Compass Life Adult Sunday School

Pastor Pete

May 10, 2020

**“The Men Who Brought Christ to America”**

**John Witherspoon**

**I. John Witherspoon in Scotland (1723-1794)**

John Witherspoon was born in 1723, the son of a minister of the Church of Scotland. Witherspoon, one of six children in the family, was born in the village of Gifford, Scotland, 18 miles east of Edinburgh Castle. At the age of \_\_\_\_, Witherspoon was considered advanced for his age and was admitted to the University of Edinburgh. He studied Latin, Greek, logic, and philosophy. Witherspoon graduated in 1739, at the age of 16, with a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ degree. Witherspoon went on to study theology and gained a license to preach in 1743. He was called as minister of the Church of Scotland parish in Beith, in 1745, where he was ordained as their minister. That same year, an invasion by Charles Edward Stuart, known as the Young Pretender, threw Scotland into turmoil. Stuart was trying to recapture the throne of England and Scotland for his family after his grandfather, King James II, had been exiled to Italy for his \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ beliefs. Witherspoon joined other parish leaders in gathering troops to fight against the rebellion, but he was soon captured by Stuart's forces. He endured a brief but harsh \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in Castle Doune near Stirling. In reestablishing his life after the war, Witherspoon married Elizabeth Montgomery on September 2, 1748. The couple had ten children, \_\_\_\_\_\_ of whom died during childhood. The Church of Scotland faced new challenges when Witherspoon was a young minister. Leaders in the Moderate, or liberal, Party of the church were challenging the Popular Party, which held a more traditional Christian faith. The Moderates were associated with closer ties to the government and selecting clergy by a central authority. The Popular Party favored continued independence of congregations and selecting their own ministers. Witherspoon was an aggressive leader of the Popular Party, and in 1753 he published a witty satire about the Moderate Party called Ecclesiastical Characteristics. Witherspoon gained celebrity status. He continued his attacks on the Moderates' theology with additional publications. In June 1757, Witherspoon was asked to serve at the Laigh Kirk church in \_\_\_\_\_, near Glasgow. There, he continued his stand against the increasing liberalism of the Moderate Party. In 1764, the University of St. Andrews awarded Witherspoon an honorary degree of doctor of divinity in recognition of his theological skills and leadership in the Popular Party.

**II. Coming to America and Princeton**

American Presbyterians knew of Witherspoon through his writings, which established him as a man of orthodoxy and a first-rate scholar. In 1766, the New York and Philadelphia Presbyterians recruited Witherspoon to come to America to head their \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and lead the Presbyterian Church. He was interested in the position, but his wife, Elizabeth, had \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in leaving Scotland. She had a great fear of crossing the ocean to begin life in a new land, so Witherspoon regretfully declined the offer. Negotiations were kept alive by the continued efforts of Benjamin Rush, a young American and graduate of the College of New Jersey who was studying medicine in Edinburgh at the time. Eventually, Witherspoon packed his family along with 300 books to add to the college library and left on the “Peggy” for the Colonies. The Witherspoons and their five surviving children arrived in Princeton, New Jersey, on August 12, 1768. The family saw a candle illuminating each \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the institution in celebration of their arrival. Witherspoon was 45 years old when he became the 6th president of the College of New Jersey at Princeton. He immediately went to work revising the college curriculum by adding the study of philosophy, history, and public speaking. Witherspoon insisted that his students master the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ language so that they would be well equipped to take part in the political and social debates of the day. He introduced French as an elective for students who wanted to study a modern language, and he taught the classes himself. In addition to managing the college's affairs, Witherspoon taught a full load of courses and preached twice each Sunday. The College of New Jersey had been founded for the express purpose of training young men in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to care for the growing Presbyterian Church in America. A split in 1741 left the church divided into Old Side and New Light factions. The Old Side Presbyterians favored traditional means of worship at established churches with trained ministers. The New Light Presbyterians were influenced by the revival movement, which included ministers traveling across the country, often giving sermons in town markets or wherever crowds gathered. Witherspoon experienced great success in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the quarreling sects. His moderate style and earnest desire to produce a well-educated clergy won him support from both sides. Witherspoon became involved in trying to resolve some \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ problems the college was having. He traveled extensively throughout the colonies, raising funds and recruiting.

**III. Revolutionary War**

By 1776, Princeton was attracting nearly as many students as highly popular \_\_\_\_ and enjoyed a record number of graduates. However, the American Revolution put Princeton in a difficult position: The town became a battleground, and at various times the main college building, Nassau Hall, was used as quarters by British and Continental Army troops. The military occupation \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ much of the college campus and its most important piece of scientific equipment, the Rittenhouse Orrery. Witherspoon was a firm \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the American colonies in their war against Britain. On June 22, 1776, he was selected by New Jersey as a delegate to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Within days, Witherspoon voted for and affixed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to the Declaration of Independence. He was the only \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to do so. He served in the Continental Congress until November 1782 while he helped draft the Articles of Confederation. Witherspoon won the respect of his colleagues and was appointed to more than one hundred committees. War also brought personal tragedy when Witherspoon's son James, a 1770 graduate of the College of New Jersey, was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ at the Battle of Germantown in Philadelphia in October 1777. When American victory seemed certain and peace was at hand, Witherspoon resigned from Congress and returned to Princeton full-time in the fall of 1782. The campus buildings and the school's finances were in disarray. Student life in the early years of the republic was bleak because of the damaged facilities and the limited availability of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Witherspoon set about rebuilding the college, a project to which he would devote the rest of his days. By July 1783, parts of Nassau Hall had been sufficiently repaired to serve a second purpose: For four months that year, the building housed the Continental Congress, bringing such statesmen as George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson.

**V. The Witherspoon Legacy**

Witherspoon continued the work of restoration at Princeton even as he returned to public service in the New Jersey legislature in 1783. In 1787, Witherspoon was a member of the New Jersey convention that approved the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Five members of the 1787 Constitutional Convention were former \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of Witherspoon's. To Witherspoon, religion and politics were intertwined. Religious faith was essential to him if true liberty was to be achieved. Faith and liberty were so connected in his teaching that a generation of Americans was deeply affected. Witherspoon believed that a righteous people needed only limited governing; he therefore taught that a government's main purpose was simply to protect and defend its citizens. Elizabeth Witherspoon, never fully content in her new country, died in 1789. Two years later, John Witherspoon married a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ widow from York County, Pennsylvania, named Ann Dill. They had two daughters, but only one survived to adulthood. Health problems soon took their toll on Witherspoon. In 1784, he had had a shipboard accident that blinded him in one eye. A fall from his horse injured the other eye, causing it to steadily deteriorate. By 1792, Witherspoon was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. When surgery failed to improve his situation, Witherspoon resigned himself to his fate and continued with his presidential duties with the help of an assistant. During Witherspoon's final years, his son-in-law, Samuel Stanhope Smith, increasingly carried more responsibility for college affairs and was himself elected president of the college in May 1795. On November 15, 1794, the seventy-one-year-old Witherspoon died at home on his farm, known as "Tusculum," just outside of Princeton. On November 18, his body was brought to Nassau Hall, where it lay in state while grieving friends, colleagues, and students paid their last respects. Witherspoon was laid to rest in the president's lot at Princeton.

**5/10 “The Men Who Brought Christ to America (George Whitfield)”**