you would do. This, we may be sure, was one secret of his success. We must convince men that we are in earnest ourselves, if we want to be believed. The difference between one preacher and another, is often not so much in the things said, as in the manner in which they are said.

It is recorded by one of his biographers that an American

shortest address; as Ezekiel, in his vision of the temple, saw that even to the little chambers there were windows suitable to their size. If we are faithful to the spirit of the gospel we labour to make things plain: it is our study to be simple and to be understood by the most illiterate of our hearers: let us, then, set forth many a metaphor and parable before the people. He wrote wisely who said, "The world below me is a glass in which I may see the world above. The works of God are the shepherd's calendar and the ploughman's alphabet." Having nothing to conceal, we have no ambition to be obscure. Lycophron declared that he would hang himself upon a tree if he found a person who could understand his poem entitled "The Prophecy of Cassandra." Happily no one arose to drive him to such a misuse of timber. We think we could find brethren in the ministry who might safely run the same risk in connection with their sermons. Still have we among us those who are like Heracitus, who was called "the Dark Doctor," because his language was beyond all comprehension. Certain mystical discourses are so dense that if light were admitted into them it would be extinguished like a torch in the Grotta del Cane: they are made up of the palpably obscure and the inexplicably involved, and all hope of understanding them may be abandoned. This style of oratory we do not cultivate. We are of the same mind as Joshua Shute, who said: "That sermon has most learning in it that has most plainness. Hence it is that a great scholar was wont to say, 'Lord, give me learning enough, that I may preach plain enough.'"

Windows greatly add to the pleasure and agreeableness of a habitation, and so do *illustrations make a sermon pleasurable and interesting*. A building without windows would be a prison rather than a house, for it would be quite dark, and no one would care to take it upon lease; and, in the same way, a discourse without a parable is prosy and dull, and involves a grievous weariness of the flesh. The preacher in Solomon's Ecclesiastes "sought to find out acceptable words," or, as the Hebrew has it, "words of delight": surely, figures and comparisons are delectable to our hearers. Let us not deny them the salt of parable with the meat of doctrine. Our congregations hear us with pleasure when we give them a fair measure of imagery: when an anecdote is being told they rest, take breath, and give play to their imaginations, and thus prepare themselves for the sterner work which lies before them in listening to our profounder expositions. Riding in a third-class carriage some years ago in the eastern counties, we

had been for a long time without a lamp; and when a traveller lighted a candle, it was pleasant to see how all eyes turned that way, and rejoiced in the light: such is frequently the effect of an apt simile in the midst of a sermon, it lights up the whole matter, and gladdens every heart. Even the little children open their eyes and ears, and a smile brightens up their faces as we tell a story; for they, too, rejoice in the light which streams in through our windows. We dare say they often wish that the sermon were all illustrations, even as the boy desired to have a cake made all of plums; but that must not be: there is a happy medium, and we must keep to it by making our discourse pleasant hearing, but not a mere pastime. No reason exists why the preaching of the gospel should be a miserable operation either to the speaker or to the hearer. Pleasantly profitable let all our sermons be. A house must not have thick walls without openings, neither must a discourse be all made up of solid slabs of doctrine without a window of comparison or a lattice of poetry; if so, our hearers will gradually forsake us, and prefer to stay at home and read their favourite authors whose lively tropes and vivid images afford more pleasure to their minds.

Every architect will tell you that he looks upon his windows as *an opportunity for introducing ornament into his design*. A pile may be massive, but it cannot be pleasing if it is not broken up with windows and other details. The palace of the popes at Avignon is an immense structure; but the external windows are so few that it has all the aspect of a colossal prison, and suggests nothing of what a palace should be. Sermons need to be broken up, varied, decorated, and enlivened; and nothing can do this so well as the introduction of types, emblems, and instances. Of course, ornament is not the main point to be considered; but still, many little excellences go to make up perfection, and this is one of the many, and therefore it should not be overlooked. When wisdom built her house she heaved out her seven pillars, for glory and for beauty, as well as for the support of the structure; and shall we think that any rough hovel is good enough for the beauty of holiness to dwell in? Certainly a gracious discourse is none the better for being bereft of every grace of language. Meretricious ornament we deprecate, but an appropriate beauty of speech we cultivate. Truth is a king's daughter, and her raiment should be of wrought gold; her house is a palace, and it should be adorned with "windows of agate and gates of carbuncle."

*Illustrations tend to enliven an audience and quicken attention.*

## Homework For March 23, 2016

1. **Read** AN Martin's lecture notes for Lec. #1 Unit IV
2. **Listen** to Lectures #27 & #28 Lecture Notes #2 & #3 Unit IV
3. **Do a careful exegesis and outline of Ephesians 2:8-10.** I would like you to consult at least 3 commentaries. (Extra Credit: What is the debate about what the phrase "it is the gift of God" is referring to? What are the 2 options? Which do you go with?)

4. **Do a full Textual Sermon Outline:**

Introduction, Body (with main points and sub points, illustrations) and Application

Once again you are preaching to a mixed congregation similar to Crossroads.

5. **Copy the sermon** for all the class and **come prepared to present** your outline from the front.

We will not be preaching the sermons...I just want you to explain how you would preach this passage. This is all we will do in the class and yet you will each only have about 7 minutes.