

Story #1:

David Brainerd and the Crossweeksung Revival

On June 18, 1745, a very discouraged missionary made his way south to Crossweeksung, New Jersey. David Brainerd had devoted his life to bring the gospel to the North American Indians for the last three years. But so far, he had seen very little fruit from his labors. The soil was rock hard and there were only a handful of converts.

At Crossweeksung that day, Brainerd preached to a congregation of four Indian women. The next day he returned to the same spot and discovered a larger crowd awaiting him. The women had traveled ten to fifteen miles to gather their friends from the surrounding area. David preached again the following day, this time to a crowd of about thirty. This time, these natives seemed greatly affected by the message, weeping many tears while he spoke. They were beginning to realize “their perishing state, and appeared concerned for a deliverance from it.”

Then, on August 8, Brainerd was preaching from Luke 14:16-23 on the Parable of the Great Banquet to about sixty-five Indians in Crossweeksung. He writes of the moment: “The power of God seemed to descend upon the assembly like a rushing mighty wind, and with an astonishing energy bore down all before it.”

David was awestruck as he witnessed the work of God upon the hearts of the men, women, and children gathered. A witchdoctor in attendance, who had been found guilty of murder, was there weeping, wailing, and calling out for God’s mercy. A woman who had earlier in the day mocked Brainerd now lay prostrate on the ground praying.

The revival continued the next day as David preached from Matthew 12 on the Parable of the Sower to a larger crowd. Again, many of the men and women in attendance were struck with anguished concern for their souls. He wrote, “I spoke not a word of terror, but on the contrary, set before them the fullness and all sufficiency of Christ’s merits, and His willingness to save all that came to Him.” The Indians cried out to God for mercy.

Brainerd knew that no human cause had brought about this change. He had not changed his delivery style. No emotional manipulation was used at his meetings. Rather, Brainerd wrote, “God’s manner of working upon them appeared so entirely supernatural, and above means, that I could scarce believe He used me as an instrument.” On November 3, Brainerd baptized fourteen natives—six adults and eight children. Two of the men baptized had been “singular and remarkable, even among the Indians, for their wickedness.”

Real spiritual fruit was evident in the lives of these converted Indians. After the services, they would crowd into Brainerd’s little cottage, where they continued to sing and speak of spiritual matters for hours on end. Family prayers or family devotions were now common among them. Several of the young converts became evangelists, traveling with Brainerd to bring the good news of salvation to others. He wrote:

I know of no assembly of Christians where there seems to be so much of the presence of God, where brotherly love so much prevails and where I should take so much delight in the public worship of God, in general, as in my own congregation; although not more than nine months ago they were worshipping devils and dumb idols under the power of darkness and superstition! Amazing change this! Effected by nothing less than divine power and grace!

It is estimated that 120 Indians were converted at Crossweeksung during this year of the Spirit’s outpouring (1745-1746). Just a year later, Brainerd was dead. But his life and diary would inspire many future missionaries including William Carey, Henry Martyn, Adoniram Judson, and Jim Elliot. Brainerd sought to exalt the Lord’s name among the nations. And because of the Holy Spirit’s power, this happened at Crossweeksung and continues to happen today.

Story #2: Battle of Kings Mountain

In September 1780 the Americans were losing their War for Independence from Britain. The British had won a stunning series of military victories in the South. In 1778, they had captured Savannah, Georgia and the Americans had failed to retake it the following year.

In early 1780, the British had decided to launch a full-scale invasion of the South. They laid siege to Charleston, South Carolina, the most important city of the South. After a three-month siege, Charleston fell to the British in May 1780. An entire American army was captured. It was one of the worst American defeats of the war.

The British moved inland and numerous Loyalists joined them. In August 1780, the British destroyed another American army at Cowpens. They were now in a position to conquer the entire South. To make matters even worse, American General Benedict Arnold deserted to the British and almost succeeded in betraying the fortress of West Point to them.

The Continental Congress recognized the dire nature of the situation and turned to the Lord for help. Between the spring of 1780 and the spring of 1781, it made three separate calls for national repentance and prayer. On April 28, 1780, Congress declared:

It having pleased the righteous Governor of the World, for the punishment of our manifold offenses, to permit the sword of war still to harass our country, it becomes us to endeavor, by humbling ourselves before him, and turning from every evil way, to avert his anger and obtain his favor and blessing, with one heart and one voice, to implore the sovereign Lord of Heaven and Earth to remember mercy in his judgments; to make us sincerely penitent for our transgressions, to prepare us for deliverance, and to renounce the evils with which he is pleased to visit us.

As the British prepared to invade North Carolina, Major Patrick Ferguson was dispatched to subdue the Carolina backcountry. He warned Patriots that he had come to “hang your leaders, and waste your country with fire and sword.” This warning and the brutality of the British stirred up Patriots across the mountains in Tennessee.

On September 25, 1780, hundreds of frontiersmen gathered at Sycamore Shoals, Tennessee. These Overmountain Men were largely Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. As the men prepared to march, their pastor Samuel Doak preached one of the most powerful sermons in the history of America. He encouraged the soldiers and ended his final prayer with these passionate words from the Bible: “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!” (Judg. 7:20).

With that pastoral encouragement, the Overmountain Men marched across the Appalachians to Kings Mountain on the North Carolina-South Carolina border, where they met Ferguson’s forces. The Battle of Kings Mountain would prove to be the shortest and most decisive battle in the history of American warfare. In a single hour, the Overmountain Men shattered Ferguson’s army. It was a total rout—the British lost 1,100 men by death or capture, to the American’s twenty-eight.

Kings Mountain turned the tide of the war. The British began to lose battle after battle. In January 1781, they were defeated at Cowpens. Finally, in October 1781, British General Cornwallis surrendered his army to George Washington at Yorktown. The Americans knew that their victories were due to the providential hand of God and many gave Him the glory.

Story #3:

John Quincy Adams argues the Amistad Case

In August 1839, the Spanish ship *La Amistad* drifted into Long Island Harbor, New York. On board were 53 Africans—men, women, and children, and two Spanish slave traders. These Africans had been kidnapped and brought across the Atlantic to be sold as slaves in Havana, Cuba, a Spanish colony.

While the slave traders were moving their captives by ship to another location on Cuba, the Africans revolted and took command of the ship. They killed the captain and the cook but kept two of the Spaniards alive. The Africans were hoping the Spaniards would navigate the ship back to their native land in Africa. But the Spaniards, while pretending to head east across the Atlantic, actually steered the ship north to American shores.

By 1820, international treaties had made the slave trade illegal in most of Europe and the Americas. However, the Spanish were reluctant to comply with these treaties. Spain was one of the first European countries to start the slave trade in the early 1500s and it was not eager to shut it down.

The Amistad Case was a political hot potato for the courts, Congress, and the president. The nation was already divided on the slavery question. Martin Van Buren's administration supported sending the Africans back to Cuba, where they would almost certainly be tried and hung.

A federal lower court ruled in favor of the Africans. At least three of them were teenage girls and none of them knew any Spanish. They could only speak their own African dialect, a clear indication that they had been forcibly brought to Cuba well after 1820.

The case was appealed to the US Supreme Court. Advocates for the Africans appealed to former president John Quincy Adams for help. This 73 year old statesman had not practiced law for thirty years. Five of the nine Supreme Court justices were slave owners, and the odds seemed to be stacked against the Africans. But, fearing God and convinced of the justice of their cause, Adams took up the case.

The arguments were presented in court on February 24, 1841. Adams fervently prayed as he entered the Supreme Court chamber. He spoke for four and a half hours, arguing from the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, common law, and the laws of God. His major point was that these prisoners had a right to receive American justice because they were arrested on American soil.

Adams had only made it halfway through his case before the court was dismissed for the day. In God's providence, one of the Supreme Court justices, Phillip Barbour, died that very night. When the court reconvened five days later, Adams took another four and a half hours to complete his case. He closed with a solemn warning to the justices of the final judgment of Almighty God:

I can only [make] a fervent petition to heaven that every member of [this honorable Court] may go to his final account with as little of earthly frailty to answer for as those illustrious dead [referring to the justice who had just died]. And that you may, every one, at the close of a long and virtuous career in this world, be received at the portals of the next, with the approving sentence, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The justices ruled 7-1 in favor of the Amistad Africans. They were free and could return to Africa or stay in the US. John Quincy Adams was elated by the decision. Because He feared God and sought to make His name great, he had secured the lives and freedom of 53 African men, women, and children.

Story #4:

Nathan Bedford Forrest's Conversion

Few Civil War figures are as controversial today as Nathan Bedford Forrest. He was unquestionably a brilliant military general and one of the South's best cavalry officers. Yet he was a leader of the Klu Klux Klan.

Although raised by a godly mother, Forrest was known for his hot temper and foul tongue. During the Civil War, he served with distinction as a Confederate cavalry officer, rising to the rank of Lieutenant General. But his military career was not without controversy. He was accused of allowing the massacre of African-American prisoners of war after taking Fort Pillow in 1864.

After the war ended and Reconstruction began, Forrest served as the Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan from 1867 to 1868. However, he resigned and recommended the Klan be disbanded in 1869 because, in his words, it "is becoming injurious instead of subservient to the public peace and public safety for which it was intended."

Finally, in the 1870s, God began working on this man's heart. Forrest met one of his former soldiers in a bank. This man had recently converted to Christ. Forrest asked the man to pray for him, so they knelt together in the bank lobby and prayed right there. From that point on, Forrest and his wife began attending a Presbyterian Church in Memphis, Tennessee. Sometime in the fall of 1875, he heard a sermon from Pastor George Stainback on Matthew 7:24-27, the story of the wise and foolish man.

Forrest was convicted of his sins, and as the Rev. Stainback recounted: "Forrest suddenly leaned against the wall and his eyes filled with tears. 'Sir, your sermon has removed the last prop from under me,' he said, 'I am the fool that built on the sand; I am a poor miserable sinner.'" The pastor sent him home to read Psalm 51. The next evening, the pastor and the old soldier prayed together and Forrest rose up a changed man.

Before he died in 1877, Forrest spoke to a civil rights organization for African-Americans, the Independent Order of Pole Bearers. He said:

I believe I can exert some influence, and do much to assist the people in strengthening fraternal relations, and shall do all in my power to elevate every man, to depress none. I want to elevate you to take positions in law offices, in stores, on farms, and wherever you are capable of going. I came to meet you as friends, and welcome you to the white people. I want you to come nearer to us. When I can serve you I will do so. We have but one flag, one country; let us stand together.

Afterwards, an African-American girl gave him a flower and he kissed her tenderly on the cheek. Nathan Bedford Forrest stands as a testimony that God saves the chief of sinners. Whatever a man or woman's past, God is able to save and transform them. To Him be the glory.

Story #5:

George Washington Carver before Congress

On January 20, 1921, a humble dark-skinned man with a high pitched voice entered the US Capitol in Washington DC for the first time. This former slave was one of the world's greatest agricultural scientists and inventors. His name was George Washington Carver.

Born a slave in rural Missouri, Carver had been raised by adopted parents. Against the odds, he had worked hard and obtained a good education. In 1896, at the invitation of Booker T. Washington, he had become professor of agriculture at Tuskegee Institute.

Carver was an avid student of God's creation and an engaging professor. At a time when most scientists were embracing Darwinian evolution, he had a strong faith in God the Creator and a wide-eyed wonder at His marvelous creation. He had developed numerous uses for peanuts and sweet potatoes and made many other agricultural discoveries.

Carver had been invited to Washington to testify before the House of Representative's Ways and Means Committee about his scientific work. There he explained to the nation's most powerful leaders that peanuts and sweet potatoes were "two of the greatest products God has ever given to us." Then he demonstrated a number of products which he had developed from the peanut. Wrapping up his testimony to the committee, Carver said:

If you go to the first chapter of Genesis, we can interpret very clearly, I think, what God intended when he said, "Behold I have given you every herb that bears seed upon the face of the earth, and every tree bearing seed. To you it shall be meat" [Gen. 1:29]. That is what he means about it. "It shall be meat." There is everything there to strengthen and nourish and keep the body alive and healthy.

A period of questioning followed. The committee chairman asked:

"Dr. Carver, how did you learn all of these things?"

Carver answered: "From an old book."

"What book?" asked the Chairman.

Carver replied, "The Bible."

The Chairman inquired, "Does the Bible tell about peanuts?"

"No, sir," Dr. Carver replied, "but it tells about the God who made the peanut. I asked Him to show me what to do with the peanut, and He did."

Although Dr. Carver was ridiculed by the secular press, he remained unashamed of the Creator. Although he rose to great fame, he remained a humble Christian man. By the end of his life, he would develop 265 uses for the peanut and 118 uses for the sweet potato. He would also figure out how to protect crops from blight and develop a treatment for polio. This brilliant humble man sought to make Jesus great and give Him the glory for all his discoveries.