

Windows of Witness
(The Life of David Brainerd)

Quotations From The Biography of David Brainerd

“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” Acts 4:20

In the book of Acts, the disciples were compelled to testify about the things they had witnessed in their walk with God. Our Lord then used these testimonies to show others more about the sufficiency of Christ. We too can often learn more of the sweet fellowship in Christ by taking a closer look at the lives of those who have walked near to our Lord.

David Brainerd (1718-1747) is one of those men. Brainerd was born in Hartford, Connecticut and through the providence of God became a missionary to the Native Americans. Preserved by Jonathan Edwards, Brainerd’s handwritten diary is a testimony that has encouraged many people of God down through the ages, including William Carey, Jim Elliot, and Adoniram Judson. I’d like to offer just a few excerpts from his diary that I believe will stir the desire of our hearts into a place of closer communion with our Lord.

On his 24th birthday Brainerd writes, “I hardly ever so longed to live to God and to be altogether devoted to Him; I want to wear out my life in his service and for his glory...”. David Brainerd traveled to the Susquehanna (a river connecting Pennsylvania, Maryland and New York). He proceeded, by foot, about a hundred miles along the river, visiting many towns and Indian settlements in his travels. He preached, by way of an interpreter, to 8 distinct Indian tribes. Brainerd faced driving storms, frigid weather, and great physical distress.

In spite of all of the physical hardship, Brainerd’s diary entry on June 4, 1745 reads, “Towards evening was in distress for God’s presence, and a sense of divine things: withdrew myself to the woods, and spent near an hour in prayer and meditation; and...the Lord had compassion on me...My soul enjoyed intenseness and freedom in prayer, so that it grieved me to leave the place.”

The following morning, June 5, 1745 he writes, “Felt thirsting desires after God in the morning.” On June 6, 1745 he continues, “Was engaged a considerable part of the day in meditation and study on divine subjects”. This theme of divine fellowship continues throughout his diary. Brainerd’s writings reveal a man who’s every desire found fulfillment in Christ.

David Brainerd’s health began to fail and he found himself in the closing out days of his life at the age of 29. Knowing his earthly time was drawing to a close he continued to write. Friday, October 2, 1747, one week before his death he penned, “My soul was this day...sweetly set on God.” On October 5, someone entered the room with a Bible in hand. He cried out, “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!” He entered eternity October 9, 1747.

According to the witness of his walk, David Brainerd experienced full satisfaction found only in Christ. I pray we may all share in this testimony.

~ Pastor Tim Hodge