

Prepare Ourselves for a Spiritual Awakening

by Gary Miller

The sermon encourages listeners to prepare themselves for spiritual awakening by building a personal prayer life with Jesus Christ, being a messenger for God's message, and trusting that He will make a way even if rejected.

Duration: 1:19:58

Scripture: Romans 10:13

Topics: "Spiritual Awakening", "Prayer and Preparation"

Description

Gary Miller emphasizes the need for spiritual awakening, drawing inspiration from historical figures like George Whitfield and Jonathan Edwards. He highlights the importance of prayer, personal relationship with God, and the role of preachers in spreading the Gospel. Miller encourages the audience to prepare themselves for a coming awakening by being messengers of God's word and not losing focus on their calling. He reminds them that spiritual awakening is a community experience, saturated by God's presence, and urges them to be proactive in their faith. The message culminates in a call to action, urging individuals to be like Whitfield, who passionately pursued his mission despite challenges.

Transcript

One of the challenges that we all face as pastors and people and praying for spiritual awakening is how does this happen because we've not really seen this and we need a model. We need some way to follow and as best I know Michael provides a model you know for us but there have been men of centuries ago that have helped pave the way for something that we've never seen and my challenge to you this morning is for us to take a look at a man and not so much that he was a man to be worshipped but look at a man that might give us some insights as pastor and people how we can prepare ourselves for the spiritual awakening that I believe is coming. I cut my teeth as a young gun, a youth minister in the 1970s on the Jesus Revolution.

Michael and I entered into ministry together in those years and I think in July we'll make 30 years that we've known each other and from our earliest days of conversation about ministry as just young guns we were just counting on the fact that we could be part of something that only God could get credit for and I've just never been able to shake that that I could be part of something that only God could get credit for because anything that is man-made has to be sustained by the energy of man and I love what I heard from Bill Stafford last night and Michael and all that was shared about desperation and I shared this a

couple of years ago when first time I was a part of refresh and I've not been able to shake this thought that you know it's all right to be desperate just don't be despondent. We are desperate but we're not despondent. This has happened before and if there is breath in our lungs, if there is a word from God in our ears then all we need to do is just move forward as in that crash of rhinos we just move through things that may appear to be obstacles to others but we just move forward with the promises of God.

I give you a word this morning out of the book of Romans because I believe this is a passage that epitomized the man that I want to introduce to you this morning and I say introduce guardedly because I feel very confident the people in this room know who I'm talking about but as Michael and I were talking just a few moments before the service began today Warren Wearsby has given some encouragement that he said if I were to pastor again I would introduce some of these people in vignettes in my messages and I've been thinking about stuff like that but I don't I'm not Warren Wearsby and so if I do up here that's really a stupid thing to do but if Warren says it you know I'm doing this because Warren Wearsby said it so it seems to give a little credibility but in Romans chapter 10 if you

would look with me at a passage that I know you're familiar with that in verse 13 beginning in verse 13 for whoever for whoever for whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved how then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed and how shall they believe in him in whom they have not heard and how shall they hear without a preacher and how shall they preach unless they are sent just as it is written how beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things in the formative years of this nation there was a man that God gave a vision deep in his heart a vision and a passion for what was not a nation at that time we were a group of separated colonies very competitive each a independent country in its own right each with a different kind of charter

from a different king and and having very little communication from Massachusetts Bay Colony down into Georgia and all along the eastern seaboard that's all we had is as a formative fledgling you know country independent groups that really didn't have much communication with one another fastest form of transportation was a horse and there were no roads that you could ride on and so you had to move through all kinds of restrictions in order to get mail or to get some kind of communication and so separate separate and very weak and not joined together as we are today as a great nation and God laid on the heart of a man in England named George Whitfield to begin to have a passion for setting up a ministry in Georgia and that ministry still in Georgia outside of Savannah there is still the

Bethesda orphanage and he raised what is equivalent to millions of dollars today to be able to establish an orphanage in in Georgia and and and to think of the times of those days when it would take eight to ten weeks to travel across the Atlantic Ocean he made 13 trips in 30 years from England to America and with a dual vision of fanning the flame of spiritual awakening while at the same time falling in love with the American people and he was from England trained as a as a as a theologian there he was a contemporary of John Wesley and Charles Wesley though they were his dear friends although there are people today who would like for us to think that Whitfield as a Calvinist and and as an Armenian representative Wesley that they had a you know arguments together they may have had some

disagreements but they loved each other deeply and I've been reading volumes of works on Whitfield's personal correspondence with Wesley and it's it's always the other people outside of their personal relationship with these guys that were always trying to break them apart because they had different agendas but these were giant men and giants usually have room for other people around them and so don't don't let anybody make you believe that there was war between these two men because they had a

deep abiding personal love for one another that that that that outlived both of them if you read their letters you'll you'll discover that but but most importantly for the passion that I want to put before you today about this man what that would mean to you and to me as we begin to fan the flame

of spiritual awakening is is rooted in the fact that there have been 57 great awakenings from 1100 A.D. until 1972 documented by a gentleman named Brian Edwards if you can get any kind of his works go ahead and do so you'd be very very impressed but what he has to say about spiritual awakening he describes spiritual awakening as a community totally saturated by the presence of God that's what spiritual awakening is it's not a high attendance day in your church it's not about a localized event in your own congregation but it's when society as a whole is changed and influenced by by something that only God can get credit for and so what we know about these men particularly John Wesley and we know about Whitfield is that something burned in their soul as young men as they were touched by

what was happening in 1727 with the Moravian awakening when that was happening in what was today I would guess a pretty close to Czechoslovakia places of that nature Bohemia in those days it was a place that broke out through Count von Zinzendorf and on his estate people established a prayer meeting that lasted over a hundred years daily and and people by the by the thousands were influenced by these men and women in this this small remote little area where they were huddled together praying because they were they were persecuted if they went anywhere else as as Protestants as as believers in Jesus Christ and a personal walk with him and so they became missionaries all over the world and Wesley himself was influenced by them as he traveled from England over to Georgia for the first time

and and they were having one of these tremendous storms on the Atlantic and those Moravian missionaries were standing on the decks of the ship just singing and the captain would say to them you're going to die and they said shout back we died before we came I mean these folks just had a passion for Jesus long before a southern Baptist ever had any kind of understanding about world missions I have traveled in East Africa and worked as a missionary there and I've gone back into places that you can't get to by Land Rover can't get to by what they call picky piggies these little motorcycles and you'd have to hack your way through and you think I'm going to be the first white man to ever be here and you come into a clearing and here's a three-story Moravian Cathedral built in the in the 1800s

before southern Baptists even knew Lottie Moon was I mean it's just something that that we need to know that this this can I tell you this God doesn't need us and as Baptists we can sometimes bust our chest out with pride over our mission effort and and God has to be saying you know if you guys had listened to me this thing would be a whole lot bigger but I want us to just understand that that George Whitfield and Wesley were moved as young men as college students by something that got hold of them they wanted a piece of that action if that makes sense to you and to me and that's something that I can relate to and in the first great awakening that began to be sparked in Northampton Massachusetts under the ministry of a gentleman named Jonathan Edwards there was in 1734 to 1747 an

awakening in a town of 1200 people that began to move throughout all of New England and within a matter of 10 years there were over 300,000 people saved that had come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior had a tremendous impact not just in Massachusetts began to spill over into the other colonies because a man like George Whitfield became personally involved with Jonathan Edwards and and began to fan those flames please let me share a little scripture with you that means a lot to me as I pastor a small church in Runaway Bay Texas it's found in Zechariah and in Zechariah 4 it talks about something that's so important for all of us in verse 10 that we should never despise the day of can you say

it with me small things I pastor a church that's in a community of 1200 the great

awakening that was initiated by God in this country between 1734 to 1747 in a little town of Northampton take a wild guess what the population was of Northampton Massachusetts 1200 and God listen you may think where you are today that there's no way that God could use me as a model or use me as a catalyst for spiritual waking I want to urge you to just take to heart some encouragement today that God has you as that messenger that he describes in Romans that that without you there's no way they're going to be able to hear there's no way they're going to be able to believe and you stand at the threshold I believe you stand at the threshold of what we will be able to say is the greatest spiritual awakening that this nation has ever seen I called out to God for it every day I hope you do as

well and understand that that's what these guys did they didn't get a four color marketing brochure they didn't come up with a way to water down church to become the emerging church which I call the submerging church I just simply want you to understand that they got on their knees before God and Whitfield was one of these men that was a man of prayer and listen prayer was something he epitomized praying without ceasing you'll be reading his letters and it's hard to separate his letter writing from his praying because as he's writing a letter all of a sudden he just breaks out into prayer as he's writing and in conversation with some of the most perhaps we would say mundane thing whether or whatever he's all of a sudden he's just talking to God with this person in conversation through

letters so whether it was through prayer or letter writing whether it was through his preaching he had a way of saturating himself personally with the presence of God folks that's where it all begins it's not like what old gypsy Smith said years ago that whenever he would go into preach a revival in a city he would take a piece of chalk in that church or on the sidewalk of that city and he would just draw a circle around himself and said God I'm praying for revival or break loose in this town but I want it to begin right here in this circle listen if you don't leave refreshed without any other word than a word for you believe me God can take that and you become a Whitfield in your community as you begin to fan the flame of something that really only God can begin listen if we really do

believe this that we want to be part of something that only God can do then it's really not up to you G.

Campbell Morgan put it this way that that prayer is how we set our sails for the wind of heaven listen folks that's what this is about this weekend just to kind of gather you together in a in a in what I can we call it a crash where we begin to hear from God I've been studying in James this past week how we're encouraged to to to listen more be quick to what be quick to hear and to put away all filthiness and I found out that that word filthiness is related to the word in the Greek for earwax that you know do you go to bed at night shoving wax in your ears probably not but my guess is you wake up in the morning where did that come from I mean listen folks that we just have a world that is filled with filthiness and you and I must have a conscious effort made by us to clean our ears out so

that we can hear God faith comes by hearing hearing by the Word of God and so Whitfield got that Whitfield in his earliest years of understanding grasped that this was very very basic whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved now that's the kind of Calvinist I can live with because he never lost the focus of his message he never lost the focus of his message you must be born again listen it may not come through you there are two little guys that are with us this week I appreciate the way y'all have treated them and let them feel a part of what's going on both of these little guys have gotten saved in the past three months and the five-year-old he was sitting right in front of you you know last night and he was at a

friend's house his mother overheard this conversation and

he's sitting with this little friend they're playing and he said hey Cecil do you know where you're gonna go when you die and Cecil said no he said well you got two choices you're going to heaven or you're going to hell and Cecil said really yeah you see you go to heaven if you ask Jesus into your heart have you ever done that Cecil said no he said well Cecil we can deal with that we can settle that right now these are the only two deacons I've got in my church one's five and one seven because until you have deacons that get that you don't need them now I thought good lord what's that all about you know this may not be about me this may not be about me having my name in lights this may not be about me being able to say look what I did I told Bill Stafford when he came out to our church in

December I said you know I've reached the point in my life where I just want to be a woodpecker pecking away at the tree when lightning strikes and all people see is fire and feathers I mean that's it I mean that's it you know where'd Miller go whatever happened to him on my tombstone I wanted to say next because God doesn't need you he doesn't need you in the beauty of this gentleman's life is that he read something that Jonathan Edwards wrote in 1737 a faithful narrative of the surprising work of God what was the last time you were surprised at what God does in your church I mean we're so scheduled to the max and we've got it so fit within a time frame that the Holy Spirit couldn't break in without an axe handle you know what you and I must understand these were men and Jonathan Edwards

today is still recognized one of the greatest philosophers and theologians Americans that have ever produced and as Whitfield read that in England said I want to get in on some of that action he comes over to Georgia establishes an orphanage personal friend with Governor Oglethorpe at that time Oglethorpe had sent Wesley home so we don't need preachers like you but there's a statue in Savannah Square dedicated to Wesley there's a statue there there's a Whitfield Square in Savannah today with no statue I have a dream someday to be able to put up a statue of Whitfield because they ran Wesley out of town but Whitfield still has a orphanage there and he didn't call it by his name in Bethesda but I've stood in that square in Savannah I said God would you give us that kind of passion again

would you give us men who have a heart for nothing but seeing people come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and and would you have us be unified from Georgia to Massachusetts from from Florida all the way to California could we be part of something that he had a vision for and a dream for that it wasn't just about him having his name and lights but he gave himself passionately to the call that he heard as a young man listen it's all about hearing God it's all about hearing God the best way Whitfield found for cleaning out the earwax was to build a personal prayer life with Jesus Christ personal intimate consistent companionship with Jesus I don't know how else to explain that to you but he is quoted but not given credit for it by introducing this word and phrase your extremity is

God's opportunity your extremity is God's opportunity I've seen it in his documents it figures into his letters often and his letters he would always finish with the words with the phrase not yours truly or your obedient servant like many of those great letters of those days were written he would sign his letters the least of the least the least of the least do you think it's any wonder that God could trust him to communicate to thousands of people without the benefit of technology how in the world could he stand out in a field in Boston and Benjamin Franklin personally walk off and figure out how many people were there and there's over 20,000 people that could hear this man's voice telling people how to come to Jesus Christ listen you don't think there's a way God will make a way oh all

he's looking for is for you and for me to be a messenger that's what a preacher is we're not communicators we're messengers we're not speakers we're messengers we have a message from the king you don't get to change the message you don't get to change how their reaction to it you just stand up there and you deliver the message and they may reject you but he tells you if they reject you they're rejecting Jesus and listen you don't have to survive this you get to go to heaven Whitfield died when he was 55 years of age with congestive heart failure he wasn't looking for retirement he was looking for a way that he said I would prefer to rust out he said I want to give everything I have to this calling that's on my heart I don't know whether this rings true in your spirit or it or not but I

think it does this man George Whitfield was personal friends with John and Charles Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Benjamin Franklin he knew all of the great men of his day but he would sign his letters the least of the least he made seven trips across the Atlantic actually 13 times he never made the 14th trip back home because he died in Massachusetts he was he's buried there today he's started an orphanage as I mentioned before he has a square named after him but perhaps one of the greatest tributes to him is by Charles Haddon Spurgeon that's why I feel confident I can put in front of you a word that you might want to consider make this man your model here's what Charles Haddon Spurgeon had to say about him other men gosh other men seem to be only half alive but Whitfield was all life fire

wind force my own model if I may have such a thing in due subordination to my lord is George Whitfield with unequal footsteps must I follow his glorious track now folks that's Charles Haddon Spurgeon another good Calvinist I just want you to see that these were men who they outlived their current ministry and he prayed for that he prayed that he would never do anything he would never do anything that would bring a disrepute to the word of God that all he had done would go down the drain he wanted people years later to know that he stood for something that was real and so his his prayer was that he would always be found faithful and there would never be anything that would bring a disrepute to his ministry and today men still remember him separated by by two or three hundred years with

this kind of passion I love what John Wesley said about him some would say his enemy have we read or have we heard of any person who calls so many thousands of sinners to repentance his phrase I quoted earlier not as accurately as I should have I would rather wear out than rust down he had a vision of an awakening that would move from the north and the south which was the length and breadth of what we now call the colonies he focused on this he had one focus you must be born again he became influenced by the teaching and the mentoring of an older man reverend tenant who was from New Jersey because he loved it as hard as he worked he would often sit with people he would just talk about heaven and how he he longed to go to heaven and how he dreamed about what heaven would be like and tenant

kind of brought him up to speed one day we have people that do that today you realize they've read every one of the left behind series books and they carry it with them when they go to Las Vegas to gamble I mean it's just you know there's still one foot in this world one foot in the other I've got some of those people in my church so I know that's true he's influenced by this and here's what tenant said to him he said your preoccupation with the thought of going to heaven may cause a servant to lose interest in the work in the field assigned to him by the master listen satan will sometimes use substitutes for us to get passionate about rather than staying focused on what our calling is you must are you with me on this you must be born again let's not forget who our models were when great

awakening swept this land the great American Revolution was just gearing up during his final visit he died in 1770 he did not foment rebellion he did not try to lead in the separation of the colonies from England but

in his letter writings he would write to the members of Parliament he would write to his wealthy and influential friends in England and say the Americans are getting a bad rap here if you knew them like I know them you would know that these are great people this is a wonderful people there is a birth of a nation taking place he said he said something that God was up to he was he was aware that that something was transitioning here and and he poured his life not back into England but into this country and by his preaching from Massachusetts Connecticut Pennsylvania through

Philadelphia on down into Charleston South Carolina all throughout Georgia you can follow his journeys 13 different missionary journeys where he's just moving all over the length and breadth of the land he tied these people together denominationally and nationally and he's been attributed in many of our history books to being one of the single forces for giving the American colonies a national identity I hope that you as a pastor don't completely rule out your responsibility to pray for those who provide political leadership over this nation because he had a he'd had no problem understanding that the two could work together not one over the other and not even as equals we but it was it's God first but there are people that could understand that there's there's a movement of God taking

place here that that covers denominational lines and state lines or colony lines God is bigger than just one denomination he found him I love your phrase that you used to describe your bridge builder conferences because that's what he was he was a bridge builder from one denomination to the next finding common ground on the things we do believe I don't know who might have been in attendance during that time but there was a time when at promise keepers there were sixty thousand people in one room under one roof in the Georgia Dome there in Atlanta and and one of the men stood up and he said I'd like for us all to tell where we're from what our denominational preference is I'd like for us to tell what church we serve and all at once everybody shouted out like the sound of the Tower of Babel

all this you know confused language and then he said I'd like you to mention the name the name that's above every other name the name at which every knee shall bow until you know even the baddest boys on the back row understands talking about Jesus and then he counted to three one two three and sixty thousand voices shouted out the name Jesus and you could hear you could hear the solid sound the force and the power that's what this nation needs to hear it's all about Jesus for 30 years he moved up and down the eastern seaboard of the colonies and opened the door for thousands of other preachers to follow in his footsteps and he did a did a great deal to break down the barriers of denominational differences what's a model and I'll quickly wrap up with this what's his model he he had a

personal prayer life that he would not allow to be interrupted a personal prayer life I came across a phrase a few years ago I'm not new to me I didn't invent it but P.U.S.H. pray until something happens he got that I mean somehow that was just in him he had a personal prayer life he would not allow to be interrupted he never lost his focus he never lost his focus on calling men to repentance and personal salvation even when rejected by men he did not let his reaction ruin the opportunity to speak beyond the grave he responded rather than he reacted he continued to pray for the impact of his messages to bear fruit in people's lives long after he was gone he called for the balance of prayer in praise there are people that want to lead you in praise but don't have a prayer life you know I

don't know what that's all about don't understand how they get a word from God but the Jesus felt like he needed to pray so I would guess that's a pretty good model to follow he did not let his ego overshadow his message as I said he signed this letter the least of the least another thought he was an original not a copy or an imitation of someone else in the strictest sense I would like to say very quickly you don't need to be

another Whitfield you just need to be you but can you see what he was willing to do he was just willing to be himself when nobody else had ever been a Whitfield I'm just Whitfield and so he did that I would suggest to you that wherever you're serving God's called you to be you there and what Bill Stafford has taught us you know in the strictest terms really to knock

you out of you and let Jesus be in you there but but he doesn't have to be something that you're imitating it's something that's very real to you he sees the day you got to hear this one he made the best of every opportunity that was brought to him he responded to an invitation to speak at the hanging of a horse thief in New England he walked with the horse thief to the gallows to the hangman's noose and on the way walking he led him to the Lord and after the condemned man gave an exhortation to the thousands of people there to receive Jesus Christ for their salvation Whitfield stood on the coffin and preached to thousands and called them to Christ listen I don't know how many divine opportunities I've missed by thinking they're an interruption but I want to at least learn this from this

old boy you know I mean I'll lead in silent prayer in a GA convention now I mean I don't know what you need to seize the day for but you need to know this was a man that will use any opportunity to get his message across the great listen the great themes of the Bible were never tossed overboard for trivial pursuit or cute communication he was passionate about his calling he loved to preach and he loved preachers and I appreciate the legacy that Michael Catt has he can't give enough away to you I'm going to tell you something preachers are tired preachers are scared they're worried they're worn out and you could pick any preacher on any given day and you could call somebody and you could tell them how can I pray for you and it could be two hours before you get off the phone so I'm telling

something this doesn't take a lot of money it just takes some time to say I want to be a source of encouragement and listen there are guys that you may not feel like you could encourage because you don't like what they're doing but the fact of the matter is there's a whole lot of faithful men out there that could stand a word of encouragement for somebody just like you and that's part of the legacy of this conference it's pulling us together and Ron Dempsey's here from Lakeshore with the people from Lakeshore Baptist Church stand if you're here this ought to be a testimony to every pastor in this room that we have people that we could invite to come to something like this and I had a man in my church a Mormon man I've been trying to lead to the Lord y'all remain standing I'm not done with

you yet and and I couldn't get to Jacksonville Florida where his son's memorial service was going to be held he'd been killed in Iraq and and I'm trying to minister to him over the phone I'm trying to pray with him trying to walk him through this trying to give this man some sense of the presence of God and this is this kind of chaos and listen when you when you pour two years into a man trying to lead him to Christ you know how Satan can use a hurt like that to rob a man of the of the of his salvation that's offered to him and I couldn't get to Jacksonville Florida but Michael had sent out a refresh brochure that had a testimony from Ron Dempsey on the back of that and I said Jacksonville Florida man I gotta call Ron and I said can you help me can you visit one of my men could you could

you minister to that family and you know rather than tell me he was too busy rather than tell me he's a CEO of a large church rather than tell me that he didn't have time for one of my members he treated my sheep like you would treat your own sheep and he showed up at their doorstep he helped them get flowers he helped him put together a memorial service he managed them he brought Jesus right into the presence of people where I couldn't be and I want you to know driving here driving here his wife called me Reckon Mocker's wife called me and said my husband made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ that's

what this is about that's what this is about when you leave this place this isn't about you having something that's been brought into your it's about ministering to other people I want

to say to the Lakeshore Baptist Church whatever you can do to encourage your pastor whatever you can do to encourage your minister music whatever you can do to encourage other people being something like this you caught the spirit of Whitfield that it isn't just about Florida it's just not about the sheep in your flock listen it's about a kingdom work that that has to be bigger than what we can control because I can't get everywhere God needs to do a work but if we will come together like never before can you imagine how many Reckon Mocker's are out there that just need to know that people care about me who don't even know me and he said the elders of the Mormon church weren't there this time by God we beat them to the doorstep and I want to say a tribute to Lakeshore Baptist Church in

your leadership for being a minister to my church and to the people in it would you express your appreciation now you can be seated thank you I'll close with this you need to hear from God and not even listen to some of the greatest advice that might be out there when Whitfield told Wesley I'm going to Georgia Wesley said don't go he'd been run out of Georgia we run out of Georgia because he was a jerk that comes from Oglethorpe he told him back in the Church of England don't send him more like Wesley when all fairness to Wesley he was lost in all fairness to Wesley he was lost but he gave that advice he gave that advice to Whitfield don't go and Whitfield as much as he loved Wesley said I got to hear from God on this and I'm going to crash on in and aren't you glad he did be a Whitfield

get the wax out of your ears and crash on ahead because faith comes by hearing God bless you man thank you Gary we're going to take a little break and then we're going to come back and see what else God has to say to us and Ken would you go get those two things back in the back for me now before we break

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