

# PROFILES

## Of Pioneer Preachers

By  
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### R. F. Whitaker 1867-1948

R. F. Franklin was one of a group of unique men who have served the Lord well and faithfully. Growing up without many of the advantages that many, even in his time had, he "lifted himself by the boot straps" and became one of the most useful in The Kingdom. Through the years he farmed and largely supported his family while he faithfully preached the Word. Perhaps we'll never realize the debt we owe such men for there have been many of them who were not what we now would call "full time preachers", yet in the fullest sense of the term, they were "full time preachers" for they never let anything take precedence over their preaching. Without them many souls would have never heard the gospel. We still have such men, and they should be honored and respected for their work's sake.

Robert Franklin Whitaker was born in either Collin or Cooke County, Texas on March 4, 1867. When he was six years old his parents moved to Mountain Springs, Texas. We have no information about his education, but assume it was such as the frontier society afforded. However, like many others, he was a close student all his life and was well acquainted with the ONE thing we all need most, the Bible. By the time he was seventeen his parents had died leaving him the responsibility for seeing after himself without parents, counsel, or money. He was living at this period in the Chico (Texas) area, and in 1887, when he was twenty years old, he obeyed the gospel under the preaching of J. H. Rayzor and J. A. Hall.

On September 22, 1888 he was married to Miss Etta Michael of Chico. Four children were born to them and she passed away on June 23, 1903. He was married again, but I do not have information about his second marriage, except his wife was an invalid in her last years and he provided loving personal care for her until his death. Other children were born to him, for the newspaper accounts of his death show eight living children at that time, and list his son, Ralph, who was lost in World War I. Information from the family shows that two of his daughters still live in Alton, Oklahoma. They are Lota Heif and Wanda Hooton.

He began preaching about 1894 and baptized sixteen people in his first meeting. Sister C. R. Nichol, in her work on gospel preachers in 1911 says; "He has been a successful preacher from the first and many have been let to Christ though his labors." In 1903-05 he was engaged in evangelistic work in Wise County, Texas. At that time

there were about seventeen churches in the county that had not introduced the instrument. He worked among these churches and helped halt the inroads of digression which were then quite strong, as well as reaching many of the lost. My own people came from Wise County and I remember hearing some of them speak of him, his ability and faithfulness.

In 1911 he was living at Thorp Spring, Texas where he moved to give his children the benefits of a Christian education offered by the Thor Spring Christian College. (As on studies the lives of gospel preachers he finds many of them seeking such educational opportunities for their children. Surely this ought to say something to other parents.)

Like other preachers of his time, he managed to gain for the Lord. His family knows he had some debates, but has no detailed information about them. However, Sister Nichol in her work "Gospel Preachers Who Blazed The Trail, 1911," says he had then had fifteen "debates with success." We can assume that these were with the usual false teachers of the period, and that he surely did more of it after that date. We wish we could know more about this.

His preaching took him "far and near" throughout North Texas and Southwestern Oklahoma. Just when he first began to preach north of the Red River, I am unable to determine, but we know he did do extensive work in the area as soon as people began to move in. He stayed in the places available, dugouts, ranches, outdoors, wherever he happened to be, and, of course, shared the life and hardships of the people. One thing we do know about this period, he did faithfully preach the Word and endeared himself to the people among whom he went. He finally moved to Tipton in 1913 and lived there for the rest of his life. He was the first gospel preacher to live in the area and established the Tipton church, as well as numbers of others. Through the years he was active in the Tipton church, serving for many years as one of its elders. He was instrumental in locating the orphan home there and all through his life worked diligently for it, raising fund, teaching the children, and doing whatever needed to be done.

Through the years at Tipton he not only preached there and in nearby places, worked diligently for the Tipton Home children, but he also encouraged young men to preach. After his death Reuel Lemmons wrote an excellent article about him that was

published in the Firm Foundation in which he gave Brother Whitaker much credit for his own development. Other younger men who knew and profited by his influence were: Ross Givens, J. M. Gilpatrick, Fay Wilson, Samuel Blackwell, Ralph Givens, and Morgan Sturgess. No doubt there were others. Brother E. A. Sanders said in the funeral services, "... Brother Whitaker was an example of the four-fold development which should characterize every Christian. Physically he was strong; mentally he was alert, morally straight and spiritually great. He also told of his unusual physical strength that lasted until the very end of his life.

On the eleventh of February, 1948 his great heart failed and he was taken to a better world. His widow followed in June of 1964. They sleep at Tipton among the remains of loved ones to await the resurrection.



R. F. Whitaker