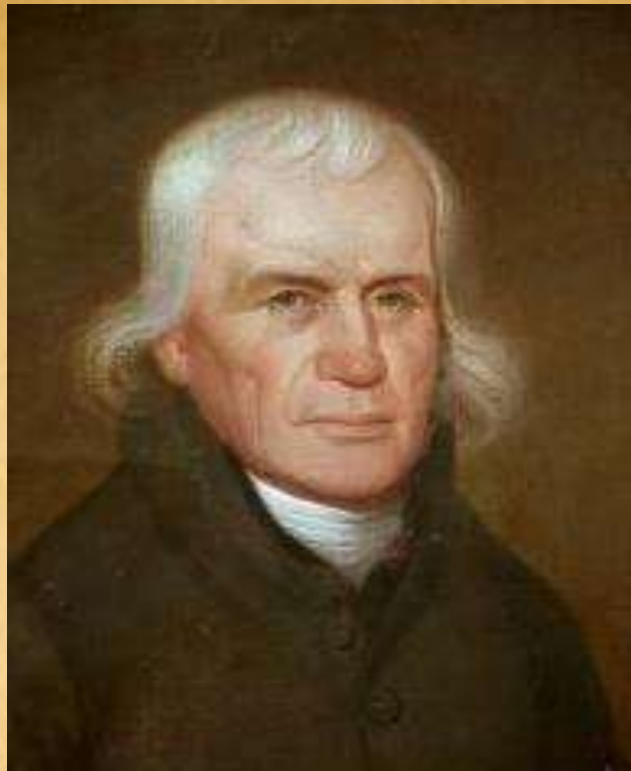


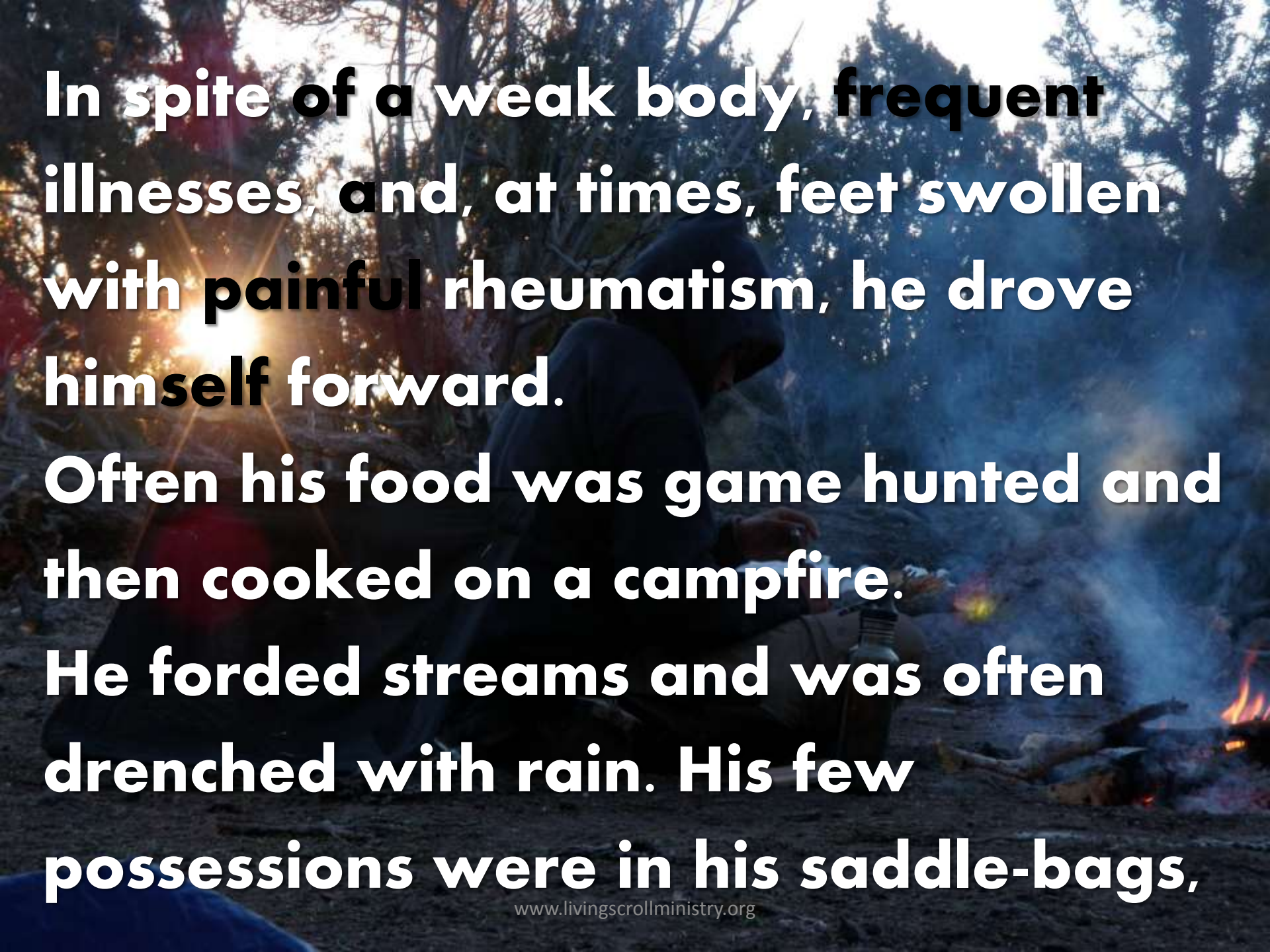
Francis Asbury

Ablaze for God Till Death
FORWARD FOR GOD AND HOLINESS



Francis Asbury {1745 – 1816} was the circuit rider so ablaze for Christ that one American biographer wrote, “He coveted our entire continent with such a passion he appeared anxious to lose his life in the work.”

**From New England to the Carolinas
and from the Atlantic to Kentucky,
Francis rode horseback in the pursuit of
souls. Some sixty times he crisscrossed
the Allegheny Mountains, often at
places where roads were nearly
nonexistent. Sometimes he rode his
horse; sometimes he led the weary
animal.**

A person wearing a dark hoodie is sitting on the ground in a forest at night. They are positioned next to a campfire, which is burning brightly and casting a warm glow. The person appears to be looking down at something in their hands. The background is filled with the silhouettes of trees and the soft light of the fire. The overall atmosphere is quiet and contemplative.

In spite of a weak body, frequent illnesses, and, at times, feet swollen with painful rheumatism, he drove himself forward.

Often his food was game hunted and then cooked on a campfire.

He forded streams and was often drenched with rain. His few possessions were in his saddle-bags,

and when he could find no frontier cabin, he pillowed his head on a saddlebag or stone. He was **tormented by ticks and mosquitoes.** Unafraid, he braved the dangers of wild beasts, and he faced and escaped stalking Indians. In Francis's final years he often had to be lifted into his saddle.



TICK BITING



Even when his friends had to tie him in his saddle, he insisted on traveling to preach wherever there was opportunity.

At times he had to be supported by two people in order to deliver his message, and at other times he preached sitting down. He is rightly honored as the father of American Methodism.

Francis had a godly mother who loved to read her Bible and the sermon of John Wesley, founder of Methodism { who was forty-two years older than Asbury }, and George Whitefield { Wesley's coworker }.

Francis began to read by age five or six, and soon he was reading the Bible on his own.



**John Wesley, founder of
Methodism {who was forty-
years older than Asbury},**



**George Whitefield
{Wesley's coworker}.**

He loved to read and reread the account of Moses and other Bible history.



The schoolmaster at the village school was a tyrant and beat Francis day after day with his leather belt until again and again Francis begged not to go to school.

**"I can't stand to be beaten
every day."**



**he said. But there was no other
place to get schooling.**

**Francis took off his shirt one day
and showed his mother twenty-
four deep red bruises across his
back.**

**Weeping, his mother said,
“Remember that while you are in
school I am on my knees praying
for you,” she said.**

**At thirteen he dropped out of
school.**



SAVED AND FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

At the same time, Francis began to seek the Lord in a prayer meeting in his home. He also kept his reading habit, his favorites being the diaries of Wesley and Whitefield.

At age fifteen he was converted. He recounted that at sixteen, one day when he was praying in an old barn with a friend, he “experienced a marvelous display of the grace of God, what some might call sanctification, and . . . was indeed very happy.”

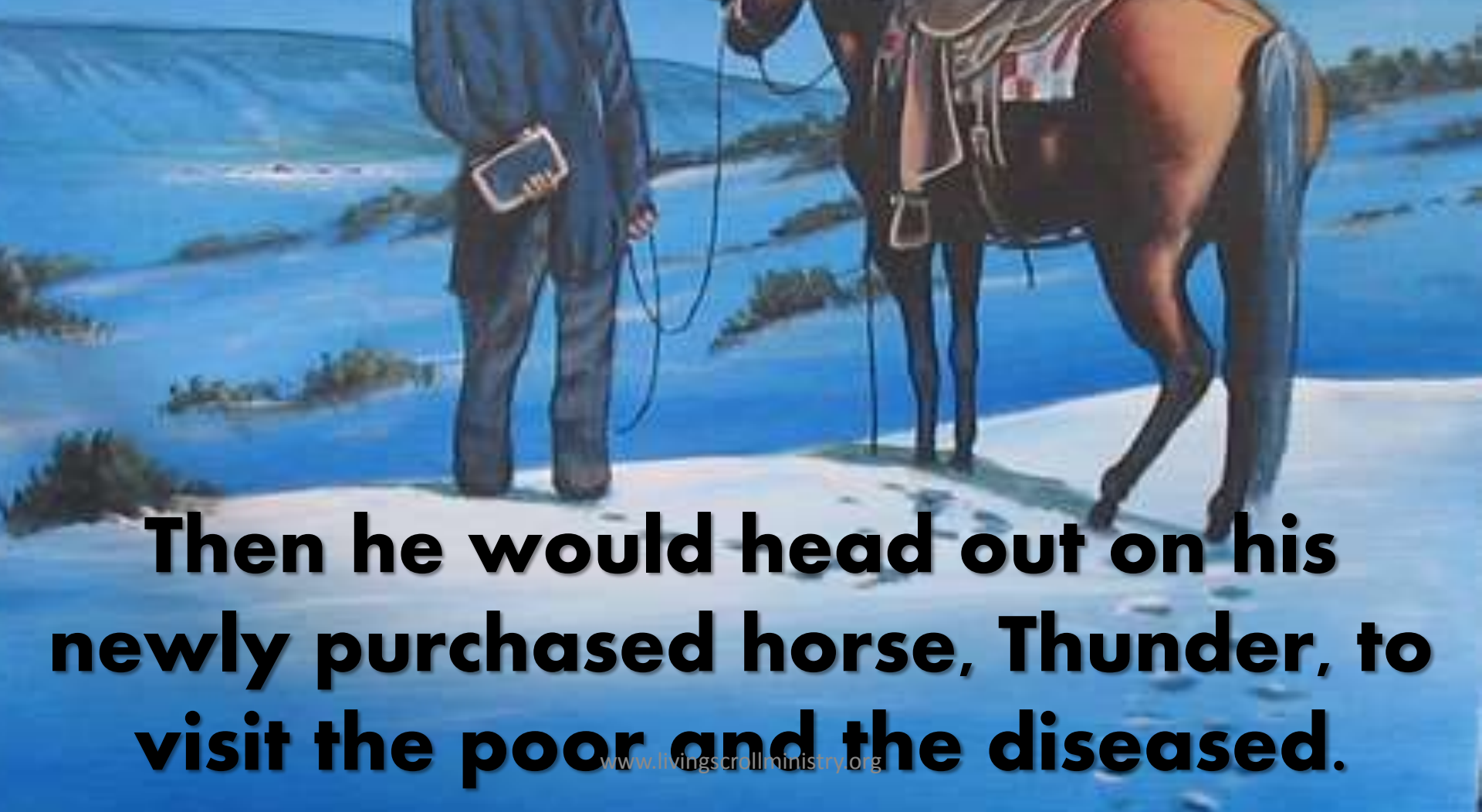
From then on, Francis never turned back.

At seventeen he was placed in charge of a Methodist “class” as its spiritual leader.

At eighteen he was appointed a “local preacher” of the Methodists.

He began traveling to nearby towns and preached three to five times per week.

**Following John Wesley's instructions,
Francis rose at four o'clock each
morning to pray.**



**Then he would head out on his
newly purchased horse, Thunder, to
visit the poor and the diseased.**

**He could hardly tear himself
away from the homes of the poor.
Their sorrows were his sorrows,
and his money was their money.**

**Francis's greatest joy was seeing
people commit their lives to Jesus.**

**He loved to see crowded
congregations sing the great
salvation hymns of Charles
Wesley and Isaac Watts with
hands raised and eyes filled with
tears.**

At twenty-two Francis was “fully admitted” to the Methodist Conference by John Wesley, and he began receiving regular ministerial appointments.

He wrote, “I will not trade my saddle for a seat in the House of Lords.” He attended his first conference in Bristol, where John Wesley preached.

TO AMERICA

When in a sermon John Wesley called for volunteers to go to America with the gospel, Francis rose to his feet, tears flooding his eyes.

It meant saying farewell to his parents and his girlfriend, never seeing them again.

Though often lonely, he lived the rest of his life as a bachelor. John Wesley trusted Francis and appointed him but gave him nothing for his journey.

Other friends gave him some clothing and ten pounds. He boarded the ship for the fifty-four-day journey to Philadelphia.

**Francis arrived in Philadelphia on
October 27, 1771, and went to a
service that very night.**

**The next night he preached his first
sermon in the New World.**

The following day he met a woman who had carried her child fourteen miles [22 Kilometers} to attend the service and was now starting home again.

**Francis was deeply moved. He said,
“Maybe the Lord sent her to preach to us! We’re going to have to work harder. The New World desperately needs the Gospel.”**

PLANNING AND PLANTING CHURCHES

Francis stayed ten days in Philadelphia and discovered that Methodists in the United States had not established circuits, though they had planted a number of local churches.

It was a two-day trip to New York, so Francis made arrangements to preach along the way. Once in New York, he immediately began to preach in homes and churches.

But his heart soon became restless, longing to get out beyond the city and find places to plant congregations of new believers. Every day he planned or preached.

He determined to start the same circuit pattern in America that John Wesley had begun in Britain, where there were already forty circuits.



The message Francis preached to the New York believers was

“Let us not sleep as others do, but let us watch and be sober.”

He was troubled that the two leaders of Methodism in the States were content to stay in the city.

He felt His call from God was to
“To initiate the fulfillment of
his continent-wide vision,

**Francis began to make short trips to
nearby places and hold services
everywhere he could.**



**He dreamed and prayed about
establishing circuits all across
America and longed for ten
preachers to help him.**

He was soon launching out beyond the cities, blazing new trails, sleeping in frontier cabins, and swimming rivers, always planning to reach the settlements beyond.

The years that followed were filled with unending ministry. In 1772, within a year of Francis's arrival in America,

John Wesley appointed him as his assistant, making him leader of all the Methodist work in the country. He was only twenty-seven.



After one year, John Wesley sent out **Thomas Rankin** and appointed him OVER Francis.

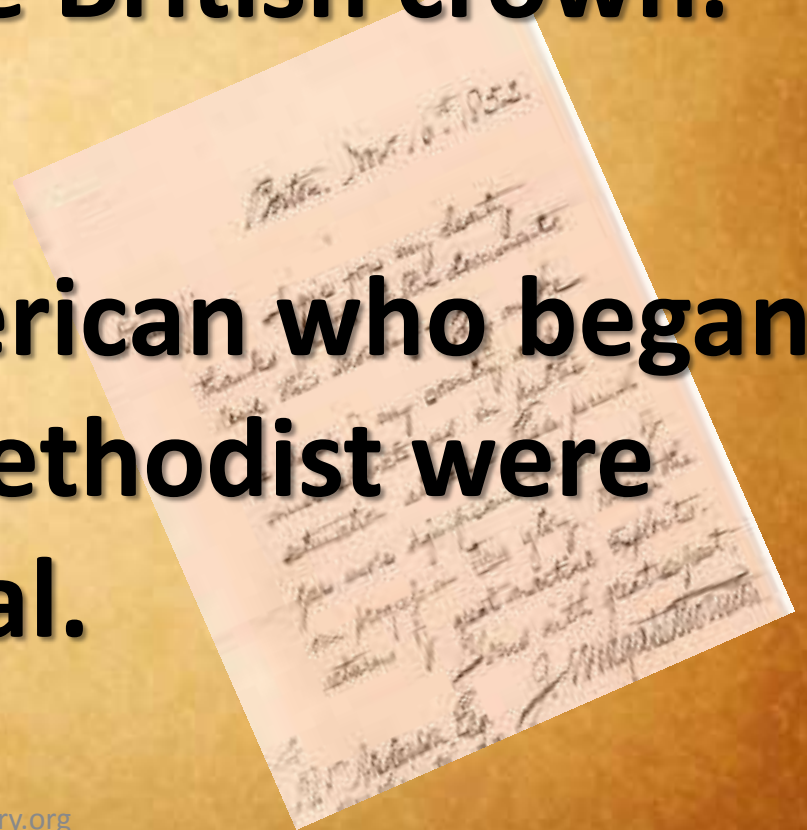
Francis accepted this move with sanctified grace and continued to pour his heart and soul into the work.

This was a difficult period for ministry.

By 1776 the United States had declared independence from England and war had broken out.

Rankin returned to England, as did many of the other Methodist leaders. John Wesley sent a letter to America urging loyalty to the British crown.

This upset many American who began to feel that the Methodist were disloyal.



Francis regretted Wesley's letter but loved Wesley as a person. Pressures from those who thought the Methodists were disloyal increased, and Francis had to go into hiding for a time.

A letter Francis wrote to friends in Britain expressing his loyalty to the States was intercepted, and when the government leaders discovered he was not disloyal, he was once more free to carry on his ministry.



SUPERINTENDENT IN AMERICA

In 1784 John Wesley appointed Francis Asbury and **Thomas Coke** joint superintendents of the American work.



**THOMAS
COKE**

**Francis still had one great passion:
to see the continent of America
evangelized for Christ. Coke,
however, organized missionary
ventures to different parts of the
world.**

He crossed the Atlantic eighteen times, residing at times in Britain and at times in Ireland.

Thus, the burden and responsibility for America was increasingly on Francis shoulders.

ANTISLAVERY

**Francis met a former slave
named Harry Hosier, who was
wonderfully saved but unable to
read or write.**



**HARRY
HOSIER**

God had called this prayer warrior to preach. Francis sometimes invited Hosier to travel with him, and soon Hosier became even more popular a speaker than Asbury.

That was no problem for Francis. All he wanted was to see more souls saved.

**Francis was grieved with slavery.
After lunch with George Washington,
he urged him to sign an
emancipation document.**



**GEORGE
WASHINGTON**

Washington told him he agreed with him but that he felt **this was not the time to sign such a document.**



ASBURY'S CARE FOR HIS CIRCUIT RIDERS

The circuit rider's life and ministry was so rugged before 1800 that half of Francis's **circuit riders died** before age thirty. From 1800 to 1844, half of them lived to be thirty-three years of age.



**CIRCUIT
RIDERS**

Of the 672 circuit riders of whom we have record, two-thirds were able to continue that ministry for twelve years.

They poured out their souls and their health.

**Francis
exalted his
circuit
riders,**



“We must reach every section of America – especially the new frontiers. We must not be afraid of men, wild animals, or disease. Our motto must always be FORWARD!”

Francis had a special burden for his rider. As he multiplied circuits and appointed new circuit riders, he added the name of each one to his daily prayer list, which contained hundreds of names.

He encouraged them to live simply and to remain single so they could apply themselves to the gospel ministry without hindrance.

They were to preach each day at noon, and their themes were to be free grace, instant salvation and sanctification through the Holy Spirit and holy living.

He advised them to keep a disciplined schedule:

- ✓ **Rise at four each morning.**
- ✓ **Spend one hour in prayer each morning from four to five and one hour from five to six in the evening**
- ✓ **Read from six o'clock each morning till noon, with an hour off for breakfast, feeding your mind and soul on the Bible and good books.**

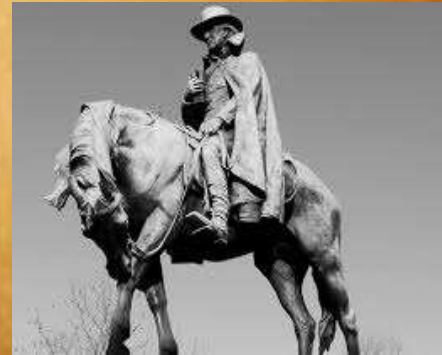
THE MORE, THE BETTER

Francis was constantly time conscious. If he could find two places to stop and preach during a day, he was glad.

If he could find three or more, so much the better. Regardless of the winter weather, he pushed on.

“I must ride or die,”

he wrote.



As much as he was able, he used his riding time praying or reading his Bible, a commentary, or some other spiritual book.

He stopped in each settlement and in many homes, preaching wherever he could find listeners.

He visited jails to evangelize condemned criminals, and he walked with them to the place of execution.

As John Wesley advised preachers, Francis kept a journal from the beginning of his ministry. One can read such quotes as these:

“The Lord enabled me to preach with power.”

“I felt divine assistant.”

“There is a considerable work of God.”

“We had a powerful meeting.”

“Thanks be to God, I had power in preaching.”

“Oh, how I wish to spend all my time and talents for Him who spilt His **BLOOD for me.”**



"I have nothing to seek but the glory of God; and nothing to fear but His displeasure. . . . if I have to beg from door to door, . . . I will be faithful to God, to the people, and to my own soul."

HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD

Francis believed that the church was to consist of born-again believers separated from the world, who believed in a definite cleansing experience of the Holy Spirit after the new birth, which then was demonstrated by a holy life.

**Here are more quotes from his
journal:**

“It is holiness that my spirit mourns.”

**“Bless the Lord, O ye saints! Holiness
is the element of my soul. my earnest
prayer is that nothing contrary to
holiness may live in me.”**

**“How I long to be more holy – to
live more with God, and for
God!”**

**“This was a day of much divine
power and love in my soul. I was
left alone and spent part of every
hour in prayer, and Christ was
near and very precious.”**

Francis had three great strategies for evangelism and a holy church.

The first was widespread use of circuit riders.

The second was the use of quarterly and annual conferences. He attended and presided at as many of these as possible

**A typical quarterly conference
would start on Saturday and
continue through Sunday evening.**

**People slept on floors, benches, the
ground, under wagons, or with
neighbors.**

**Sunday morning opened with a
love feast.**

**This was strictly for the faithful.
During the feast, water and
bread were passed around and
participants drank and ate
together.**

**They testified, prayed, quoted
Scripture, sang hymns, and
shouted the praises of God.**

The morning service began at eleven o'clock. It began with baptisms followed by a long sermon and the Lord's Supper.

The Sunday evening service was evangelistic in nature. It was not uncommon to see hundreds coming forward to pray.

Francis's third strategy for evangelism and a holy church was the camp meeting. The first interdenominational camp meeting was held at Cane Ridge in Kentucky in 1801.

**Thousands from almost all
denomination came from far and
near, and the meeting continued
night and day.**

**Attendances vary from twelve
thousands to twenty-five
thousand people.**

Hundreds fell prostrate under the mighty power of God. At times two, three, four, and even seven preachers addressed different parts of the crowd at the same time.

“The heavenly fire spread in almost every direction.”

A revival movement was sparked among the churches, and in many places the Presbyterians and Methodists united their labors in camp meetings.

By 1811, through Francis encouragement, the Methodist had four hundred camp meetings of their own, and within ten more years there were nearly a thousand.

Among those who frequented camp meetings and sang the gospel hymns was Nancy Hanks, the mother of Abraham Lincoln.



NANCY HANKS

By this time Francis Asbury had become the best-known person in America, even preaching to the House of Representatives in Washington.

His work was spreading far and wide, but he was getting weaker and weaker in body.

**Nevertheless, he drove himself on
to the very last days of his life.
When he could no longer ride
horseback,**

**he was carried in a horse-drawn
sulky to his next appointment and
then was carried into the church or
home, where he would sit and
preach.**

**He kept winning souls,
ordaining preachers, and
moving from camp meetings
to conferences.**

DEATH AND GLORY

A year before Francis died, he wrote,

**“My eyes fail. . . . It is my
fifty-fifth year of ministry
and forty-fifth of labor in
America . . .**

But whether health, **life, or
death, good is the will of the
Lord:**

**I will trust Him; yea, and will
praise Him;**

**He is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever –
GLORY!”**

During Francis's last several days, he was still travelling by sulky and speaking.

On March 31, 1816, as his speech began to fade, he lifted his hand, and his face radiated a heavenly joy.

**“His face was the face of an
angel.”**

**The family he was staying with
and other friends gathered
around for a service.**

**One of his coworkers asked,
“Do you believe that Jesus
is precious?”**

**Francis was too weak to answer
but raised both of his hands,**



**and in a few moments his head
rested on his coworker and he
passed away at age
SEVENTY-ONE.**

**When Asbury arrived in America
there were *1,160 Methodist*.**

**When he died, there were *214,235*.
He had ordained more than *three
thousand ministers* and preached
more than *seventeen thousand
sermons*.**

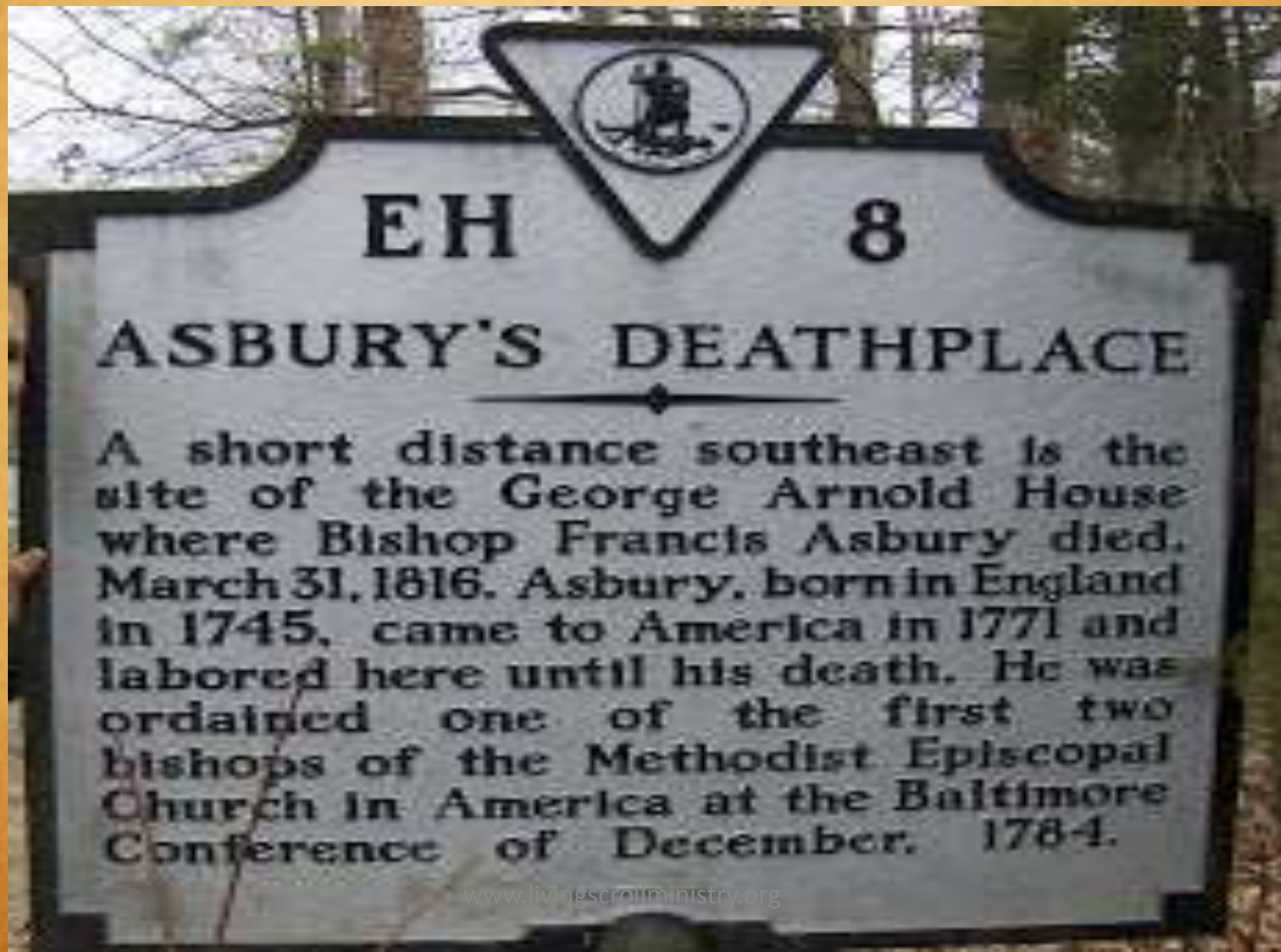
More than *fourteen thousand Methodist “classes”* had been formed.

The Methodist movement had become the fastest-growing denomination in America, including one in every forty people in America.

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The Methodist movement had become the fastest-growing denomination in America, including one in every forty people in America.

Asbury was temporarily buried where he died; his remains were later taken to Baltimore.



Twenty-five thousand people, out of a total Baltimore population of about fifty thousand, marched in the burial procession in love of Asbury.

The National Historical Publications Commission of the United States Government in 1951 chose sixty-six great Americans whose writings were to be preserved for America.

Among these are George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Francis Asbury.



George Washington,



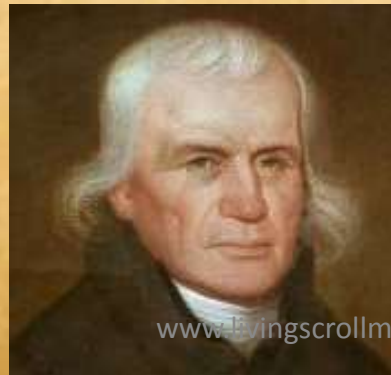
John Adams,



Thomas Jefferson,



Abraham Lincoln



Francis Asbury

In 1924 President Calvin Coolidge dedicated a magnificent bronze statue of Asbury mounted on an obviously weary horse.



**It stands on a
fifty-five-ton
granite
pedestal at an
intersection in
Washington,
D.C.**

Arnold J. Toynbee, one of the great historians of the twentieth century, wrote that the

“modern English-speaking world was saved in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by the Methodists.”

This is true. One of the greatest and holiest of these was Francis Asbury.