

The Pattern of Paul's Missionary Life Revealed in the Ministry of David Brainerd for the Furtherance of the Gospel Among the Nations

2 Timothy 1:8-12

There is probably no one who has had a greater influence on the modern missionary movement than David Brainerd. John Thornbury, a biographer of Brainerd wrote, "Only eternity will reveal how many fires of evangelistic zeal have been lit by the perusal of the account of his short but powerful life."¹ His impact on men like William Carey, Adoniram Judson, Henry Martyn and Jim Elliott was enormous. This is all the more amazing when you consider he died at the age of twenty-nine and had a missionary ministry to the American Indians for only three years.

The power of Brainerd's influence, in large part, lies in the pattern of ministry he adopted, a pattern for service found in the life of the apostle Paul. The parallels between the lives of Paul and David Brainerd are striking. They are too numerous to be merely a coincidence. Their mutual and equal commitment to the power of the gospel, the necessity of a clear and undeniable call, a ministry of suffering and an unsurpassing confidence in Christ drove them as William Carey said, "to expect great things [from God] and to attempt great things [for God]."

The lives and ministries of these heroes of the faith, one standing gladly in the shadow of the other, provide a model for ministry worthy of our most careful consideration. In 2 Timothy 1:8-12 we see four characteristics of a ministry for the furtherance of the gospel among the nations.

Unashamed of Christ and His gospel 2 Timothy 1:8

¹ John Thornbury, *David Brainerd: Pioneer Missionary to the American Indians* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1996), 298.

The condition in which the apostle Paul penned 2 Timothy was that of a Roman prison. This was not his first imprisonment, but it would prove to be his last. Second Timothy was his final letter, the benediction of his ministry. The apostle Paul wrote with urgency, making clear that he did not expect to avoid execution this time (2 Tim 4:6-8). As he wrote Timothy, his young son in the ministry, he is alone except for the company of Doctor Luke (2 Tim 4:11). The conditions in the Mamertine Prison where he possibly was held have been described as a filthy hole with no light, no fresh air and a dungeon that was never cleaned. Prisoners often went mad; almost everyone who entered died there.

These are the conditions in which Paul was faithful to his *charge* at the end of his life. Verse 8 begins by looking back to the challenge of v. 6-7. In light of being given a spirit “of power and love and discipline,” Paul charged Timothy, “Therefore, *do not be ashamed* (v. 8, 12, 16) of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner.” Paul is quick to point out that he is not Rome’s prisoner, but the Lord’s. I am here because He put me here. I am here to suffer for His gospel and to do so by the power of God. In that suffering there should be no shame! No shame of Christ (a crucified criminal), the Lord Jesus, the Messiah King. No shame of His gospel which is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). No shame of His faithful servant (Paul, a subversive anarchist) who willingly and joyfully put it all on the line for King Jesus.

The same charge laid down by Paul to Timothy, would later characterize the life and ministry of David Brainerd (1718-1747). He was born into a devout Christian home in Haddam, Connecticut. Tragically, he would see his father die at the age of nine and his mother at the age of fourteen. He would experience lengthy battles with depression, loneliness and melancholy that would afflict him most of his life. Tuberculosis would dog him most of his three year ministry among the Indians. In God’s providence, Brainerd’s journal and diary were edited and

published by Jonathan Edwards. (1703-1758). Through these writings, the life and ministry of David Brainerd has been preserved.

It was at the age of twenty-one, on July 12, 1739, as he prepared to enter Yale College and prepare for ministry, that he was wonderfully converted to the Christ he would faithfully love and serve for a brief eight years. It is appropriate to quote at length Brainerd's own account of this glorious event:

... I was walking again in the same solitary place, where I was brought to see myself lost and helpless... Here, in a mournful, melancholy state, I was attempting to pray; but found no heart to engage in that or any other duty... then, as I was walking in a dark thick grove, unspeakable glory seemed to open to the view and apprehension of my soul. I do not mean any external brightness, for I saw no such thing... It was a new inward apprehension or view that I had of God, such as I never had before, nor anything which had the least resemblance of it.

I stood still, wondered, and admired! I knew that I never had seen before anything comparable to it for excellency and beauty ... My soul rejoiced with joy unspeakable to see such a God, such a glorious Divine Being; and I was inwardly pleased and satisfied that He should be God over all for ever and ever. My soul was so captivated and delighted with the excellency, loveliness, greatness, and other perfections of God, that I was even swallowed up in Him.

Thus God, I trust, brought me to a hearty disposition to exalt Him and set Him on the throne, and principally and ultimately to aim at His honor and glory, as King of the universe. I continued in this state of inward joy, peace, and astonishment, till near dark, without any sensible abatement; and then began to think and examine what I had seen; and felt sweetly composed in my mind all the evening following. I felt myself in a new world, and everything about me appeared with a different aspect from what it was wont to do.

At this time, the way of salvation opened to me with such infinite wisdom, suitableness, and excellency, that I wondered I should ever think of any other way of salvation; was amazed that I had not dropped my own contrivances, and complied with this lovely, blessed, and excellent way before. If I could have been saved by my own duties, or any other way that I had formerly contrived, my whole soul would now have refused it. I wondered that all the world did not see and comply with this way of salvation, entirely by the righteousness of Christ.²

With such a glorious awakening to the excellency and beauty of Christ, it is no wonder David Brainerd was unashamed of Christ and His gospel. There was no shame of Christ and His

² David Brainerd, *The Life & Diary of David Brainerd* (Grand Rapids: Bakers, 1949), 69-70.

gospel in Paul. There was no shame of Christ and His gospel in Brainerd. There must be no shame of Christ and His gospel in us.

Certain of Your Calling As a Gospel Minister 2 Timothy 1:9-11

Paul was confident in His *salvation* (cf. also v. 12). He was equally confident in his *call to ministry*, both its character and its nature. Note the spiritual progression and spiritual logic to Paul's argument in these verses.

- 1) God "has saved us... not according to our works." We did not save ourselves (v.9).
- 2) God called us "with a holy calling." God's call is from a holy God and unto a holy life (v.9).
- 3) This holy calling is "according to his own purpose and grace." God sets the agenda for our lives and it is by His grace that we live out His plan for our lives (v.9).
- 4) This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. The preexistent Christ set in motion His amazing grace for our salvation and service in eternity past (v.9).
- 5) This grace has been revealed in space and time, in history, "by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus" (v.10).
- 6) The amazing nature of this grace is seen in the fact that the Christ who gives it has "abolished death" and "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." No wonder grace is amazing and no wonder Paul is not ashamed of the gospel (v.10).
- 7) It is with this gospel of the incomparable Christ and Savior that Paul was appointed to a three-fold assignment for the nations: a) preacher (herald), b) apostle (missionary) and c) teacher (v.11).³

Brainerd had the same certainty of God's call and God's grace as did the apostle Paul. In fact, it was all that kept him going at particular points in his life. In a letter to his brother on Jan. 2, 1744, Brainerd wrote, "We should always look upon ourselves as God's servants, placed in God's world to do His work; and accordingly labor faithfully for Him. Let it then be your great concern, thus to devote yourself and your all to God."

³ See also 1 Tim 2:7 for these same three assignments.

Brainerd was convinced of his call, even if he was not sure of the same for others. Brainerd enrolled at Yale in 1739. He was at the top of his class and on his way to graduating with honors. However, in the winter of 1741, after the fall commencement address given by Jonathan Edwards, an address entitled “The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God,” an address not well received by the more reserved administration, a freshman overheard Brainerd say in a private conversation of Yale’s tutor Chauncey Whittlesey, “I do not believe he has any more grace than this chair I lean upon.”⁴ He was also accused of saying he was surprised that Rector Thomas Clap “did not drop dead for fining scholars that followed Mr. Tennent...”⁵ Refusing to publicly apologize, though he confessed his guilt, Brainerd was expelled from school. He would later write a letter of public apology and plead to be forgiven and allowed to graduate. Jonathan Edwards and others also made appeals on his behalf but all to no avail. He was never readmitted. He never graduated. Humbled? Yes. Humiliated? No doubt. Denied his calling as a gospel minister? Never! After being denied his degree Brainerd said, “God sees fit to deny it.”⁶

Brainerd often thought deeply about his holy calling and appointment as a preacher, missionary and teacher. A few excerpts from his dairy make this clear:⁷

Monday, June 25, 1744: Was something better in health than of late; was able to spend a considerable part of the day in prayer and close studies. Especially longed for the presence of God in my work and that the poor heathen might be converted. And in evening prayer my faith and hope in God were much raised. To an eye of reason, everything that respects the conversion of the heathen is as dark as midnight; and yet I cannot but hope in God for the accomplishment of something glorious among them.

Tuesday, June 26: In prayer my soul was enlarged, and my faith drawn into sensible exercise. Was enabled to cry to God for my poor Indians; though the

⁴ Brainerd, 133, 381.

⁵ Ibid., 133.

⁶ Ibid., 132.

⁷ The following excerpts are taken from Brainerd, 166-171.

work of their conversion appeared impossible with man, yet with God I saw all things were possible...I was much assisted in prayer for dear Christian friends and for others that I apprehended to be Christless. But was more especially concerned for the poor heathen and those of my own charge. Was enabled to be instant in prayer for them and hoped that God would bow the heavens and come down for their salvation. It seemed to me there could be no impediment sufficient to obstruct that glorious work, seeing the living God, as I strongly hoped, was engaged for it... Longed that God would purge me more that I might be as a chosen vessel to bear His name among the heathens. Continued in this frame till I dropped asleep.

Thursday, June 28: Spent the morning in reading several parts of the Holy Scripture, and in fervent prayer for my Indians that God would set up His kingdom among them and bring them into His Church... My great concern was for the conversion of the heathen to God; and the Lord helped me to plead with Him for it. Towards noon, rode up to the Indians in order to preach to them. While going, my heart went up to God in prayer for them; could freely tell God He knew that the cause was not mine which I was engaged in, but it was His own cause and it would be for His glory to convert the poor Indians.

Lord's Day, July 1: In the morning, was perplexed with wandering vain thoughts; was much grieved, judged and condemned myself before God... Thus also after I came to the Indians my mind was confused. I felt nothing sensibly of that sweet reliance on God that my soul has been comforted with in days past. Spent the forenoon in this posture of mind and preached to the Indians without any heart.

In the afternoon, I felt still barren when I began to preach, and after about half an hour I seemed to myself to know nothing and to have nothing to say to the Indians; but soon after I found in myself a spirit of love, and warmth, and power, to address the poor Indians. God helped me to plead with them to "turn from all the vanities of the heathen to the living God." I am persuaded the Lord touched their consciences for I never saw such attention raised in them before. And when I came away from them, I spent the whole time, while I was riding to my lodgings three miles distant, in prayer and praise to God.

After I rode more than two miles, *it came into my mind to dedicate myself to God again, which I did with great solemnity and unspeakable satisfaction. Especially gave up myself to him renewedly in the work of the ministry. And this I did by divine grace, I hope, without any expectation or reserve; not in the least shrinking back from any difficulties that might attend this great and blessed work. I seemed to be most free, cheerful and full in this dedication of myself. My whole soul cried: "Lord, to Thee I dedicate myself! Oh, accept of me and let me be Thine forever. Lord, I desire nothing else, I desire nothing more. Oh, come, come, Lord, accept a poor worm. 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth, that I desire besides Thee.'"*

After this, was enabled to praise God with my whole soul that He had enabled me to devote and consecrate all my powers to Him in this solemn

manner. *My heart rejoiced in my particular work as a missionary; rejoiced in my necessity of self-denial in many respects.*

Friday, July 6: Awoke this morning in the fear of God... I am, of late, most of all concerned for ministerial qualifications and the conversion of the heathen. Last year, I longed to be prepared for a world of glory and speedily to depart out of this world; but of late all my concern almost is for the conversion of the heathen, and for that end I long to live.

But blessed be God, I have less desire to live for any of the pleasures of the world, than ever I had. *I long and love to be a pilgrim, and want grace to imitate the life, labors and sufferings of Paul among the heathen. And when I long for holiness now it is not so much for myself as formerly; but rather that thereby I may become an “able minister of the New Testament,” especially to the heathen.*

Brainerd’s delight and certainty in Christ, “who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace,” is evident in each entry of his journal. It was only by this joyful certainty in his calling as a gospel minister that Brainerd labored and suffered faithfully among the Indians. His continual concern for the lost souls of Indians was driven by a deep dependence on Christ and conviction that the gospel was the power to salvation. These realities deepened Brainerd’s certainty in his calling, which deepened his faithfulness to his task. Following the pattern of the life and ministry of Paul, Brainerd challenges us to become “able ministers of the New Testament,” certain of our calling to be gospel ministers.

Willingness to suffer for the sake of Christ

2 Timothy 1:8, 12

Twice in this paragraph Paul speaks of suffering. In verse 8 he invites Timothy to join him in suffering for the gospel. In verse 12 he informs us he has suffered for his ministry as a preacher, apostle, and teacher. The phrase “For this reason” looks back to v. 11 and shows that it was for the sake of the ministry to which he had been called that he suffered for the sake of Christ. One can also consult 2 Corinthians 11:23-33 for a lengthy and detailed description of

just a portion of what Paul suffered for the sake of His Savior. And, it was extensive and it was intense. And, it made it all the more possible for God to put on display His amazing power and His amazing grace.

Once more David Brainerd walked in the footsteps of his apostolic example and mentor. This time it was by his willingness to suffer for the sake of Christ. Fred Barlow put things in perspective when he writes,

By almost every standard known to modern missionary boards, David Brainerd would have been rejected as a missionary candidate. He was tubercular – died of that disease at twenty-nine – and from his youth was frail and sickly. He never finished college, being expelled from Yale for criticizing a professor and for his interest and attendance in meetings of the “New Lights,” a religious organization. He was prone to be melancholy and despondent. Yet this young man, who would have been considered a real risk by any present-day mission board, became a missionary to the American Indians and, in the most real sense, ‘the pioneer of modern missionary work.’⁸

It is of providential import to note God’s protective hand on young David as he pursued the missionary assignment given to him by God. Brainerd’s first journey to what is called the “Forks of the Delaware” resulted in a miracle of God that preserved his life and revered him among the Indians as a “Prophet of God.” Encamped at the outskirts of the Indian settlement, Brainerd planned to enter the Indian community the next morning to preach to them the Gospel of Christ. Unknown to him, his every move was being watched by warriors who had been sent out to kill him. F.W. Boreham records the incident:

But when the braves drew closer to Brainerd’s tent, they saw the paleface on his knees. And as he prayed, suddenly a rattlesnake slipped to his side, lifted up its ugly head to strike, flicked its forked tongue almost in his face, and then without any apparent reason, glided swiftly away into the brushwood. “The Great Spirit is with the paleface!” the Indians said; and thus they accorded him a prophet’s welcome.”

⁸ Fred Barlow, *Profiles in Evangelism* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1976), 33.

On April 1, 1743, Brainerd's ministry in Delaware was put on hold when he traveled to Stockbridge, Massachusetts to begin his ministry to the Mohegan Indians. Through the spring months, he lived with a Scottish man and slept on a bed of straw. He traveled a mile and a half each day to be able to preach to the Indians, and he struggled daily with depression, loneliness, illness and physical discomfort. His diary entry on May 18, 1743 remarks:

My circumstances are such, that I have no comfort of any kind but what I have in God. I live in the most lonesome wilderness; have but one single person to converse with, that can speak English. Most of the talk I hear is either Highland Scotch or Indian. I have no fellow Christian to whom I might unbosom myself or lay open my conversation about heavenly things and join in social prayer. I live poorly with regard to the comforts of life. Most of my diet consists of boiled corn, hasty-pudding, etc. I lodge on a bundle of straw, my labor is hard and extremely difficult, and I have little appearance of success, to comfort me.⁹

Brainerd would then live alone in a wigwam through most of the summer and finally, on July 30, 1743, he moved into a hut he had built for himself. In March 1744, Brainerd was given a chance to leave the wilderness and become the pastor of the church in East Hampton, Long Island. By this time, however, his devotion as a missionary to the Indians far outweighed his desire for a comfortable position, and he chose to stay. On May 1, 1744, however, he received orders to move to his original commission with the Indians in Pennsylvania. Thus, the Mohegan Indian's were left under the care of a man named John Sergeant, while Brainerd went back to the "Forks of Delaware."

Upon his arrival in Delaware, Brainerd was greatly discouraged at the state of the Indians. They had been scattered into the wilderness by land hungry whites and, though they seemed open to Christianity, they were very leery of listening to any white people. Nevertheless, he began preaching in turn to both the Indians and a nearby settlement of Irish. Although the Indians there rejected some of their old ways, they did not put their hope in Christ

⁹ Brainerd, 124.

as a Savior. Brainerd was very discouraged by this and did not think that his efforts in the “Forks of Delaware” were any success. In an attempt to find more success and reach more Indians, he took two trips to the Susquehanna River. Although Indians there had some interest in the gospel he was preaching, Brainerd still found little tangible success in his work. In addition, he became very ill during his second journey to the Susquehanna. On several occasions he expected that he would die.

During this time, Brainerd became increasingly reliant upon God’s working on the Indians before he would have any success. He described this in his June 27, 1744, diary entry: “My soul seemed to rely wholly upon God for success, in the diligent and faithful use of means. Saw, with greatest certainty, that the arm of the Lord must be revealed for the help of these poor heathen, if ever they were delivered from the bondage of the powers of darkness.” His desire to see the Indians saved grew deeper than it had ever been. On July 23 of the same summer he wrote: “Had sweet resignation for the divine will and desired nothing so much as the conversion of the heathen to God, and that His kingdom might come in my own heart and the hearts of others.”

On June 19, 1745, Brainerd left the “Forks of Delaware” and went to Crossweeksung, New Jersey, where he would find the great success he had been searching for. As in Pennsylvania, he found on his arrival that the Indians were scattered throughout the land. Unlike before, however, they offered no objections to his preaching and began to quickly gather others to hear the message. At the end of July, during a return visit to the “Forks of Delaware”, a major breakthrough occurred in Brainerd’s ministry: his interpreter, Moses Tautomy, and his wife were saved and baptized. When Brainerd returned to Crossweeksung in August, the Indians were eagerly awaiting him. That month, only six weeks after his first visit to

Crossweeksung, Brainerd witnessed a spiritual awakening among the Indians. He was greatly encouraged as many came to a saving knowledge of Christ and many more traveled great distances to hear his message.

Brainerd took this opportunity immediately to begin discipling a new community of believers. He began baptizing those who showed evidence of their salvation, and throughout the fall he met with Indians individually to give them more teaching. On December 21, 1745, he began giving catechetical lectures to those who were ready for even deeper discipleship. On January 31, 1746, a schoolmaster arrived and began teaching children during the day and adults in the evenings. That spring he took a huge step in his ministry by moving the Indians from Crossweeksung to Cranberry, New Jersey, so they could live close to one another in a permanent community and be taught more easily. Less than a year after his arrival Brainerd had a congregation of over 130 Christian Indians under his watchcare. Concerning them 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 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 pagan darkness and superstition. Amazing change this! Effected by nothing less than divine power and grace!

Tragically, in the fall of 1746 Brainerd's illness began to overcome him. His diary is full of entries about how weak he was and how hard it was to continue his ministry in his physical condition. Consequently, he left the Indians in November and traveled to New England, where he was cared for by friends. In March 1747, he returned for what would be his last visit to the Indians before his death. By this time he was very depressed by his sickness and even looked forward to death. On May 19, 1747, Brainerd moved into Jonathan Edwards' home in New Hampton, where he would spend the last nineteen weeks of his life under the care of Edwards' daughter, Jerusha. Finally, what he referred to in his diary as "that glorious day"

came; he died of tuberculosis on October 9, 1747, at the age of 29. He was indeed willing to suffer for Christ. As a result, in a world much different than ours and by means of a ministry of only a few years, hundreds of Indians were born into the kingdom of God.

Unsurpassing Confidence in Your Security in Christ **2 Timothy 1:12**

Death has a way of putting things in perspective. In his famous Resolutions, Jonathan Edward's wrote: "6) Resolved, To live with all my might, while I do live. 7) Resolved, Never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of my life. 9) Resolved, To think much on all occasions of my own dying, and of the common circumstances which attend death. 17) Resolved, That I will live so as I shall wish I had done when I come to die."

Paul knew he was at life's end. He was in the twilight of life and though many things were uncertain, one thing he knew for sure: "I know whom I have *believed* and am *persuaded* that *He* (not me) is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day."¹⁰ Paul has placed his life, his eternal destiny in the hands of a sovereign God, a God he was confident would keep him no matter what and no matter when. Come life or death, he was secure in the God who is able.

At the end of his life David Brainerd had the same assurances as Paul. Dying in the home of Jonathan Edwards, cared for by his daughter Jerusha, the evidence pointing to the strong possibility they had fallen in love, Brainerd would write, just days before his death (most if not all his thoughts being dictated to others):

Friday, October 2: My soul was this day, at turns, sweetly set on God. I longed to be with Him that I might behold His glory. I felt sweetly disposed to commit all to Him, even my dearest friends, my dearest flock, my absent brother, and all my concerns for time and eternity. Oh, that His kingdom might come in the world; that they might all love and glorify Him, for what He is in Himself; and

¹⁰ cf. 2 Tim 1:18; the final judgment when Christ returns.

that the blessed Redeemer might “see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied”!
Oh, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Amen.¹¹

In commenting on the last days of Brainerd’s life, his friend and mentor, Jonathan

Edwards said:¹²

On the morning of the next day, being Lord’s Day, October 4, as my daughter Jerusha (who chiefly attended him) came into the room, he looked on her very pleasantly, and said: “Dear Jerusha, are you willing to part with me? I am quite willing to part with you. I am willing to part with you; I am willing to part with all my friends; I am willing to part with my dear brother John, although I love him the best of any creature living. I have committed him and all my friends to God and can leave them with God. Though, if I had thought I should not see you and be happy with you in another world, I could not bear to part with you. But we shall spend an happy eternity together. In the evening, as one came into the room with a Bible in her hand, he expressed himself thus: “Oh, that dear Book! that lovely Book! I shall soon see it opened! The mysteries that are in it, and the mysteries of God’s providence, will be all unfolded!”

On Tuesday, October 6, he lay, for a considerable time, as if he were dying. At which time, he was heard to utter, in broken whispers, such expressions as these: “He will come, He will not tarry. I shall soon be in glory. I shall soon glorify God with the angels.”

Thursday, October 8, he was in great distress and agonies of body; and for the greater part of the day was much disordered as to the exercise of his reason... He told me it was impossible for any to conceive of the distress he felt in his breast. He manifested much concern lest he should dishonor God by impatience under his extreme agony; which was such that he said the thought of enduring it one minute longer was almost insupportable.

Notwithstanding his bodily agonies, the interest of Zion lay still with great weight on his mind; the great importance of the work of the ministry.

Towards day, his eyes fixed; and he continued lying immovable till about six o’clock in the morning, and then expired on Friday, October 9, 1747, when his soul, as we may well conclude, was received by his dear Lord and Master as an eminently faithful servant, into that state of perfection of holiness and fruition of God, which he had so often and so ardently longed for; and was welcomed by the glorious assembly in the upper world, as one peculiarly fitted to join them in their blessed employ and enjoyment.

Since this, it has pleased a holy and sovereign God to take away this my dear child [Jerusha] by death, on the fourteenth of February, next following; after a

¹¹ Brainerd, 374.

¹² The following are taken from Brainerd, 375-376.

short illness of five days, in the eighteenth year of her age. She was a person of much the same spirit with Mr. Brainerd. She had constantly taken care of and attended him in his sickness for nineteen weeks before his death, devoting herself to it with great delight because she looked on him as an eminent servant of Jesus Christ.

In this time, he had much conversation with her on the things of religion; and in his dying state, often expressed to us, her parents, his great satisfaction concerning her true piety and his confidence that he should meet her in heaven; and his high opinion of her, not only as a true Christian, but a very eminent saint; one whose soul was uncommonly fed and entertained with things that appertain to the most spiritual, experimental, and distinguishing parts of religion; and one who, by the temper of her mind, was fitted to deny herself for God and to do good, beyond any young woman whatsoever that he knew of. She had manifested a heart uncommonly devoted to God in the course of her life, many years before her death; and said on her deathbed, that she had not seen one minute for several years, wherein she desired to live one minute longer, for the sake of any other good in life, but doing good, living to God, and doing what might be for His glory

This is how Brainerd lived and how he died. This is how the young girl he loved lived and died. No wonder he wrote, “Oh, how precious is time! And how guilty it makes me feel when I think I have trifled away and misapproved it, or neglected to fill up each part of it with duty to the utmost of my ability and capacity.”¹³

Conclusion

David Brainerd died in 1747 in the home of Jonathan Edwards. His ministry to the Indians was contemporary with Wesley, Whitefield and Edwards as they ministered to the English-speaking people during the period called in English and American history, the “Great Awakening.”

Brainerd’s centuries-spanning influence for revival is positive proof God can and will use any vessel, no matter how fragile and frail, if he or she is only radically devoted to the Savior!

J. M. Sherwood said that David Brainerd’s story “has done more to develop and mold the spirit of modern missions, and to fire the heart of the Christian Church, than that of any man

¹³ Brainerd, 336.

since the apostolic age.”¹⁴ He never left New England, but through those he inspired he has spoken to India, Burma, New Zealand, Persia, and Ecuador just to name a few.

When asked, “What can be done to revive the word of God where it has decayed?” John Wesley said, “Let every preacher read carefully the life of David Brainerd.” We have looked at this man and his life as it unfolded in the shadow of the pattern of the apostle Paul. F. W. Boreham described him as, “a man in a million.”¹⁵ It is wisely said, “He lives long who lives well.” By that measurement David Brainerd lived long. My hope and prayer is that we will live long too!

¹⁴ J. M. Sherwood, *Memoirs of Rev. David Brainerd Missionary to the Indians of North America* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls), xxx.

¹⁵ F. W. Boreham, *A casket of cameos; more texts that made history...* (New York: Abingdon, 1924), 21.