

David Brainerd

by Don O. Shelton



Introduction. What is more stimulating and valuable in life than the memory of the men who have had a leading part in making the world what it is? The perpetuation of the spirit and message of great and noble workers, of true nation builders, of world benefactors, is a task both delightful and essential. Many men of highest nobility of life, who bravely and unselfishly did divinely appointed tasks, and who lived supremely to the end that all men might come to know Him who is the way, the truth, the life, had a voice not only for their own age, but for subsequent ages. Such a voice had David Brainerd ... the brave, undaunted, self-denying pioneer of the cross in America.

Parentage and Early Life. He had a highly respectable Puritan ancestry. His father was one of his Majesty's council for the colony of Connecticut. His mother was the daughter of the first pastor at Hingham, England. Under persecution her father came to New England, where he became pastor at Hingham, Massachusetts. A great-grandfather of Brainerd was also a Puritan minister, who, after leaving England, came to America and founded the town of Lynn, Massachusetts.

Of four sons David was the third. From his earliest years he was physically weak, and predisposed to consumption. In his boyhood he was quiet, devout and thoughtful.

His father died when he was a child. On the death of his mother, in his fourteenth year, he was left in an exceedingly distressed and melancholy condition.

Boyhood. In his fifteenth year he left his early home and went to East Haddam, Connecticut, where he remained four years.

"I was not much addicted to the company and amusement of the young," he said, referring to this period of his life; "but this I know, that when I did go into such company, I never returned with so good a conscience as when I went. It always added new guilt, made me afraid to come to the throne of grace, and spoiled those good frames with which I was wont sometimes to please myself."

But he found that all his good frames were but self righteousness, not

founded on a desire for the glory of God.

Prepares for College. When nineteen years of age he went to Durham. Having a growing desire for a liberal education, he took up preparatory college studies. He also devoted himself anew to the duties of religion. He writes:

"I became very strict and watchful over my thoughts, words, and actions; concluded that I must be sober indeed, because I designed to devote myself to the ministry and imagined that I did dedicate myself to the Lord."

A year later he went to the home of the Rev. Mr. Fiske, acting upon whose suggestion he withdrew from the society of young people and associated with reverent older people at Haddam. He gave much time to prayer and Bible study. In less than a year he read the Bible twice through. He made it a point, also, to listen attentively to sermons.

Interest in Religious Matters. He became so much interested in religious subjects that on Sabbath evenings he met a few young people for religious conversation. At the close of these meetings, frequently late at night, he tried to recall the sermons he had heard during the day. On Monday mornings he repeated the effort. He now began to think seriously of uniting with the church. Though regular in religious duties he became increasingly convinced that he was building on a self-righteous foundation. Step by step, however, he was brought to self-renunciation, and to an absolute trust in Jesus Christ for salvation.

"In the winter of 1738," he says, "it pleased God, one Sabbath morning, as I was walking out for prayer, to give me on a sudden such a sense of my danger, and the wrath of God, that I stood amazed, and my former good frames presently vanished. From the view which I had of my sin and vileness, I was much distressed all that day, fearing that the vengeance of God would soon overtake me. I was much dejected; kept much alone; and sometimes envied the birds and beasts their happiness, because they were not exposed to eternal misery, as I evidently saw that I was ... Hundreds of times I renounced all pretences of any worth in my duties, as I thought, even while performing them, and often confessed to God that I deserved nothing for the very best of them, but eternal condemnation; yet still I had a secret hope of recommending myself to God by my religious duties."

The next few months were filled with heart-searching, secret prayer, conviction of sin, inward distress and perplexity, and a depressing view of the corruption of his nature. Finally he came to see that even

in his fasting and praying he did not aim to glorify God and that his dominant motive was self-interest.

A Day of Prayer. One day he gave himself up completely to prayer and fasting. During it he almost continuously asked that God would open his eyes to see the evil of sin, and the way of life by Jesus Christ. There resulted a clearer revelation of his helpless condition. But he had no abiding peace. Hope and fear, encouragement and despair, alternated.

"Once, I remember, a terrible pang of distress seized me," he writes. "The thought of renouncing myself, and standing naked before the Lord, stripped of all goodness, was so dreadful to me that I was ready to say to it, as Felix to Paul, 'Go thy way for this time.'"

He could not endure these views of his own sinfulness, and his sorrow of heart continued. He was perplexed, also, because it seemed that God showed less mercy to him than to others.

Spiritual Crisis. Finally, at the close of this long period of self-scrutiny, self-conviction, self-condemnation and utter helplessness, the will of God was revealed to His servant in an unusual manner. The crisis he describes graphically. He was walking in a solitary place.

"Here, in a mournful, melancholy state, I was attempting to pray; but found no heart to engage in that or any other duty; my former concern, exercise, and religious affections were now gone. I thought that the Spirit of God had quite left me; but still was not distressed, yet disconsolate, as if nothing in heaven or earth could make me happy. Having been thus endeavoring to pray -- though, as I thought, very stupid and senseless -- for nearly half an hour; 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 nor do I intend any imagination of a body of light, somewhere in the third heavens, or anything of that nature; but 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 anything comparable to it for excellency and beauty; it was widely different from all the conceptions that ever I had of God, or things divine. I had no particular apprehensions of any one person in the Trinity, either the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost; but it appeared to be divine glory. My soul rejoiced with joy unspeakable, to see such a God, such a

glorious divine Being; and I was inwardly 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; at least to that degree, that I had no thought (as I remember) at first, about my own salvation, and scarce reflected that there was such a creature as myself. 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."

Thus ended in peace his long and bitter conflict. He came out into a life filled with joy and wonder. He marveled that all men did not see that the only way of salvation is by the righteousness of Christ. Often, in the toilsome days that followed, he had dark visions of his guilt and sin, but there are no indications that he had a doubt respecting the way of salvation.

A few plain paragraphs which Brainerd wrote indicate his thought on what it is to be a Christian. He wrote them, he said, "as he felt and experienced, and not from any considerable degree of doctrinal knowledge, or acquaintance with the sentiments of others." They are as follows:

- "(1) He has a true knowledge of the glory and excellency of God, that He is most worthy to be loved and praised for His own divine perfections, Ps. 145:3.
- (2) God is his portion, Ps. 73:25. And God's glory his great concern, Matt. 6:22.
- (3) Holiness is his delight; nothing he so much longs for as to be holy, as God is holy, Phil. 3:9-12.
- (4) Sin is his greatest enemy. This he hates for its own nature, for what it is in itself, being contrary to a holy God. And consequently he hates all sin, Rom. 7:24; 1 John 3:9.
- (5) The laws of God also are his delight, Ps. 119:97; Rom. 7:22. These he observes, not out of constraint, from a servile fear of hell; but they are his choice, Ps. 119:30. The strict observance of them is not his bondage, but his greatest liberty, vs. 45."

The story of Brainerd's subsequent career will show that his own thought and life accorded with these great fundamental principles.

College Life. He entered Yale College in the fall of 1739. His great fear, at this time, was that he might not be able to maintain a true Christian life during his college course. After self-examination and prayer there came to him a reassurance of the favor of God and the

power of His word, and his strength was renewed throughout the winter.

Beginning of Life of Prayer. It was in these student days that he began that life of intense, believing prayerfulness, by which his missionary career was to be pre-eminently marked. Some of these seasons of prayer were unspeakably joyous and of great spiritual refreshment. "Oh!" he exclaims, "one hour with God infinitely exceeds all the pleasures and delights of this lower world." When he came from the Lord's table on one occasion he wondered how so many of his fellow-students could live carelessly.

Illness. He applied himself so persistently to his college work that in August, 1740, his health failed and he was compelled to discontinue his studies. Afterward he found it possible to say of this period: "I looked death in the face more steadfastly; and the Lord was pleased to give me renewedly a sweet sense and relish of divine things." His days of rest were given to self-scrutiny and prayer. Entries in his journal at this time indicate the state of his mind:

"In the forenoon, while I was looking on the sacramental elements, and thinking that Jesus Christ would soon be 'set forth crucified before me,' my soul was filled with light and love, so that I was almost in an ecstasy; my body was so weak, I could scarcely stand."

The next day he wrote;

"I again found the assistance of the Holy Spirit in secret duties, both morning and evening, and life and comfort in religion through the whole day."

Later he said:

"I now so longed after God, and to be freed from sin, that when I felt myself recovering, and thought I must return to college again, which had proved so hurtful to my spiritual interest the year past, I could not but be grieved, and thought I had much rather have died; for it distressed me to think of getting away from God."

With such thoughts and in such a spirit he returned to Yale.

His Ambition. His chief temptation was an ambition to excel in his studies. This was at least temporarily checked by a marked spiritual awakening which came to the college. Once he laments his growing coldness and dullness, owing to the return of this temptation.

The Great Awakening. A vigorous religious movement, known as the Great Religious Awakening, began in 1739, and continued with intermittent power until 1745. It was a strong factor in shaping the destiny of New England. George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards were two of the most prominent instruments in it. But far-reaching and powerful as it was in its influence, it was not without regrettable features. Jonathan Edwards stated that for a time the religious interest was very great and general at New Haven; that the college had no small share in it; that some of the students became serious, "many of them remarkably so, and were much engaged in the concerns of their eternal salvation. By all that I can learn concerning Brainerd," he continues, "there can be no reason to doubt but that he had much of God's gracious presence, and of the lively actings of true grace, at that time; yet he was afterwards abundantly sensible that his religious experiences and affections at that time were not free from a corrupt mixture, nor his conduct to be acquitted from many things that were imprudent and blameable; which he greatly lamented himself, and was desirous that others should not make an ill use of such an example." Brainerd's own account of these notable days was destroyed. On his death-bed, he ordered that his journals, covering this and former periods of his life, should be burned.

A Costly Remark. However, the main statements of fact, so far as Brainerd's connection with the revival is concerned, were preserved by Jonathan Edwards. This, in substance, is the interesting story: Brainerd and a few other students who had been spiritually quickened, banded themselves together as friends for mutual helpfulness. When in the company of each other they expressed their views freely and frankly. On one occasion two or three of these friends had a conversation in the hall where a prayer meeting had just been held and in which Mr. Whittelsey, a tutor, had led in prayer. "No other person," says Jonathan Edwards, "now remained in the hall but Brainerd and his companions. Mr. Whittelsey having been unusually pathetic in his prayer, one of Brainerd's friends on this occasion asked him what he thought of Mr. Whittelsey. He made answer, 'He has no more grace than this chair.' One of the freshmen happening at that time to be near the hall, though not in the room, overheard these words."

Expulsion from College. A report of this occurrence finally reached the Rector of the college. He sent for the friends of Brainerd who had heard his remark and extorted from them a statement. It was demanded of Brainerd that he make a public confession of the remark he had made in private. This he did not do. The Rector forbade him from attending a certain meeting. Brainerd went. He was wrongly accused of speaking critically of the Rector. Because of these things, while in

his third year, he was expelled from the college.

His subsequent conduct revealed his fine Christian temper. Though believing that he had been too severely dealt with, and though suffering keen disappointment, owing to his inability to continue his studies, he uttered no bitter word. Eighteen months later he wrote:

"This day (September 14, 1743) I ought to have taken my degree (this being Commencement Day); but God sees fit to deny me. And though I was greatly afraid of being overwhelmed with perplexity and confusion, when I should see my classmates take theirs; yet, at the very time, God enabled me with calmness and resignation to say 'the will of the Lord be done.' Indeed, through divine goodness, I have scarcely felt my mind so calm, sedate, and comfortable, for some time. I have long feared this season, and expected my humility, meekness, patience and resignation, would be much tried; but found much more pleasure and divine comfort than I had expected."

His trial was made far severer by the fact that had it not been for the action of the governors, he would not only have taken part with his classmates in the public exercises, but would have stood at the head of his class. Eventually he was convinced that God had dealt with him in an infinitely wise way in all His dispensations.

Preparation for the Ministry. Early in 1742 Brainerd began special studies for the ministry, securing the help of the Rev. Mr. Mills of Ripton, Connecticut. His diary shows that he made steady progress in Christian attainment. He gave himself to self-examination and to prayer, and had eager aspirations for greater holiness of character. There also came to him an intense longing for the conversion of the heathen.

"Oh, that God would bring in great numbers of them to Jesus Christ! I cannot but hope that I shall see that glorious day."

In a clause of a hymn which he quotes, he indicates his crowning determination:

"My God shall be my all."

In his diary he wrote:

"I wanted to wear out my life in his service, and for his glory."

And also this:

"I know that I long for God, and a conformity to His will, in

inward purity and holiness, ten thousand times more than for anything here below."

Such were his aspirations as he moved speedily toward his life work.

Examined as to Fitness. It was with a keen sense of his own weakness and of the evil of his own heart, but with splendid devotion to the service of God, that he met the Association at Danbury, was examined, and licensed to preach the gospel. Afterward, in prayer with a friend, he resolved to give himself utterly to the doing of the will of God.

On November 25, 1742, he was examined in New York City, by the Correspondents in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, who wished him to begin missionary labors among the Indians. Brainerd felt himself wholly unfit for this service.

"I thought myself the worst wretch that ever lived," he said. "It hurt me and pained my very heart, that anybody should show me any respect. Alas! methought how sadly they are deceived in me! How miserably would they be disappointed if they knew my inside! O my heart! And in this depressed condition, I was forced to go and preach to a considerable assembly before some grave and learned ministers; but felt such a pressure from a sense of my vileness, ignorance and unfitness to appear in public, that I was almost overcome with it; my soul was grieved for the congregation; that they should sit there to hear such a dead dog as I preach."

This vivid portrayal of his thoughts concerning himself indicates in a general way the estimate he ever placed on his fitness for his work. No self-praise, no intimation of self-sufficiency, can be found in all his journals. He was ever lowly in his own sight. In the might of the strength secured in hours of prayer he dealt giant blows at whatever form of evil appeared, or seemed to appear, in his heart.

Appointment as a Missionary. Though Brainerd himself was sorely distressed by a sense of his weakness and unworthiness, others considered his attainments of a remarkably high order. Such was the view of the Correspondents of the Society in Scotland. They had intended to send him first to the Indians at the Forks of the Delaware, but at a subsequent conference they directed him to go to the Indians at Kaunaumek, a point in the wilderness between Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and Albany, New York.

Begins Work at Kaunaumek. It was on April 1, 1743, that he began

this self-sacrificing ministry. He slept the first night on a heap of straw. Cut off as he was from friends and congenial spirits, the reason that he suffered depression of mind and "nameless and inconceivable anguish," is apparent. Kaunaumeeek he found lonely and unpleasant.

"It was encompassed with mountains and woods; twenty miles distant from any English inhabitants; six or seven from any Dutch; and more than two from a family that came some time since, from the Highlands of Scotland, and then lived, as I remember, about two years in this wilderness. In this family I lodged about the space of three months, the master of it being the only person with whom I could readily converse in those parts except my interpreter; others understanding very little English."

The severity of the hardships endured by Brainerd would have disheartened and overwhelmed a less resolute and unselfish man. Weak in body, surrounded by savages who were ignorant and largely indifferent to his fervent Gospel appeals, he did not shrink or falter. He sought divine guidance at every step, poured out his soul in intercessory prayer in behalf of the Indians and persistently sowed the seed of the Kingdom.

Typical Days. Picture him there in the dreary, lonely forest. Not a comfort did he have. His food, largely hasty-pudding, boiled corn, bread baked in the ashes, and sometimes a little meat and butter; his bed, boards covered with straw and raised slightly above the ground; his home, a floorless log cabin. A mile and a half away, by a rough path, lived the Indians for whom he labored. To them he went almost daily. Brainerd told his brother that he had seen no English person for a month. These, and severe physical trials, moved him not. "I scarce think of them," he said, "or hardly observe that I am not entertained in the most sumptuous manner." The second Sunday after his arrival he records this statement:

"Rose early in the morning, and walked out and spent a considerable time in the woods, in prayer and meditation. Preached to the Indians, both forenoon and afternoon. They behaved soberly in general; two or three in particular appeared under some religious concern; with whom I discoursed privately; and one told me, 'that her heart had cried, ever since she had heard me preach first.'"

This is the story of another typical day:

"Spent the forenoon in reading and prayer, and found myself engaged; but still much depressed in spirit under a sense of my

vileness, and unfitness for any public service. In the afternoon I visited my people, and prayed and conversed with some about their soul's concerns: and afterwards found some ardor of soul in secret prayer. O that I might grow up into the likeness of God!"

Builds a Cabin. While at Kaunaameek, with his own hands he built a small hut. When, after long labor, his little home was ready and he moved into it, he gave praise to his Master for a place of retirement. He found, as multitudes before and since have done, that withdrawal for secret prayer is absolutely essential. Did not the divine Principal in the School of Prayer say to all men in all ages: "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly?" In his lone cabin in the wilderness Brainerd offered in secret the effectual, fervent prayer that is mighty in its working. There he sought and found strength sufficient to conquer discouragements and temptations. The walls of that little room, could they have spoken, would have borne witness to the diligence with which a master workman sought through prayer and meditation to attain the utmost possible degree of wisdom, and conformity to the will of God.

Prayer Life. Some of the secrets of Brainerd's prayer-life are disclosed in his journal. Five days after he began to occupy his humble cottage, he wrote:

"Was enabled to pray much the whole day. It is good, I find, to persevere in attempts to pray, if I cannot pray with perseverance, i.e., continue long in my addresses to the divine Being. I have generally found, that the more I do in secret prayer, the more I have delighted to do, and have enjoyed more of a spirit of prayer; and frequently have found the contrary, when with journeying or otherwise I have been much deprived of retirement."

Severe Trials. Among his afflictions at Kaunaameek was great bodily weakness. Occasionally, also, his inability to obtain food caused him much distress.

"I am forced to go or send ten or fifteen miles for all the bread I eat; and sometimes it is mouldy and sour before I eat it, if I get any considerable quantity. And then again I have none for some days together, for want of an opportunity to send for it, and cannot find my horse in the woods to go myself... Yet I feel contented with my circumstances, and sweetly resigned to God ... In prayer I enjoyed great freedom; and blessed God as much

for my present circumstances, as if I had been a King."

Where is there a nobler picture of a missionary hero than that contained in these simple sentences? And he went on -- praying, studying, suffering; interceding, pleading, preaching, until that Lord's day, March 11, 1744, when, dwelling on the Parable of the Sower, he preached his last sermon at Kaunaumeeek.

Finishes Work at Kaunaumeeek. He had spent a year with these Indians, but as there were only a few of them they agreed to make their future home at Stockbridge and to come under the ministry of the pastor there. Consequently Brainerd decided that his life would count for more among the Indians near the Forks of the Delaware.

Methods and Results. Before passing on to view his new work, listen to his own description of some of his methods and experiences at Kaunaumeeek:

"In my labors with them, in order to 'turn them from darkness to light,' I studied what was most plain and easy, and best suited to their capacities; and endeavored to set before them from time to time, as they were able to receive them, the most important and necessary truths of Christianity, such as most immediately concerned their speedy conversion to God, and such as I judged had the greatest tendency, as means, to effect that glorious change in them. But especially I made it the scope and drift of all my labors, to lead them into a thorough acquaintance with these two things: first, the sinfulness and misery of the estate they were naturally in; the evil of their hearts, the pollution of their natures; the heavy guilt they were under, and their exposedness to everlasting punishment; as also their utter inability to save themselves, either from their sins, or from those miseries which are the just punishment of them; and their unworthiness of any mercy at the hand of God, on account of anything they themselves could do to procure His favor, and consequently their extreme need of Christ to save them. And, secondly, I frequently endeavored to open to them the fullness, all-sufficiency, and freeness of that redemption, which the Son of God has wrought out by His obedience and sufferings, for perishing sinners; how this provision He had made, was suited to all their wants; and how He called and invited them to accept of everlasting life freely, notwithstanding all their sinfulness, inability, unworthiness."

He wrote for their use forms of prayer; translated into their language some of the Psalms; and led them to join him in singing hymns.

During his ministry at Kaunaameek several Indians were spiritually awakened, and came to talk with him respecting their salvation. Some came with tears. They asked "whether the God which Christians served, would be merciful to those who had frequently been drunk?" Some of the Indians reformed. They gave up their idolatrous practices. They stopped some of their heathen dancing and hallooing. They showed a deeper respect for the Sabbath. They gave more attention to their children. When they knew Brainerd was to leave they looked sad and urged him to remain. They said that "they had now heard so much about their souls' concerns, that they could never more be willing to live as they had done, without a minister, and further instructions in the way to heaven."

Attractive Openings. At this time there came to Brainerd invitations to important pastorates, promising comforts and congenial surroundings. They were promptly declined. The remembrance of the loneliness, the hardship, and the sorrow in the wilderness, which he had endured; and the prospect of similar experiences in the new Indian colony toward which he had set his face did not daunt him. The opportunity afforded by the proffered pastorates for nearness to his home and friends, was also absolutely ineffectual in its appeal. He lived to do the will of God; and the will of God, as he interpreted it, was that he should preach the gospel to the heathen. He had set his hand to the plow. He would not look back.

Mission at Forks of Delaware. As an arrow speeding to its mark, so Brainerd went to perform his allotted task. On horseback he turned towards Crossweeksung, near the Forks of the Delaware. As he rode on, he prayed. The country was desolate, the settlements few. One day he rode one hundred miles. It was on June 23, 1744, that he reached the Forks of the Delaware. By weariness, by melancholy, by the strangeness of his surroundings, he was oppressed. On the Sunday following, he was so weak that he could barely walk. But his zeal triumphed over his feebleness. He visited and instructed the Indians.

Condition of the Indians. These Indians were not in a hopeful condition. Brainerd thought that to an eye of reason the prospect of their conversion was as dark as midnight. But he had an eye of faith. Hence he hoped in God; spent long seasons in prayer; sought to discover the workings of God in the lives of Bible characters; and his faith grew.

First Sunday. Mingled gloom and sunshine characterized his first Sabbath at his new home. Of that day he left this account:

"Rose early; felt poorly after my long journey, and after being

wet and fatigued. Was very melancholy; have scarcely ever seen such a gloomy morning in my life; there appeared to be no Sabbath; the children were all at play; I a stranger in the wilderness, and knew not where to go; and all circumstances seemed to conspire to render my affairs dark and discouraging. Was disappointed concerning an interpreter, and heard that the Indians were much scattered ... Rode about three or four miles to the Irish People, where I found some that appeared sober and concerned about religion. My heart then began to be a little encouraged; went and preached, first to the Irish, and then to the Indians; and in the evening was a little comforted; my soul seemed to rest on God, and take courage."

Ordination. One month after beginning his labors at the Forks of the Delaware he met the Presbytery at Newark and was there ordained. One who was present sent a message to the Society by whom Brainerd had been engaged. It read: "He passed through his ordination trial to the universal approbation of the Presbytery, and appeared uncommonly qualified for the work of the ministry." Just before returning to his mission he was taken ill and suffered severe pain. His expression of gratitude for the faithful care given him indicates a beautiful trait of his character:

"I often admired the goodness of God that he did not suffer me to proceed on my journey from this place where I was so tenderly used, and to be sick by the way among strangers. God is very gracious to me, both in health and sickness, and intermingles much mercy with my afflictions and toils."

On his return he devoted himself to study; interceded in prayer for the Indians; taught them with a sublime intensity of purpose; and watched for evidences of their turning from darkness to light as eagerly as a mariner, having long battled with opposing winds and waves, watches for the appearance of a long desired port.

Idolatry of Indians. Severely was his faith tested. It was reported to him that the Indians were to meet for idolatrous festivities. Then his burden seemed heavier than he could endure. He resolved to break up the proceedings but knew not how to act. He went aside for prayer.

"I was in such anguish," he says, "and pleaded with so much earnestness and importunity, that when I rose from my knees I felt extremely weak and overcome; I could scarcely walk straight; my joints were loosed; the sweat ran down my face and body; and nature seemed as if it would dissolve ... Thus I spent the evening, praying incessantly for divine assistance, and that I

might not be self-dependent, but still have my whole dependence upon God. What I passed through was remarkable, and indeed inexpressible. All things here below vanished; and there appeared to be nothing of any considerable importance to me, but holiness of heart and life and the conversion of the heathen to God."

The next morning, with strong cries to God, he started for the scene of the proposed feast and dance. As he went he poured out his soul in prayer. At his request, the Indians discontinued their proceedings and listened to a Gospel address. In the afternoon he again preached, and his hearers were further subdued. As there were no special evidences of the workings of the Spirit of God, Brainerd was sorely troubled. These suggestions came to him:

"There is no God, or if there be, He is not able to convert the Indians, before they have more knowledge." Thus he was strongly tempted to cease pleading with God for the conversion of the Indians. He was grievously perplexed. Again faith triumphed. The temptation was resisted. He would still pray for the conversion of the Indians. Nothing else did he so much desire.

Other Trials. Other trials, great and varied, awaited him. Some of the Indians would not become Christians because they feared that the pow-wows would enchant and poison them. These fears Brainerd sought to overcome. He publicly challenged the powers of darkness to do their utmost on him. "I told my people," he said, "that I was a Christian, and asked them why the pow-wow did not bewitch and poison me." Thus openly he bore witness to the love and power of God. And there were trials from within: feeble health; wandering thoughts; restricted prayer; imperfections of character. Then there came seasons of joy and peace. His strength and hope were renewed. In this he rejoiced.

"My soul enjoyed a sweet season of bitter repentance and sorrow, that I had wronged the blessed God, who, I was persuaded, was reconciled to me in his dear Son. My soul was tender, devout and solemn. And I was afraid of nothing but sin; and afraid of that in every action and thought."

How Brainerd Met Trials. Hard toll filled the succeeding weeks. With the help of others he completed a small cottage, to be his home during the winter. In this little house he sought strength by prayer to meet all adverse conditions. This entry in his journal shows how he faced his bitter trials:

"Having now a happy opportunity of being retired in a house of

my own, which I have lately procured and moved into; considering that it is now a long time since I have been able, either on account of bodily weakness, or for want of retirement, or some other difficulty to spend any time in secret fasting and prayer; considering also the greatness of my work, the extreme difficulties that attend it, and that my poor Indians are now worshipping devils, notwithstanding all the pains I have taken with them, which almost overwhelms my spirit; moreover, considering my extreme barrenness, spiritual deadness and dejection, of late; as also the power of some particular corruptions; I set apart this day for secret prayer and fasting, to implore the blessing of God on myself, on my poor people, on my friends, and on the church of God."

In this season of prayer, during which he was overwhelmed by a sense of his insufficiency, he saw that he had sinned:

"Either (1) to yield an unbecoming respect to some earthly objects, as if happiness were to be derived from them; or (2) to be secretly froward and impatient, and unsuitably desirous of death, so that I have sometimes thought I could not bear to think that my life must be lengthened out."

Hopeless as to his ability to do good, he wished for death. He desired death rather than uselessness. But he saw his sin in this and cried out for forgiveness. He prayed long into the night. So urgent was he that he forgot his need of food and could scarcely stop praying.

Victory Through Prayer. Three days later, on the Sabbath, and between the services, he went among the bushes and asked God to forgive his deadness. He was overwhelmed with sorrow because he could not address the Indians more compassionately and affectionately. He severely condemned himself for his lack, but saw that what he desired could only come from God himself. His prayer prevailed. In his next address, he was enabled to speak fervently, affectionately, tenderly, importunately.

Prayerfully Continues Labors at Forks of the Delaware. Days of gloom and unrest were followed by joy and peace. The awakening of his interpreter and of some Indians gladdened him. A new hope arose in his heart. He prayed again with freedom, even with cheerfulness. He found it sweet to rest and hope in God, he said. Not infrequently did he spend whole days in fasting and prayer, in behalf of himself, his Indians and the church of God. At times he took such delight in prayer that he had no wish for food. "I dreaded leaving off praying at all lest I should lose this spirituality, this blessed thankfulness to God which I

then felt," was the way he expressed his feeling. As a result of his long periods of communion with God, things that had seemed difficult appeared easy; his gloomy seasons became less frequent; his hope of the progress of the Kingdom revived; and his strength became equal to his hardships.

His View of Death. He was deeply affected by a visit made to a sick man. Early in the day the man died. Brainerd made this comment:

"O, how great and solemn a thing it appeared to die! O, how it lays the greatest honor in the dust! And O, how vain and trifling did the riches, honors, and pleasures of the world appear. I could not, I dare not, so much as think of any of them; for death, death, solemn (though not frightful) death appeared at the door. O, I could see myself dead, and laid out, and enclosed in my coffin, and put down into the cold grave, but without terror! What are friends? What are comforts? What are sorrows? What are distresses? 'The time is short.' It remains, that 'they which weep, be as though they wept not; and they which rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; for the fashion of this world passeth away.' O come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen. Blessed be God for the comforts of the past day."

Not only then, but throughout the whole period of his physical decline, of which at this time there were premonitions, he had absolutely no fear of death.

At Crossweeksung -- Growing Audiences. On June 19th, 1745, Brainerd visited a group of Indians at Crossweeksung, New Jersey, about eighty miles southeast from the Forks of the Delaware. He found only two or three families. There were other settlements ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty miles away. To the few women and children who gathered he preached, and announced that he would speak again the next day.

"Whereupon," he says, "they readily set out and travelled ten or fifteen miles, in order to give notice to some of their friends at that distance. These women, like the woman of Samaria, seemed desirous that others should see the man, who had told them what they had done in their past lives, and the misery that attended their idolatrous ways."

On the following day larger numbers greeted him. Again, at twilight he spoke, and more still were present. They were remarkably attentive and well-behaved. Three days later, on the Sabbath, he preached to an increased number. Their attitude enheartened him. They seemed glad

that he was there.

"Not a word of opposition was heard from any of them against Christianity, although in times past they had been as much opposed to anything of that nature, as any Indians whatsoever. Some of them not many months before, were enraged with my interpreter, because he attempted to teach them something of Christianity."

Indians Request a Sermon. The next day the Indians came to him of their own accord and asked him to preach.

"To see poor pagans desirous of hearing the Gospel of Christ animated me to discourse to them; although I was now very weakly and my spirit much exhausted. They attended with the greatest seriousness and diligence; and some concern for their souls' salvation was apparent among them."

On succeeding days their attentiveness and seriousness continued. Brainerd's heart was revived and his soul refreshed as he saw signs of a harvest from his labors. In increasing numbers the Indians gathered, many of them having journeyed long distances, that they might hear him preach. With their request that he speak twice each day he gladly complied. He admired the goodness of God, who, he believed, had led them thus to inquire after the way of salvation. He rightly attributed their enlarged attendance, their deepened interest and their tearful concern to the working of the Spirit of God. For this, his heart was filled with thankfulness.

Again Visits Forks of the Delaware. On the following Sabbath he found the Indians still more concerned and affectionate. He preached twice. They pleaded with him to remain longer. But he had too severely taxed his strength.

"My constitution was exceedingly worn out," he writes, "and my health much impaired by my late fatigues and labors; and especially by my late journey to Susquehanna in May last, in which I lodged on the ground for several weeks together."

Nevertheless, he did not spare himself. He preached twice the next day to between forty and fifty Indians. He also had personal conversations with them and was amazed to find how gladly they had received, and how firmly retained, his instructions. On July 2, 1745, he found it necessary to leave them.

"Was obliged to leave these Indians at Crossweeksung," he wrote, "thinking it my duty as soon as my health would admit,

again to visit those at the Forks of the Delaware. When I came to take leave of them and to speak particularly to each of them, they all earnestly inquired when I would come again, and expressed a great desire of being further instructed. Of their own accord they agreed, that when I should come again, they would all meet and live together, during my continuance with them; and that they would use their utmost endeavors to gather all the other Indians in these parts who were yet more remote. When I parted with them, one told me, with many tears, 'She wished God would change her heart;' another, that 'She wanted to find Christ;' and an old man, who had been one of their chiefs, wept bitterly with concern for his soul. This encouraging disposition, and readiness to receive instruction, now apparent among the Indians, seem to have been the happy effect of the conviction which one or two of them met with, sometime since at the Forks of the Delaware; who have since endeavored to show their friends the evil of idolatry. Though the other Indians seemed but little to regard, and rather to deride, them; yet this, perhaps, has put them into a thinking posture of mind, or at least, given them some thoughts about Christianity, and excited in some of them a curiosity to hear; and so made way for the present encouraging attention. An apprehension that this might be the case here, has given me encouragement that God may, in such a manner, bless the means which I have used with the Indians in other places; where as yet, there is no appearance of it. If so, may His name have the glory of it; for I have learnt, by experience, that He only can open the ear, engage the attention, and incline the hearts of poor benighted, prejudiced pagans to receive instruction."

Leaving Crossweeksung, Brainerd rode to New Brunswick, a distance of forty miles, praying as he went. At night he cried out to God in behalf of the Indians he had left behind him. After he went to bed he continued in prayer for them until he fell asleep.

Notable Awakening at Crossweeksung. Brainerd rested for a week. Then, weak in body, he went on to the Forks of the Delaware, where, on the first Sabbath after his arrival, he preached two sermons to the Indians. Three weeks later, in a prayerful spirit, depending utterly upon God, he took up his work again at Crossweeksung. So eager was he for the conversion of the Indians that it seemed to him that he had hardly any desire to be the personal instrument in the work he wished to see accomplished among them. His sole wish was that the work might be done. He found these Indians, among whom he had labored for many months, in a serious, awakened state. On one occasion, when he addressed them, they listened eagerly.

"But there appeared nothing very remarkable," he adds, "except their attention, till near the close of my discourse; and then divine truths were attended with a surprising influence, and produced a great concern among them. There were scarcely three in forty who could refrain from tears and bitter cries. They all as one seemed in an agony of soul to obtain an interest in Christ; and the more I discoursed of the love and compassion of God in sending His Son to suffer for the sins of men; and the more I invited them to come and partake of His love, the more their distress was aggravated; because they felt themselves unable to come. It was surprising to see how their hearts seemed to be pierced with the tender and melting invitations of the Gospel, when there was not a word of terror spoken to them."

Two days later their number increased and their concern for their personal welfare was evident.

The Working of the Spirit of God. When Brainerd spoke to many of them after his public address,

"the power of God seemed to descend upon the assembly 'like a mighty rushing wind,' and with an astonishing energy bore down all before it. I stood amazed at the influence, which seemed to seize the audience almost universally," he wrote in his journal, "and could compare it to nothing more aptly, than the irresistible force of a mighty torrent or swelling deluge; that with its insupportable weight and pressure bears down and sweeps before it whatever comes in its way. Almost all persons of all ages were bowed down with concern together, and scarcely one was able to withstand the shock of this surprising operation. Old men and women, who had been drunken wretches for many years, and some little children, not more than six or seven years of age, appeared in distress for their souls, as well as persons of middle age."

Such manifestations of divine power Brainerd had never beheld. It was enough, he thought, to convince even an atheist of the truth and power of the Word of God.

Indians Convicted of Sin. Almost without exception these Indians cried out for mercy. Some were unable to go home or to stand. Brainerd's account of their condition is of exceptional interest:

"Their concern was so great, each one for himself, that none seemed to take any notice of those about him, but each prayed freely for himself. I am led to think they were, to their own

apprehensions, as much retired as if they had been individually by themselves, in the thickest desert; or I believe rather that they thought nothing about anything but themselves, and their own state, and so was every one praying apart altogether. It seemed to me now that there was an exact fulfilment of that prophecy, Zech. 12:10-12; for there was now 'a great mourning as of Hadadrimmon;' -- and each seemed to 'mourn apart.' Methought this had a near resemblance to the day of God's power, mentioned in Josh. 10:14; for I must say I never saw any day like it, in all respects: it was a day wherein I am persuaded the Lord did much to destroy the kingdom of darkness among this people."

Some of the Indians came to see the corruption of their own hearts. All feared the wrath of God. White people, also, who had come to criticize, were aroused and convicted of their sin. It was a memorable day in the lives of the people; memorable, too, in the life of Brainerd.

Changed Lives. Concern no less remarkable was shown on the following days. Tears and cries indicated the workings of the Spirit of God. Brainerd did not terrorize his hearers. He dwelt on the mercy of God, on the love and all-sufficiency of the Saviour. He invited, he entreated, he comforted those who truly repented. It must have been very affecting, as, indeed, Brainerd says it was,

"to see the poor Indians, who the other day were hallooing and yelling in their idolatrous feasts and drunken frolics, now crying to God with such importunity for an interest in His dear Son! Almost every one was praying and crying for himself, as if none had been near, 'Guttummauhalummeh; guttummauhalummeh,' i.e., 'Have mercy upon me;' 'have mercy upon me,' was the common cry."

One woman, who was in deep sorrow, explained her grief by saying that she had been angry with her child and feared that she had sinned. She was so deeply grieved by the sharp temper she had shown that she awoke early, began sobbing, and for hours continued weeping.

All Night Indian Prayer Meeting. Brainerd decided to visit once more the Indians on the Susquehanna. When he told these Indians at Crossweeksung of his purpose they heartily acquiesced. He left them an hour and a half before sunset. Soon after they began praying and continued in prayer until early the next morning. Afterward, Brainerd was told that they never mistrusted, "till they went out and viewed the stars, and saw the morning star a considerable height, that it was later than bed time. Thus eager and unwearied were they in their devotions

... It was likewise remarkable, that this day an old Indian, who had all his days been an idolater, was brought to give up his rattles, which they use for music in their idolatrous feasts and dances, to the other Indians, who quickly destroyed them." Brainerd saw that all this was the work of God alone and rejoiced in it. With a glad heart he began his journey to the Forks of the Delaware and to Susquehanna.

An Idolatrous Feast. His zeal did not lessen as he went on. Nearly every day he preached to groups of Indians. Some of his hearers wept. Some were aroused to a sense of their evil state. Some voiced their distress in cries. Some bitterly opposed him and scoffed at Christianity. At one place he found the Indians preparing for a sacrifice and dance. He was much cast down by the outlook. So absorbed were the Indians in their preparations for the feast that Brainerd could not bring them together for a meeting. His trial was made severer by the fact that his own interpreter was a pagan and an idolater.

"I was under the greatest difficulties imaginable," he said. "However, I attempted to discourse privately with some of them, but without any appearance of success; notwithstanding, I still tarried with them. In the evening they met together, nearly a hundred of them, and danced around a large fire, having prepared ten fat deer for the sacrifice. The fat of the inwards they burnt in the fire while they were dancing and sometimes raised the flame to a prodigious height; at the same time shouting and yelling in such a manner, that they might easily have been heard two miles or more. They continued their sacred dance nearly all night, after which they ate the flesh of the sacrifice, and so retired each one to his lodging. I enjoyed little satisfaction; being entirely alone on the island as to any Christian company, and in the midst of this idolatrous revel; and having walked to and fro till body and mind were much pained and oppressed, I at length crept into a little crib made for corn, and there slept on the poles."

Truly one who could record such hardships and self-sacrifices as these, in this open, and frank, and unassuming way, and resolutely go on doing what seemed an almost hopeless task, was a genuine apostle and minister of Jesus Christ. *One who could creep into a little crib made for corn, and there steep on the poles*, and do it because he loved his Master and those for whom He died, was a hero of the cross.

Indian Powwows. The next day was the Sabbath, and Brainerd sought to bring the Indians together for instruction. His appeals were in vain. They assembled their powwows and several of them began juggling, posturing and performing in a frantic and outlandish manner. They did

this to find out why there was so much sickness among them.

"In this exercise they were engaged for several hours, making all the wild, ridiculous and distracted motions imaginable; sometimes singing, sometimes howling, sometimes extending their hands to the utmost stretch, and spreading all their fingers, they seemed to push with them as if they designed to push something away, or at least keep it off at arm's end; sometimes stroking their faces with their hands, then spurning water as fine as mist; sometimes sitting flat on the earth, then bowing down their faces to the ground; then wringing their sides as if in pain and anguish, twisting their faces, turning up their eyes, grunting, puffing, etc. Their monstrous actions tended to excite ideas of horror, and seemed to have something in them, as I thought, peculiarly suited to raise the devil, if he could be raised by anything odd, ridiculous, and frightful. Some of them, I could observe, were much more fervent and devout in the business than others, and seemed to chant, peep and mutter with a great degree of warmth and vigor, as if determined to awaken and engage the powers below."

Throughout this wild scene, Brainerd sat, undiscovered, about thirty feet from them and viewed the entire proceeding. They went on with their incantations for over three hours, and wore themselves out by their exertions. When they ended Brainerd sought to teach them, but they quickly disbanded, leaving him in a very gloomy state.

He was the only Christian at this wilderness settlement. Loneliness, together with the impression produced by this heathen exercise, made this a day of notable darkness in his career. He writes that he was almost stripped of all resolution and hope respecting further attempts for propagating the Gospel and converting the pagans, and that this was the most burdensome and disagreeable Sabbath he ever saw. He was especially distressed by the loss of his hope respecting the conversion of these Indians. "This concern appeared so great," he said, "and seemed to be so much my own, that I seemed to have nothing to do on earth, if this failed." His hope of their conversion was exceedingly precious to him. For their conversion he thought, he prayed, he toiled, he lived. Their deplorable moral state and their steadfast resistance of his message weakened and dispirited him.

An Indian in Inhuman Dress. A few months before Brainerd witnessed the most frightful and terrorizing sight he had ever seen among these Indians, or elsewhere.

"This was the appearance of one who was a devout and zealous

reformer, or rather, restorer of what he supposed was the ancient religion of the Indians. He made his appearance in his pontifical garb," Brainerd continues, "which garb was a coat of boar skins, dressed with the hair on, and hanging down to his toes; a pair of bear skin stockings, and a great wooden face painted, the one half black, the other half tawny, about the color of an Indian's skin, with an extravagant mouth, cut very much awry; the face fastened to a bearskin cap, which was drawn over his head. He advanced towards me with the instrument in his hand, which he used for music in his idolatrous worship; which was a dry tortoise shell with some corn in it, and the neck of it drawn onto a piece of wood, which made a very convenient handle. As he came forward, he beat his tune with the rattle, and danced with all his might, but did not suffer any part of his body, not so much as his fingers, to be seen. No one could have imagined from his appearance or actions, that he could have been a human creature, if they had not some intimation of it otherwise. When he came near me, I could not but shrink away from him although it was then noonday, and I knew who it was; his appearance and gestures were so prodigiously frightful. He had a house consecrated to religious uses, with divers images cut upon the several parts of it. I went in, and found the ground beat almost as hard as a rock, with their frequent dancing upon it."

Brainerd's effort to turn these particular Indians from darkness to light seems to have been futile. Some white people who lived in the neighborhood gave them liquor and were an evil example to them. Weak in body, and much depressed in spirit, he again turned his face toward the Forks of the Delaware and Crossweeksung.

Continued Awakening at Crossweeksung. His first message at Crossweeksung reached and comforted the hearts of the Indians there. "O what a difference is there between these, and the Indians with whom I have lately treated on the Susquehanna!" he exclaims. "To be with those seemed like being banished from God and all His people; to be with these, like being admitted to His family, and to the enjoyment of His divine presence!" These Indians at Crossweeksung had formerly shown signs of being as obstinate and as depraved as those at Juncanta Island. Through the zealous teaching of the Gospel, and by the power of the Holy Spirit their characters had been transformed. The next day encouragement came. With what joy Brainerd must have written these words:

"I scarce think I ever saw a more desirable affection in any people in my life. There was scarcely a dry eye to be seen among them; and yet nothing boisterous or unseemly, nothing that

tended to disturb the public worship; but rather to encourage and excite a Christian ardor and spirit of devotion."

In his subsequent ministry among these Indians he was rejoiced by their attentiveness, their constancy and their responsiveness. He had baptized altogether forty-seven Indians, thirty-five of whom lived at Crossweeksung and the others at the Forks of the Delaware. Their lives brought no reproach upon the cause of Christ.

Strong Adversaries. One valued lesson which Brainerd learned in his many trying and disheartening experiences with the Indians at Crossweeksung, was: "It is good to follow the path of duty, though in the midst of darkness and discouragement." The beginnings of his work were exceedingly difficult, but ere long his heart was made glad by their evident desire to be delivered from sin. "They were one after another affected with a solemn concern for their souls, almost as soon as they came upon the spot where divine truths were taught them." There were adversaries, though. Enemies circulated false reports among the Indians. Some of the whites tried to make them believe that Brainerd deceived them, that he lied to them, and that it was his design to impose upon them.

"When none of these, and such like suggestions, would avail to their purpose, they then tried another expedient, and told the Indians, 'My design was to gather together as large a body of them as I possibly could, and then sell them to England for slaves; than which nothing could be more likely to terrify the Indians, they being naturally of a jealous disposition, and the most averse to a state of servitude perhaps of any people living.'"

This base design failed. The Indians soon discovered the real character of their deceivers. In this, and numerous other ways, God worked in behalf of his beloved servant. He not only overruled the craft of men and qualified Brainerd's interpreter for his work, but also prevented prejudice against Brainerd and his missionary labors.

Results Summarized. In its apparent effects Brainerd's toil at Crossweeksung was a strong testimony to the power of his faithful, persistent and patient teaching of the Word of God, and to his believing, continuous, intercessory prayers. The outcome of his labors at Crossweeksung he summarizes under five heads, which, in substance, are:

1. The unprecedented work among these Indians began when his own hopes were at their lowest ebb. He learned from this that it is wise to go on in the path of duty, in spite of adverse conditions.

2. In a providential, and almost inexplicable manner God brought the Indians together for instruction. When he arrived, to begin his ministry among them, he did not find a single man, but only four women and a few children. After a few days the Indians began to gather, some coming a distance of twenty miles. A few weeks later some came over forty miles to hear him. "Many came without any intelligence of what was going on here, and consequently without any design of theirs, so much as to gratify their curiosity. Thus it seemed as if God had summoned them together from all quarters for nothing else but to deliver His message to them."

3. These Indians were kept from becoming prejudiced against Brainerd or against the message he brought, though some white people represented him as a knave and a deceiver.

4. Brainerd's interpreter became remarkably efficient. "He appeared to have such a clear doctrinal view of God's methods of dealing with souls under a preparatory work of conviction and humiliation as he never had before."

5. The entire work went forward in such a way as to make it apparent that the awakening was the result of divine power. Repeated invitations to the unrepentant, based on fundamental Scripture truths, was the method used by Brainerd. He said he never knew so general an awakening as took place when he addressed the Indians on the parable of the great supper (Luke 14) and set before them the unsearchable riches of Gospel grace. These gentler measures, which God had used in arousing sinners, were the means of silencing those who would have objected and criticized, had the awakening been accompanied by tears, by convulsions, by swoonings, or by other violent demonstrations.

Value of Brainerd's Testimony. Brainerd was his own most exacting critic. No one so closely scrutinized the methods and Brainerd's characteristics of this mission to the Indians as did he. No one was more likely to make a reasonable estimate of its value than he. His own testimony, therefore, is weighty and significant:

"I think I may justly say that here are all the symptoms and evidences of a remarkable work of grace among these Indians, which can reasonably be desired or expected ... Their pagan notions and idolatrous practices seem to be entirely abandoned in these parts. ...They seem generally divorced from drunkenness, their darling vice ... A principle of honesty and justice appears in many of them. ...Their manner of living is much more decent and comfortable than formerly ... Love seems to reign among them, especially those who have given evidences of a saving change."

In the accomplishment of these notably gratifying results he had ridden over three thousand miles on horseback, suffered many physical

fatigues and endured innumerable hardships. Yet he finished his labors with joy, being more than compensated for all his toil and suffering by large apparent fruitage.

A Full Year's Work. The excellent work at Crossweeksung continued. Throughout the winter of 1745-6 he frequently wrote of manifestations of the power of God and of strong impressions made upon many by the preaching of the Gospel. At times he expressed grief because of his own lukewarmness and strongly resolved to redouble his efforts. His days were already so filled with labor that it does not seem possible that more activity could have been crowded into them. He admitted that he exerted himself to the utmost limit of his strength. He said, however, that though he did go to the extreme of his strength, so that he did all that he could, he did not labor with that heavenly temper, that single eye to the glory of God, that he longed for. At the close of a full year spent at Crossweeksung he added these words in his journal:

"This day makes up a complete year from the first time of my preaching to those Indians in New Jersey. What amazing things has God wrought in this space of time, for this poor people! What a surprising change appears in their tempers and behavior! How are morose and savage pagans, in this short period, transformed into agreeable, affectionate and humble Christians! And their drunken and pagan howlings turned into devout and fervent praises to God; they who were sometimes in darkness are now become light in the Lord."

In his description of six unusual cases of conversion he gratefully acknowledged the saving power of Christ.

Declining Physical Strength. In the summer of 1746 his strength began to wane perceptibly. His difficult, exhausting labors had seriously impaired his physical force. He found himself unfitted for a life of such severe exertion and hardship. As the weeks passed his vitality steadily lessened and his seasons of dejection multiplied. Such entries as the following appear in his journal at this period:

"Wanted to wear out life, and have it at an end; but had some desires of living to God, and wearing out life for Him." Eight days later he said: "Blessed be God for this freedom from dejection." His weakness increased to such an extent that on September 27, 1746, he closed the record of his day with these words: "I had little strength to pray, none to write or read, and scarce any to meditate; but through divine goodness I could with great composure look death in the face and frequently with sensible joy." Entries in his diary now become less

regular. Almost invariably when he does write he refers to his refreshment of soul and to the feebleness of his body. He was resigned to the will of God and was willing to live or die, but found it difficult to reconcile himself to the thought of living a useless life.

Leaves the Indians. Early in November, 1746, he became exceedingly weak in body, and decided to go to New England to visit friends whom he had not seen for a long time. Before he left he visited the houses of his Indians who lived at Cranberry, New Jersey, where he had been laboring for a short period.

"I scarcely left one house but some were in tears; and many were not only affected with my being about to leave them, but with the solemn addresses I made them upon divine things."

It was on Friday, March 7, 1747, that he left Cranberry, and traveled toward Elizabethtown. There he met his brother. Subsequent days were filled with journeyings and seasons of devotion, and on Thursday, May 28, he arrived at Northampton, Massachusetts. A medical examination showed that he was in a consumptive state. His physician gave him no encouragement. This diagnosis, Jonathan Edwards said, did not seem to occasion the least discomposure in Brainerd, nor to make any manner of alteration as to the cheerfulness and serenity of his mind, or the freedom and pleasantness of his conversation.

Sunset Hours. As the summer months passed, his physical decline was rapid. When autumn came he was weaker than he had yet been. He spent the autumn days reading his old private writings. As he re-read the story of his missionary labors he rejoiced, and thanked God for what had happened. On one occasion, when in great distress of body, he spoke to those who were standing by of the only happiness in this world, namely, pleasing God. The nearer death came, the more he desired to die. "He several times spoke of the different kinds of willingness to die," said Jonathan Edwards, "and represented it as an ignoble, mean kind, to be willing to leave the body, only to get rid of pain; or to go to heaven, only to get honor and advancement there." In his prayers Brainerd interceded for his former congregation, asking that the Lord would preserve it and not suffer His great name to lose its glory in that work. In his parting message to his brother he urged a life of self-denial, of unworldliness, of devotion to God, of the earnest seeking of the grace of God's Spirit. One of his memorable sentences was:

"When ministers feel these special gracious influences on their hearts it wonderfully assists them to come at the consciences of

men, and as it were to handle them; whereas, without them, whatever reason and oratory we make use of, we do but make use of stumps instead of hands."

He worked on, reading and correcting his journals, and had a growing consciousness that his work in the world was rapidly coming to an end.

Death. As long as he saw anything to be done for God he found life worth living. Five days before his death, as he saw the Bible in the hands of one who had just come into the room, he exclaimed:

"O 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 Friday, October 9, 1747, he passed to his reward. On the following Monday his funeral occurred in Northampton and was attended by "eight of the neighboring ministers, a large number of gentlemen of liberal education and a great concourse of people." The funeral sermon was preached by Jonathan Edwards. The title of his discourse was, "Christians, when absent from the body, are present with the Lord." The text was 2 Corinthians 5:8. In it the greatest preacher of New England at that time paid a remarkable tribute to the memory of his beloved young friend. Let this one sentence from Edwards' exalted eulogy stand out for our meditation: "In Brainerd's whole course he acted as one who had indeed sold all for Christ, had entirely devoted himself to God, had made His glory his highest end, and was fully determined to spend his whole time and strength in His service."

Why So Influential. What made Brainerd's life so forceful, so worthy, so fruitful and so remarkably influential? How came it to pass that a world-wide influence has been exercised by one who spent but three short years in active Christian service; who lived in the solitary places of the earth, in wigwams and huts of the forest; who had for his companions rude savages; and who wrote but little beside the daily journal of his meditations, his prayers, his heart-searchings and his efforts to reclaim the lost?

Dedication to his Life Work. In enumerating the qualities which made him the man he was we put first a *firm purpose, formed at the beginning of his career, to devote himself to the evangelization of the Indians.* Though urged to become a pastor in New England and on Long Island, he deliberately chose the harder task of ministering to savages. To this mission it was his delight to dedicate himself again and again. Among the saints of the church there have been but few who have held as closely as did he to one commanding, exalted and

early chosen purpose. He kept strictly to the main point, on to the end.

Concentration of Effort. *He was zealous to a marked extent in the prosecution of his work.* In estimating his zeal it must be remembered that the missionary spirit in Brainerd's time was rarer than it is now. Large numbers of men of his own class were not giving themselves, as now, to missionary enterprises. So intent was he upon fulfilling his mission that he forced himself to speak to the Indians even when he had no heart to speak to them. He often desired death because he frequently despaired of benefiting them. He deliberately said that he would choose death rather than a life spent for nothing. While on brief holidays he could not refrain from preaching the Gospel at every opportunity. His journals are a glowing record of his activities, even when he was weighed down by fatigue and bodily weakness. Those who read the inspiring record will doubtless agree with Alexander V.G. Allen, who, in his *Life of Jonathan Edwards*, pays this tribute to Brainerd: "He was an ardent, enthusiastic soul, moving with great impetuosity in whatever he undertook, one whose zeal for religion was even consuming his life."

Dependence On God. *He relied implicitly upon the guidance and power of God.* His experience had convinced him that only God "can open the ear, and engage the attention, and incline the heart of poor benighted, prejudiced pagans." His difficulties were such that without this faith he would have quickly given up in despair. When encouragements came he gave all the praise to God. Several times he refers to the workings of God as being independent of means. On one occasion the proof of this was so clear that he said that

"God's manner of working upon them, seems so entirely supernatural, and above means, that I could scarcely believe that he used me as an instrument, or what I spake as the means of carrying on His work."

His faith did not shrink even under the most unfavorable circumstances. At times, when the Indians seemed to be given over completely to the doing of evil, Brainerd stood his ground and proclaimed the Gospel. He believed the Gospel to be the power of God unto salvation, capable of transforming the most depraved lives.

Doing the Will of God. *He gave himself without reserve to the doing of the will of God.* At the beginning of his missionary career he vowed that he would be wholly the Lord's, and thoroughly devoted to His service. A few years later he presented his soul to God again for service, making no reservation whatever. He states that the language of his thoughts and disposition then was:

"Here I am, Lord, send me; send me to the ends of the earth; send me to the rough, the savage pagans of the wilderness; send me from all that is called comfort in earth, or earthly comfort; send me even to death itself, if it be but in Thy service, and to promote Thy Kingdom."

He placed all that he was at the disposal of God. There is not the slightest indication that from the moment he began his missionary labor he ever sought his own case, or that he had any other thought, or purpose, or motive in life, but the doing of the will of God.

Valuation of Time. *He set a high value upon time.* He recognized the shortness of time, and it was his absorbing ambition to fill it all up in the service of his Master. He was pained when he saw time slipping away without good being accomplished. "Oh, that God would make me more fruitful and spiritual!" was his heart's prayer. When he felt that he had spent time poorly or purposelessly he expressed his grief and shame, his discouragement and confusion. When the last moment of his earthly life had nearly come, he uttered these sublime words:

"I declare, now I am dying, I would not have spent my life otherwise for the whole world."

Evangelistic Spirit. *He had the evangelistic spirit to an intense degree.* He considered the Redeemer's Kingdom incomparably more valuable than anything else on earth, and his chief longing was that he might promote it. He desired that all the circumstances of his life might be such as would best fit him to serve God. When important life decisions were to be made his prayer was: "The will of the Lord be done. It is no matter for me."

Spotlessness. *He had a flawless longing for personal purity.* His great desire for conformity to the image of Christ is given expression in nearly every page of his memoirs. "Longed exceedingly for an angelical holiness and purity, and to have all my thoughts at all times, employed in divine and heavenly things," is a sentence that indicates his supreme prayer for himself. More than his necessary food did he desire a clean heart, and a right spirit, and a sense of the presence of God. Seldom was he afraid; when he was, this was his fear:— "I was afraid of nothing but sin, and afraid of that in every action and thought."

Once when he was in prayer all things here below seemed to vanish, and there appeared to him to be nothing of considerable importance, but holiness of heart and life, and the conversion of the heathen to God. "I know that I long for God, and a conformity to His will, in

inward purity and holiness, ten thousand times more than anything here below," are words that he wrote not at the end, but at the beginning of his career. Were they written at the beginning of the Christian life of each present-day disciple of Christ what might we not expect in evangelistic zeal in our own time?

Self-Denial. *His self-denial is apparent at every step of his career.* There is not a single sentence in his journal, there is not a comment by Jonathan Edwards, or by any other contemporary of Brainerd, that in the remotest way suggests that he ever put self before the interests of the Kingdom of Christ. The proof that Paul gave of his loyalty to Christ by the record of his sufferings in his first Epistle to the Corinthians does not greatly overmatch or surpass the evidence of the self-denials of Brainerd. Both, as good soldiers of Christ, endured hardness uncomplainingly. This is the thrilling story of one of Brainerd's missionary journeys:

"After having lodged one night in the open woods, he was overtaken by a northeasterly storm, in which he was almost ready to perish. Having no manner of shelter, and not being able to make fire in so great a rain, he could have no comfort if he stopped; therefore he determined to go forward in hopes of meeting with some shelter, without which he thought it impossible to live the night through; but their horses — happening to eat poison, for the want of other food, at a place where they lodged the night before — were so sick, that they could neither ride nor lead them, but were obliged to drive them, and travel on foot: until, through the mercy of God, just at dusk, they came to a bark hut where they lodged that night."

On another occasion, this was his experience:

"We went on our way into the wilderness, and found the most difficult and dangerous traveling, by far, any of us had seen. We had scarce anything else but lofty mountains, deep valleys, and hideous rocks, to make our way through ... Near night my beast on which I rode, hung one of her legs in the rocks, and fell down under me; but through divine goodness, I was not hurt. However, she broke her leg; and being in such a hideous place, and near thirty miles from any house, I saw nothing that could be done to preserve her life, and so was obliged to kill her, and to prosecute my journey on foot. This accident made me admire the divine goodness to me, that my bones were not broken, and the multitude of them filled with strong pain. Just at dark, we kindled a fire, cut up a few bushes, and made a shelter over our heads, to save us from the frost which was very hard that night; and committing ourselves to God by prayer, we lay down on the

ground, and slept quietly."

None of these things, nor the multitude of other trials which he endured, moved him.

Unselfishness. *He was wholly unselfish in all his toil and ministry.* There is not the faintest indication that he ever sought his own ease, his own comfort, or his own aggrandisement. Zeal for his Lord and Master animated him. It was his delight to use every atom of his strength in seeking to win the Indians to a new life in Christ Jesus. There is not a sentence in his journal, there is not a word in the writings of those who knew him best, to the effect that he ever failed to sacrifice himself to the utmost for the sake of the Kingdom of Christ. He belongs to the magnificent army of those who counted not their lives dear unto themselves. He saw a vision, he heard a message. He was imbued with a spirit not of this world.

Prayerfulness. *In the prosecution of his work Brainerd prayed without ceasing.* "I love to live alone in my little cottage," said he, "where I can spend much time in prayer." He relied implicitly on the promises of God, and firmly held that prayer,— steadfast, importunate and believing, is the chief means to large usefulness.

He belonged to the noble army of God's servants who hold the simplest view of prayer, that God hears and answers definite prayer, that prayer brings guidance, strength and deliverance. He states that he saw how God called out His servants to prayer and made them wrestle with Him, when He designed to bestow any great mercy on His Church.

"Prayer Closet and Mission Field." His journal is largely a record of the intensity and perseverance of his prayer life. "It is the only book I know," said Dr. A.J. Gordon, "where you see the two things side by side, the prayer closet and the mission field." Brainerd's constant object was the turning of the Indians from the power of Satan unto God. That it might be achieved, he sought by all the means at his command to fulfil on his own part every condition of effective service, Hence it was that in the silence of his rude cabin; amid the loneliness of the forest; and on horseback, as he journeyed over rugged mountain paths to proclaim the Evangel, his voice was lifted up to God in behalf of his beloved Indians. "When I return home, and give myself to meditation, prayer and fasting," he writes, "a new scene opens to my mind, and my soul longs for mortification, self-denial, humility, and divorcement from all the things of the world." On some occasions he became so earnest in prayer and meditation, that he had no desire for sleep. It was his joy to pour out his heart in uninterrupted prayer.

Hindrances to Prayer. Bodily weakness, prolonged fatigue and numerous benumbing hardships, were not sufficient to cause him to neglect communion with his heavenly Father. The following entry in his journal indicates his custom throughout his ministry:

"In the afternoon, though very ill, was enabled to spend some considerable time in prayer: spent indeed, most of the day in that exercise: and my soul was diffident, watchful, and tender, lest I should offend my blessed Friend, in thought or behavior ... Rode from the Indians to Brunswick, nearly forty miles, and lodged there. Felt my heart drawn after God in prayer, almost all the forenoon, especially in riding. In the evening, I could not help crying to God for those poor Indians; and after I went to bed, my heart continued to go out to God for them till I dropped asleep. O, blessed be God, that I may pray!"

It was thus, by prayer, that he sought strength to meet his hard tasks, that he obtained wisdom for his work in behalf of his ignorant, degraded savages. "His life," said Jonathan Edwards, "shows the right way to success in the work of the ministry. He sought it as the resolute soldier seeks victory in a siege or battle; or as a man that runs a race for a great prize. Animated with love to Christ and souls, how did he labor always fervently, not only in word and doctrine, in public and private, but in prayers day and night, 'wrestling with God ' in secret, and 'travailing in birth' with unutterable groans and agonies! until Christ were formed in the hearts of the people to whom he was sent!"

Influence on Subsequent Generations. No American, of the century in which Brainerd lived, has exerted a more far-reaching influence than he. The record of his unfaltering, self sacrificing career has moved thousands of zealous servants of Christ, in many nations, to holier living and nobler doing.

Some Whom He Influenced. In estimating the power exerted by Brainerd, we must take into account his influence on men who have notably served the cause of Christ. By the reading of Brainerd's memoirs, Henry Martyn was led to give his life to missionary service in foreign lands. Martyn was roused and impelled to action by Brainerd's modest recital of his trials and self-sacrificing experiences, and by the vivid record of his sublime devotion to the doing of the will of his Saviour. John Wesley, too, recognized the sterling quality of Brainerd's character and ministry. Frederick W. Robertson was moved by the story of Brainerd's Spirit-filled life, and his own character was shaped thereby. "At one period," says Stopford A. Brooke, "Robertson read daily the lives of Martyn and Brainerd. These books supplied a want in his mind, and gave him impulse." In his own peculiarly

fascinating way, Robertson himself describes the impression made upon him by the record of Brainerd's self-denying loyalty to the cause of Christ. "I have been reading lately 'Brainerd's Life'," he writes, "which to my taste, stands alone as a specimen of biography. 'To believe, to suffer, and to love,' was his motto, like that of the early Christians; but with us, if a minister gives himself a little exertion, a hundred voices flatter him with an anxiety for his life, as if a fireside, plentiful table, and warm clothing were compatible with the idea of suicide. Brainerd did spend himself in his Master's service, and his *was* self-denial — and a self-denial which there was none to witness or admire."

Among many in later days upon whom the career of David Brainerd exerted a powerful influence, was Dr. A.J. Gordon, pastor of the Clarendon Street Church, Boston. In describing a visit paid to Brainerd's grave, he said: "Does it savor of saint-worship or superstition to be thus exploring old graveyards, wading through snow-drifts, and deciphering ancient headstones on a cold day in midwinter? Perhaps so, on the face of it; but let us justify our conduct. What if the writer confesses that he has never received such spiritual impulse from any other human being as from him whose body has lain now for nearly a century and a half under the Northampton slab? For many years an old and worn volume of his life and journals has lain upon my study table, and no season has passed without a renewed pondering of its precious contents. 'If you would make men think well of you, make them think well of themselves,' is the maxim of Lord Chesterfield, which he regarded as embodying the highest worldly wisdom. On the contrary, the preacher and witness for Christ who makes us think meanly of ourselves, is the one who does us most good and ultimately wins our hearts. This is exactly the effect which the reading of Brainerd's memoirs has on one. Humiliation succeeds humiliation as we read on. 'How little have I prayed! how low has been my standard of consecration!' is the irresistible exclamation; and when we shut the book we are not praising Brainerd, but condemning ourselves, and resolving that, by the grace of God, we will follow Christ more closely in the future." That Brainerd's journal has made impressions similar to these on many thousands of lives, there is no doubt. In its pages breathes the very Spirit of the Master. The thoughtful and prayerful reader of it comes to have an ardent longing for greater holiness of character and an eager desire to redeem every moment of time for the Master's service.

One of the Greatest of Missionaries. Brainerd has been put here first among the heroes of the cross in America, because of the remarkable degree to which he was given up to self-renunciation; because of his

loyalty to the Son of God; and because he joyfully did hard tasks for the extension of his Master's kingdom. In these particulars he is distinguished as one of the most heroic servants of Christ of all time.

Reproducible Qualities. Those qualities of Brainerd's character that are most admirable, that have made his name precious, that made it possible for him to leave a trail of light behind him — his habitual prayerfulness; his purpose at any cost to persevere in the work to which God had called him; his searching of the Scriptures; his constant exercise of faith under the most adverse circumstances; his renunciation of everything that interfered with the working out of what he believed to be the divine plan for his life, are imitable qualities and of priceless value.

His Spirit Indispensable. Brainerd stands as one of the bravest, truest, greatest missionaries by whom the world has been enriched. The longer we meditate on what he was and on what he did, the more reasonable the words of John Wesley appear. In answer to the question, "What can be done in order to revive the work of God in the world?" Wesley said: "Let every preacher read carefully over the 'Life of David Brainerd.' Let us be followers of him, as he was of Christ, in absolute self-devotion, in total deadness to the world, and in fervent love to God and man. Let us but secure this point and the world will fall under our feet." At another time, Wesley wrote: *Find preachers of David Brainerd's spirit, and nothing can stand before them.*

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