

The Barren Fig-Tree

by

**George
Whitefield**

The Barren *Fig-Tree*:

A

SERMON

Preached on THURSDAY Morning,

OCTOBER 21st, 1742.

IN THE

High-Church-Yard

OF

GLASGOW,

Before the Celebration of the Lord's-Supper there.

MARK xi. 13, 14.

By the REVEREND

Mr. *GEORGE WHITEFIELD*, A.M.

*Taken from his own mouth, and publish'd at the Desire of many of the
Hearers.*

GLASGOW

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3

MARK xi. 13, 14. *And seeing a Fig-Tree afar off having leaves, he came if happily he might find any Thing thereon; and when he came to it he found nothing but leaves for the Time of Figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, no Man eat Fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his Disciples heard it.*

Here I see a large (Assembly,) and I think a very attentive Assembly, and I would hope you are all come here this Morning with an Intention to begin and to go on, and end this Day with God. I would hope that you do not intend to mock the Great God. But as the Day is more especially set a Part for fasting and prayer, for a Day of Humiliation before the Great God: You would take care to answer the End of the Church, and in your public and secret Devotion take care to humble yourselves before the Great God. Many circumstances call us to fasting before the Lord, and especially, a Call to prepare for the Table of the Lord, to meet Jesus at his blessed Table, such a Call as that ought more especially to be harkened unto for those who humble themselves most; and bring the most humble and contrite Heart along with them, will certainly be most acceptable unto God, Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth Eternity, whose Name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy Place with him also that is of a

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Contrite and humble Spirit, to revive the Spirit of the Humble, and to revive the Heart of the Contrite ones. But then on such a Day as this, you are not only to humble yourselves in Particular for your own Sins, but you are to call to mind the Sins of your Nation in general; you are to call to mind your Wretched and dismal Condition of both Church and State: And let those have a Part in your secret Devotion, that we may be sensible of, what a vile Ungrateful barren People we have been,

that we may see what Cause you have to humble ourselves before the Lord, What cause to dread, lest the Lord should unchurch us, and take his Kingdom from us. I have chosen the Words of this Text as a Subject of your morning Meditation.

THE Words you have been reading, give an Account of a great Miracle our Saviour was pleased to perform in the Days of his flesh; I mean his cursing the *Barren Fig-Tree*, a Miracle, which like the blessed Author of it has been sadly ridiculed, by these who have been perverse Enemies unto the Son of God: Our Saviour has been sadly abused in his Character, on account of this Miracle, as being an Angry and unjust Man for cursing a Tree, and which was not his own, Thus our Saviour is represented by one of his noted Enemies, 'He says, Our Saviour came unto a *Fig-Tree* when he could not expect to find Fruit, and being hungry, and finding no Fruit on the Tree, he in a great Passion and ill Nature, cursed a Tree that was not his own.' Thus was our Saviour abused in his Character, and let not his Members think it strange if they meet with the same Treatment, be not unwilling to bear a Part

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5

of his glorious Cross. But there is no Occasion for this Slander, it is all Calumny, and therefore as the Lord enables me at this Time, I shall endeavour to shew you the Import of the Miracle, and clear it from these Aspersions cast on it, *2dly*. Shew you the Reason why our Lord cursed the *Fig-Tree*, and then endeavour to make Application suitable to a Day of fasting, and Humiliation.

FIRST, I shall clear the Miracle from the Aspersions cast upon it, and our Lord on the Account of it, by the Adversaries of our Religion, we see in the *12th Verse* it's said, on the Morrow when they were come from *Bethany* he was hungry, observe that the Lord Jesus Christ took upon him all the sinless Infirmities of human Nature; Jesus Christ was subject to weariness of Body to hunger & thirst, He sat on the Well being weary, he was as we are only without Sin, very Weak, very unfirm, and this ought to give you Comfort that are weary in your Work, tho' not of your Work. Remember that your Lord Jesus Christ was Weary. He was now hungry, amazing that Jesus Christ should have stooped thus, He that by a Word speaking could create Millions of Worlds, yet should be hungry for you and me! He had been riding in Triumph unto *Jerusalem*, had retired to some poor Cot-house in *Bethany* all Night, and come in

the Morning hungry, lacking Food unto his Body, but O unspeakably more hungring after the Salvation of Souls! It's remarkable, that tho' he was often hungry in his Wants, yet he wrought no Miracles to relieve himself, but many to re-

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lieve others, This may Comfort those that are Poor, and want Bread, O look up, the Lord Jesus was hungry before thee.

VERSE 13th, *And seeing a Fig-Tree afar off having leaves, he came if happily he might find any Thing thereon, and when he came to it he found nothing but leaves; for the Time of Figs was not yet. Seeing a Fig-Tree and leaves on it, our blessed Saviour might reasonably expect to find Fruit where there were leaves.* But here an Enemy of our Religion charges our Saviour most falsely; for, *says he*, 'How could it enter into his Heart, that he would find Fruit on that Tree, for we are told, that the Time of Figs was not yet.' But this is all for wanting Understanding of the Text. 'He came if happily he might find any Thing thereon, and when he came he found nothing but leaves, for the Time of Figs was not yet.' That is the Time of gathering the ripe Figs was not yet, And therefore, Jesus might reasonably expect that there was some Fruit growing on that Tree; Jesus Christ finds Leaves when he had Reason to expect to find Fruit, and then Jesus said unto it, *Never Man find Fruit on thee hereafter for ever.* Here he is blamed as being in Passion, because being disappointed of having his Appetite satisfied. And thereafter for cursing another Man's *Fig-Tree*, that was not his own, but it was his own *Fig-Tree*, for he created it, the whole Earth was the Son of God's, he might do with it as he pleased. He gave it the Man, and he might take it away, he was not Unjust, for he took nothing but what was his own. It appears, that our blessed Saviour was by no Means to blame, on Account of cursing this *Fig-Tree*. But my dear Friends, I shall no longer continue on this, but shew you

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7

the Great and grand Reason in our Lord's cursing this *Barren Fig-Tree*; and that was to shew, what in a little afterwards should befall the *Jewish Church*. This *Fig-Tree* was the very Picture of the *Jewish Church*. The Church of the *Jews* was a Church that the Lord's Right-Hand had planted: The Lord God had made the People of the *Jews* a peculiar People, *The Lord had not dealt so with any other Nation and he had with them; the Heathen had not the Knowledge of the Law, the Lord had made them his Friends,*

he had planted them in his Vineyard, and he had erected a Vine-press among them, the Lord had committed unto them the Oracles of God, they had the Scriptures, and the *Pharisees* that wear their long Robes and preached among them; and were called of Men *Rabbi, Rabbi*, they had the Sabbaths and the New-Moons; they had the Feast of Tabernacles, and in a special manner they had the Ordinance of the Passover. They had all the external Things that could make a Church Glorious; they had Church-Judicatories, they had general Assemblies, Synods, and Kirk Sessions, and they had Magistrates as well as Ministers, they were the Lords professing People. But like this *Fig-Tree* they only brought forth Leaves? God had caused them to take Root downward and grow upward; God had visited them from Time to Time, but when God came, still nothing but Leaves? And that which was worse, God expected they would have brought forth Grapes, but behold wild Grapes? Corruptions were crept into the *Jewish Church*. The whole Head was Sick, and the whole Heart was Faint, from the Crown of the Head to the Sole of the Foot, there

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8

was nothing but Wounds and Bruises, and putrifying Sores. They kept Fasts, but they were not such Fasts as the Lord had chosen. They would pray and preach, they would make long Prayers, and disfigure their Faces, and come & boast in the Temple, how often they prayed & fasted. But this was only from self, and an outside Religion, we may see how Ignorant the *Pharisees* were of inward Religion, by our Lord's Converse with *Nicodemus*, who was one of the best of them, *he said, how can these Things be?* And the High-Priest, instead of being friendly to Jesus Christ, they hated him in their Hearts, and would have long before destroyed him: But they feared the People, but they hated his Doctrine and his Law.

I doubt not but many of you that fear God, and have been mourning for poor *Scotland*, have prevented me, the Spirit of the Lord has enabled you to make Application. That this is the Case of poor *Scotland*, perhaps some may condemn me for my plain dealing; but I know not how to give flattering Titles unto any when I am speaking for God. 'Tis our Duty to tell People what is amiss, that they may humble themselves for it, and that they may be praying to divert the Judgements that are hanging over their Heads. I appeal to all of you, that knew any Thing of the Beauty of the Church some Time ago; if it is not a Back-sliding Church, and if we have not sadly gone from the Piety of our our fore-Fathers.

'Tis true we have Assemblies, Synods and Kirk-Sessions, and all the Courts that the *Jews* had: And we have got Universities and Colleges, where the Sons of the Prophets are brought up, we have got Professors and Principals, and we have got Fasts,

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9

and the Lord's Supper celebrated among us; we have got *Bibles* and can read, and pray, and sing Psalms. Yet many no doubt there are; that do not believe the Doctrines of the Church of *Scotland*, that eat's of it's Bread, There are many that are Enemies to the peculiar Doctrines of the Gospel. Family Religion is neglected, and Psalms singing in Families laid aside; and Profaneness, Atheism and Infidelity, of all kinds abounding in this City. Is not this my dear Friends the Case? Well what may we expect? We may expect that he will Curse the Church of *Scotland* as he cursed the *Barren Fig-Tree*. And if we do not repent, we may expect that God will send forth his Armies to destroy us. I am speaking now in the General, and I aimed at no particular Person, and I speak not to expose any but to humble us all. And my dear Friends, the most of us how little Fruit have we brought forth unto God. We are not content with bringing forth no Fruit, but we are continually bringing forth bad Fruit. And the Christians themselves how Cold have they been unto God, how little have we appeared for the Lord of Hosts. How much driven down by the Fear of Men. My dear Friends, let us all with one Heart, let us with one Voice humble ourselves, and rent our Hearts, and not our Garments; I am sure as I am a Minister of Christ, I will willingly joyn with you. O our Barrenness! O our Unfruitfulness! How little do we for Jesus Christ, what Account can you give of yourselves, of your Fruit

unto Christ; an Account that you will be ashamed of at the Day of Christ. We may well Fast and weep if possible with Tears of Blood: We may weep over our Neighbours, over our Family,

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over our own private State; & cry, that the Blood of Jesus might cleanse us from all our Sins. Our Iniquities are so exceeding Great, that if God was not Infinite in sparing, the Lord would make our Name *Ichabod*, and the Glory of God would depart from us. Especially if we consider what Mercy we have received: It's not two Years past, since the Lord sent a terrible Dearth among us. Whereby the Lord said if thou don't return, O Church of *Scotland*! I will send thee all my Plagues, The Lord

removed that, and has sent two plentiful Harvests; and the Lord has sent an awakening through the Land. And this has been all ascribed unto the Power of the Devil. What a sinful Nation are we, what may we expect if God deal with us after all our Iniquities; we may expect he will deal with us, as he dealt with the *Barren Fig-Tree*: Withered Trees are good for nothing but the Fire, and withered Souls are good nothing but to be burning in Hell-Fire. Spend this Day in Humiliation and prayer, humble yourselves in Secret, and if People will not pray for themselves, do you pray for them, beg of God, that God may spare the Church of *Scotland*, and spare our State. We have got another Fast proclaimed; pray let us not mock God, O stand in the Gap you Children of the most High God! You Children of *Abraham*, O intercede for *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*! And entreat the Lord not to be angry for Interceding for them. If you will not be wounded by the Sword of the Spirit, the Lord will make the Sword of an Enemy to rike in your Blood. This is the least Thing you can expect. O plead that the Lord send you not a Famine of the Word of God! O what would your Fathers would have given to see these Days

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 11

you see! I pray you therefore to turn unto the Lord. Let Magistrates Labour to be more fruitful, lest God should Curse them for not bearing Fruit. And Jesus Christ will Curse Barren Ministers that have only the Form of godliness without; it's Power that and preach and pray, but do not put in Practice themselves: And formal Hypocrites which have not the Root of the Matter in their Hearts. My dear Friends, it is well there is Blood in Christ to apply unto; let us go to it this Morning.

AND you who are to go to the Sacrament, when you go to it and see how Christ died for you, say, O my Soul, why hast thou been so barren! and done so little for Christ; adore Jesus Christ that has spared thee so long, it's owing to Jesus Christ that God has not cut thee down long or now. Had not Christ entreated the FATHER, you and I had heed burning in Hell, or given up to a reprobate Mind. O beg of Jesus that you may not be content with bringing forth Leaves only! But that you may bring Fruit, Faith, Love, Hope, Joy, and Patience and Forbearance; and all the Graces of the eternal Spirit. Then God will let us spread our Branches from Sea, to Sea, then Jesus would be once more the Glory of the whole Earth, then the Lord Jesus Christ would Delight to be among us, and he would walk among the seven Golden Candlesticks; and we shall be

terrible like an Army with Banners. In a few Days I shall not be speaking unto you any more, but be where I will, I shall be glad to hear that *Scotland* flourishes, and that your Souls are turning unto the Lord. O Return unto him this Fast-Day with weeping, with fasting and prayer! Say, Lord cut us

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not down yet but Dunge us; that from henceforth we may bring forth Fruit unto Holiness, and our End be everlasting Life. My heart is now full, O think of God's Condescension! And Love and think what God has done for you; and let his Goodness lead you to Repentance, and let his Love constrain you. But I shall detain you no longer from your respective Churches, may God break all your Hearts, may Ministers and People be tender before God. O I hope you shall have some good Days! Now the Societies of *Edinburgh* have set two Days apart for prayer, do you so here, & see if God will come among us; don't let us mock God by sitting before him as his People, and yet having our Hearts running after our Covetousness: Let us beg of God to take off our Barrenness, and that we begin to be Fruitful, and henceforth, glorifie God by bringing forth Fruit, being upon the Stretch for God, being stedfast and unmoveabl; always abounding in the Work of God, for as much as we know that our Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

Even so Lord Jesus. Amen.

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