

The Life of David Brainerd - Part. 1

by Jonathan Edwards

David Brainerd's life was marked by a struggle with sin and self-righteousness, but ultimately led to his conversion and spiritual growth.

Duration: 1:02:37

Scripture: Psalm 73:25-26, Psalm 84:10, Psalm 119:11, Matthew 22:37, Philippians 3:8, Hebrews 12:22-24, Revelation 14:3

Topics: "Audio Books"

Description

In this sermon transcript, the speaker shares their personal journey of seeking salvation and experiencing conviction of their sinfulness. They describe moments of feeling the gate to heaven was impossible to enter, but also times of hope and diligence in their pursuit of God. The speaker recounts a specific day of fasting and prayer where God revealed the true state of their heart and the impossibility of self-deliverance. They also share moments of intense anguish and fear of judgment, but ultimately find peace and joy in surrendering to God's sovereignty and seeking His glory.

Transcript

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The Life of David Brainerd was first published in 1749. It is approximately 300 pages long and is divided into ten chapters. Both historical and devotional, it is the most printed of all Jonathan Edwards' works.

Please visit HowellAudio.com to offer your impressions of this recording and to explore additional titles. The Life of Rev. David Brainerd. Chapter 1. From Brainerd's private diary, except for any explanations added by President Jonathan Edwards.

April 20, 1718 through February 1741. From his birth to the time when he began to study for the ministry. Contains his own narrative of his conversion, his connection with Yale College and the grounds of his expulsion.

David Brainerd was born April 20, 1718 at Haddam, Connecticut. His father was Hezekiah Brainerd, Esquire, and his mother was Dorothy Hobart, daughter of the Rev. Jeremiah Hobart. He was the third son

of his parents who had five sons and four daughters.

The oldest son was a respectable citizen of Haddam. The second son was Rev. Nehemiah Brainerd, a worthy minister in Eastbury, Connecticut. The fourth son was Mr. John Brainerd, who succeeded his brother David as missionary to the Indians and as pastor of the same church of Christian Indians in New Jersey.

The fifth son was Israel, recently a student at Yale College, who died soon after his brother David. Their mother, having lived about five years a widow, died when David Brainerd was about fourteen years of age. Thus he was left both fatherless and motherless in his youth.

The following is the account he has himself given of the first twenty-three years of his life. I was from my youth somewhat sober and inclined to melancholy, but do not remember anything of the conviction of sin worthy of remark till I was, I believe, about seven or eight years of age. Then I became concerned for my soul and terrified at the thought of death, and was driven to the performance of religious duties, but my religious concerns appeared a melancholy business that destroyed my eagerness for play.

And though, regrettably, this religious concern was but short-lived, still I sometimes attended secret prayer. Thus I lived without God in the world and without much concern, as I remember, till I was about thirteen years of age. In the winter of 1732 I was roused out of this carnal security by I scarce know what means at first, but I was much excited by the prevalence of a mortal sickness in my hometown of Haddam.

I was frequent, constant, and somewhat fervent in prayer, and took delight in reading, especially Mr. Janeway's Token for Children. I felt sometimes much melted in the duties of religion, took great delight in the performance of them, and sometimes hoped that I was converted, or at least in a good and hopeful way for heaven and happiness, not knowing what conversion was. The Spirit of God at this time had a great influence upon me.

I was remarkably dead to the world. My thoughts were almost wholly employed about my soul's concerns, and I may indeed say I was almost persuaded to be a Christian. I was also exceedingly distressed and melancholy at the death of my mother in March 1732, but afterward my religious concerns began to decline, and by degrees I fell back into a considerable degree of security, though I still attended secret prayer.

About the 15th of April, 1733, I relocated from my father's house to East Haddam, where I spent four years, but still I was without God in the world. However, I sometimes practiced secret religious duties. I was not much addicted to the company and the amusements of the young, 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 that satisfaction I took in my good character with which I habitually pleased myself. But what rotten horror! All my good self-conceptions were but self-righteousness, not founded on a desire for the glory of God. About the end of April, 1737, being full nineteen years of age, I relocated to Durham to work on my farm, and continued about one year, frequently longing after a liberal education.

But when about twenty years of age I applied myself to study and was now engaged more than ever in the duties of religion. I became very strict and watchful over my thoughts, words, and actions. I 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.

Sometime in April, 1738, I went to live with Reverend Mr. Fisk of Haddam, and continued with him during his life. I remember he advised me wholly to abandon young company and associate myself with grave elderly people, which counsel I followed. My manner of life was now wholly regular and full of religion, such as it was, for I read my Bible more than twice through in less than a year, spent much time every day in prayer and other secret duties, gave great attention to the word preached, and endeavored my utmost to retain it.

So much concerned was I about religion that I agreed with some young persons to meet privately on Sabbath evenings for religious exercises, and thought myself sincere in these duties. And after our meeting was ended, I used to repeat the discourses of the day to myself, recollecting what I could, though sometimes very late at night. I used occasionally on Monday mornings to recollect the same sermons, had sometimes pleasure in religious exercises, and had many thoughts of joining the Church.

In short, I had a very good outside, and rested entirely on my duties, though I was not sensible of it. After Mr Fisk's death, I proceeded in my studies with my brother, was still very constant in religious duties, often wondered at the levity of professors, and lamented their carelessness in religion. In this way I proceeded a considerable length on a self-righteous foundation, and should have been entirely lost and undone, had not the mere mercy of God prevented it.

Sometime in the beginning of winter, 1738, it pleased God one Sabbath morning, as I was walking out for secret duties, suddenly to give me such a sense of my danger and the wrath of God, that I stood amazed, and my former satisfaction I took in my good character 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 for their happiness, because they were not exposed to eternal misery, as I evidently saw that I was.

In this way I lived from day to day, being frequently in great distress. Sometimes there appeared mountains before me to obstruct my hopes of mercy, and the work of conversion appeared so great that I thought I should never be the subject of it. I used, however, to pray and cry to God, and perform some other duties with great earnestness, and thus hoped by some means to make the case better.

Hundreds of times I renounced all pretenses 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. When I prayed affectionately, and my heart seemed in some measure to melt, I hoped that God would be thereby moved to pity me.

There was then some appearance of the goodness in my prayers, and I seemed to mourn for sin. I could in some measure presume upon the mercy of God in Christ, so I thought. Nevertheless, my most dominant thought was that the foundation of my hope was some imagination of goodness in my meltings of heart, the warmth of my affection, and my extraordinary elaboration in prayer.

At times the gate appeared so very straight that it looked next to impossible to enter, yet at other times I flattered myself that it was not so very difficult, and hoped I should by diligence and watchfulness soon gain the point. Sometimes after multiplying my duties in considerable affection, I hoped I had made a good step toward heaven, and imagined that God was affected as I was, and that He would hear such sincere

cries as I called them. And so sometimes, when I withdrew for secret prayer in great distress, I returned comfortable, and thus healed myself with my duties.

In February of 1739 I set apart a day for secret fasting and prayer, and spent the day in almost incessant cries to God for mercy, that He would open my eyes to see the evil of sin and the way of life by Jesus Christ. God was pleased that day to make considerable discoveries of my heart to me. Still I trusted in all the duties I performed, though there was no manner of goodness in them, there being in them no respect to the glory of God nor any such principle in my heart.

Yet God was pleased to make my endeavors that day a means to show me my helplessness in some measure. Sometimes I was greatly encouraged, and imagined that God loved me and was pleased with me, and thought I should soon be fully reconciled to God. But the whole was founded on mere presumption, arising from more strenuous duty, or warmth of affections, or some good resolutions or the like.

And when at times great distress began to arise as a sign of my vileness and inability to deliver myself from a sovereign God, I used to put off the discovery as what I could not bear. Once I remember a terrible pang of distress seized me, and the thought of renouncing myself and standing naked before God, 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. Thus, though I daily longed for greater conviction of sin, when the discoveries of my vile, wicked heart were made to me, then the sight was so dreadful and showed me so plainly my exposedness to damnation that I could not endure it.

Even so, I thought that I must see more of my dreadful state in order to find a remedy. I constantly strove after whatever qualifications I imagined others obtained before the reception of Christ, in order to recommend me to his favor. Sometimes I felt the power of a hard heart, and supposed it must be softened before Christ would accept of me.

And when I felt any meltings of heart, I hoped now the work was almost done. Hence, when my distress still remained, I was accustomed to murmur at God's dealings with me. I thought, when others felt their heart softened, God showed them mercy.

But my distress remained still. At times I grew remiss and sluggish, without any great convictions of sin, for a considerable period of time. But after such a season, convictions sometimes seized me more violently.

One night I remember in particular, when I was walking alone outside, I had opened to me such a view of my sin that I feared the ground would cleave asunder under my feet, and become my grave, and send my soul quick into hell before I could get home. So great was my anguish that I was forced to go to bed, lest my distress should be discovered by others which I much feared. Yet I scarcely did sleep at all, for I thought it would be a great wonder if I should be out of hell in the morning.

And though my distress was sometimes thus great, yet I greatly dreaded the loss of convictions, and returning back to a state of carnal security, and to my former insensibility of impending wrath. Such an outlook made me exceedingly exact in my behavior, lest I should stifle the motions of God's Holy Spirit. When at any time I considered my convictions, and thought the degree of them to be considerable, I often trusted in them.

But this confidence, and the hope of soon making some notable advances toward deliverance, would ease my mind, and I soon became more senseless and remiss. Again, when I discerned my convictions to grow languid, and thought them about to leave me, this immediately alarmed and distressed me. Sometimes I expected to take a large step, and get very far toward conversion by some particular opportunity or means I had in view.

The many disappointments, the great distress and perplexity which I experienced, put me into a most horrible disposition of contesting with the Almighty. With inward vehemence and virulence, I found fault with His ways of dealing with mankind. My wicked heart often wished for some other way of salvation than by Jesus Christ.

Being like the troubled sea, my thoughts confused, I used to contrive to escape the wrath of God by some other means. I had strange projects, full of atheism, contriving to disappoint God's designs and decrees concerning me, or to escape His notice and hide myself from Him. But when upon reflection I saw these projects were vain, and would not serve me, and that I could contrive nothing for my own relief, this would throw me into the most horrid frame of mind.

Even wishing there was no God, or wishing there was some other God that could control Him, these thoughts and desires were the secret inclinations of my heart, frequently acting before I was aware. But miserable me! They were mine, although I was frightened when I came to reflect on them. When I considered, it distressed me to think that my heart was so full of enmity against God.

It made me tremble, lest His vengeance should suddenly fall upon me. I used to imagine before that my heart was not so bad as the scriptures and some other books represented it. Sometimes I used to take great pains to change my inner attitude to a humble, submissive disposition, and hoped there was then some goodness in me.

But, on a sudden, the thoughts of the strictness of the law or the sovereignty of God would so irritate the corruption of my heart that I had so watched over and hoped I had brought to good comportment, that my heart would break over all bounds and burst forth on all sides like floods of waters when they break down their dam. Being sensible of the necessity of deep humiliation in order to obtain a saving relationship with Christ, I used to set myself to produce in my own heart the convictions requisite in such a humiliation. For example, I used to attempt to contrive a conviction that God would be just if He cast me off forever, that if ever God should bestow mercy on me, it would be mere grace, though I should be in distress many years at first and be furbishly engaged in duty.

I tried to make myself think that God was not in the least obliged to pity me the more for all past duties, cries, and tears. I strove to my utmost to bring myself to a firm belief of these things and a hearty assent to them, and hoped that now I had toppled the idol of self, truly humbled myself, and that I bowed to the divine sovereignty. I frequently told God in my prayers that now I had those very dispositions of soul which He required, and on which He showed mercy to others, and on this basis I would beg and plead for mercy.

But when I found no relief and was still oppressed with guilt and fears of wrath, my soul was in a tumult, and my heart rose against God, thinking Him too harsh. Yet then my conscience flew in my face, putting me in mind of my recent confession to God of His justice in my condemnation. This, giving me a sight of the badness of my heart, threw me again into distress.

I wished that I had watched my heart more narrowly, to keep it from breaking out against God's dealings with me. I even wished that I had not pleaded for mercy on account of my humiliation, because thereby I had lost all my apparent goodness. Thus, scores of times I vainly imagined myself humbled and prepared for saving mercy while I was in this distressed, bewildered, and tumultuous state of mind.

The corruption of my heart was especially irritated with the following things. First, the strictness of the divine law, for I found it was impossible for me, after my utmost pains, to answer its demands. I often made new resolutions, and as often broke them.

I imputed the whole to carelessness, and the need to be more watchful, and used to call myself a fool for my negligence. But when, upon a stronger resolution, and greater endeavors, and close application to fasting and prayer, I found that all attempts failed. Then I quarreled with the law of God, as unreasonably rigid.

I thought, if it extended only to my outward actions and behavior, that I could bear with it. But I found that it condemned me for my evil thoughts and sins of my heart, which I could not possibly prevent. I was extremely loath to own my utter helplessness in overcoming sin.

But after repeated disappointments, I thought that rather than perish, I could do a little more still, especially if such and such circumstances might aid my endeavors and strivings. I hoped that I should strive more earnestly than ever, if sin pressed firmly in on me, though I never could find the time to do my utmost in the manner I intended. This hope of future, more favorable circumstances, and of doing something great hereafter, kept me from utter despair in myself, and from seeing myself fallen into the hands of a sovereign God, and dependent on nothing but free and boundless grace.

Second, another point that irritated me was that faith alone was the condition of salvation, that God would not come down to lower terms, and that He would not promise life and salvation upon my sincere and hearty prayers and endeavors. That word, Mark 16, 16, He that believeth not shall be damned, cut off all hope there. I found that faith was the sovereign gift of God, that I could not get it as of myself, and could not oblige God to bestow it upon me by any of my performances.

This, I was ready to say, is a hard saying. Who can hear it? I could not bear that all I had done should stand for mere nothing. As I had been very conscientious in duty, had been very religious a great while, and had, as I thought, done much more than many others who had obtained mercy, I confessed indeed the vileness of my duties.

What made them at that time seem vile was how I had highly appraised them in my thoughts previously, rather than because I was all over defiled like a devil. My inner defilement was the principal corruption from whence my sins flowed, so that I could not possibly do anything that was good. Hence I called what I did by the name of honest, faithful endeavors.

I could not bear it that God had made no promises of salvation for such endeavors. Third, I could not find out what faith was, or what it was to believe and come to Christ. I read the calls of Christ to the weary and heavy-laden, but could find no way in which he directed them to come.

I thought I would gladly come if I knew how, though the path of duty was never so difficult. I read Stoddard's Guide to Christ, which I trust was, in the hand of God, the happy means of my conversion, and my heart rose against the author. For though he told me my very heart all along under convictions, and

seemed to be very beneficial to me in his directions, yet here he seemed to me to fail.

He did not tell me anything I could do that would bring me to Christ, but left me, as it were, with a great gulf between me and Christ, without any direction how to get through. For I was not yet effectually and experimentally taught that there could be no way prescribed, whereby a natural man could, of his own strength, obtain that which is supernatural, and which the highest angel cannot give. Fourth, another point was the sovereignty of God.

I could not bear that it should be wholly at God's pleasure to save or damn me, just as He would. That passage, Romans 9, 11-23, was a constant vexation to me, especially verse 21. Reading or meditating on this always destroyed any hope of salvation, for when I thought I was almost humbled and almost resigned, this passage would make my enmity against God appear.

When I came to reflect on the inward enmity and blasphemy which arose on this occasion, I was the more afraid of God, and driven further from any hopes of reconciliation with Him. It gave me a dreadful view of myself. I dreaded more than ever to see myself in God's hands, and it made me more opposite than ever to submit to His sovereignty, for I thought He designed my damnation.

At this time the Spirit of God was powerfully at work with me, and I was inwardly pressed to relinquish all self-confidence, all hope of ever helping myself by any means whatsoever. The conviction of my lost estate was sometimes so clear and manifest before my eyes, that it was as if it had been declared to me in so many words, it is done, it is done, it is forever impossible to deliver yourself. For about three or four days my soul was thus greatly distressed.

At some turns, for a few moments, I seemed to myself lost and undone, but then would shrink back immediately from the sight, because I dared not venture myself into the hands of God as wholly helpless and at the disposal of His sovereign pleasure. I dared not see that important truth concerning myself, that I was dead in trespasses and sins. But when I had, as it were, thrust away these views of myself at any time, I felt distressed to have the same discoveries of myself again, for I greatly feared being given over to God and my complete inability.

When I thought of putting off the acceptance of scriptural truth to a more convenient season, the conviction was so close and powerful that the present time was the best, and probably the only time, that I dared not put it off. It was the sight of truth concerning myself, truth respecting my state as a creature fallen and alienated from God, and who consequently could make no demands on God for mercy, but was at His absolute disposal, from which my soul shrank away, and which I trembled to think of viewing. Thus, He that does evil, as all unregenerated men continually do, hates the light of truth.

He doesn't care to come to it, because it will reprove His deeds and show Him what He truly deserves. John 3.20 Sometime before, I had taken many pains, as I thought, to submit to the sovereignty of God. Yet I went about it the wrong way.

I did not even once imagine that knowing the truth about my sin and helplessness before God, which my soul now so much dreaded and trembled at, was actually what I was aiming for. I had ever hoped that when I had attained to that humiliation which I supposed necessary to proceed faith, then it would be not fair for God to cast me off. But now I saw that this notion of mine was itself evil.

It was not really an admission that I was spiritually dead and destitute of all goodness. On the contrary, my mouth would be stopped by my complete helplessness and accountability before God. My standing looked as dreadful to me as that of a poor, trembling creature venturing off some high precipice.

I saw myself and the relation I stood in to God. I a sinner and criminal, and He a great judge and sovereign. Hence I put off reading about my state of depravity and helplessness in the Bible.

I tried for better circumstances to do read difficult passages in. Either I must read another passage or two, or pray first, or something of the like nature, or else put off my submission to God with an objection that I did not know how to submit. But the truth was I could see no safety in owning myself in the hands of a sovereign God and could lay no claim to anything better than damnation.

After a considerable time spent in similar exercises and distress, one morning, while I was walking in a solitary place, as usual, I at once saw that all my contrivances and projects to effect or procure deliverance and salvation for myself were utterly in vain. I was brought quite to a standstill. I found myself totally lost.

I had thought many times before that the difficulties in my way were very great, but now I saw, in another and very different light, that it was forever impossible for me to do anything toward helping or delivering myself. I then thought of blaming myself that I had not done more and been more engaged while I had opportunity, for it seemed now as if the season of doing was forever over and gone. But I instantly saw that regardless of what more I might have done, I would have by no means improved my status one bit.

I saw that I had made all the pleas I ever could have made for all eternity, and I saw that all my pleas were in vain. The tumult that had been before in my mind was now quieted. I was somewhat eased of that distress which I felt while struggling against a sight of myself and of the divine sovereignty.

I had the greatest certainty that my state was forever miserable, for all that I could do would amount to nothing. I marveled that I had never been sensible of it before. While I remained in this state, my notions respecting my duties were quite different from what I had ever entertained in times past.

Before this, the more I did in duty, the more hard I thought it would be for God to cast me off, though at the same time I confessed and thought I saw that there was no goodness or merit in my duties. But now, the more I did in prayer or any other duty, the more I saw that I was indebted to God for allowing me to ask for mercy, for I saw that self-interest had led me to pray, and that I had never once prayed from any respect to the glory of God. Now I saw that there was no necessary connection between my prayers and the bestowment of divine mercy, that they had laid not the least obligation upon God to bestow His grace upon me, that there was no more virtue or goodness in them than there would be in my paddling with my hand in the water, which was the comparison I had then in mind.

And this was the case because my prayers were not performed from any love or regard to God. I saw that I had been heaping up my devotions before God, fasting, praying, pretending, and indeed really thinking sometimes that I was aiming at the glory of God, whereas I never once truly intended it, but only my own happiness. I saw that as I had never done anything for God, I had no claim on anything from Him but perdition on account of my hypocrisy and mockery.

Oh, how different did my duties now appear from what they used to do! I used to charge them with sin and imperfection, but this was only on account of the wandering and vain thoughts attending them, and not because I had no regard for God in them, for regard I thought I had. But when I saw evidently that I had

had regard to nothing but self-interest, then my duties appeared a vile mockery of God, self-worship, and a continued course of lies. I saw that something worse had attended my duties than barely a few wanderings, for the whole was nothing but self-worship and a horrid abuse of God.

I continued, as I remember, in this state of mind from Friday morning to the Sabbath evening following, July 12th, 1739, when I was walking again in the same solitary place where I was brought to see myself lost and helpless, as before mentioned. Here, in a mournful, melancholy state, I was attempting to pray but found no heart to engage in prayer 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 there was nothing in heaven or earth that could make me happy. I continued to endeavor to pray for nearly half an hour while I thought to myself, but was unable to gain clarity of mind. 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 had never seen before 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 apprehension of any one person in the Trinity, either the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost, but it appeared to be divine glory that I then beheld.

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, forever 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 the 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 to set Him on the throne, and principally and ultimately to aim at His honour and glory, as King of the Universe.

I continued in this state of inward joy, peace, and astonishment till near dark, without any perceivable abatement. Then I 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 customarily did.

At this time the way of salvation opened to me with such infinite wisdom, suitableness, and excellency, that I puzzled how I could have ever thought of any other way of salvation. I 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.

I wondered that all the world did not see and comply with this way of salvation entirely by the righteousness of Christ. The sweet relish of what I then felt continued with me for several days, almost constantly, in greater or lesser degrees. I could not but sweetly rejoice in God when I laid down and when I rose.

The next Lord's Day I felt something of the same kind, though not so powerful as before. But not long after, I was again involved in darkness and in great distress, yet not of the same kind with my distress under convictions. I was guilty, afraid, and ashamed to come before God, and exceedingly pressed for the sense of guilt, but it was not long before I felt, I trust, true repentance and joy in God.

In the beginning of September I went to Yale College and signed up there, but with some degree of reluctance, lest I should not be able to lead a life of strict religion in the midst of so many temptations. After this, in the vacation before I went to stay at college, it pleased God to visit my soul with clearer manifestations of Himself and His grace. I was spending some time in prayer and self-examination when the Lord, by His grace, so shined to my heart that I enjoyed full assurance of His favor for that time, and my soul was unspeakably refreshed with divine and heavenly enjoyments.

At this time especially, as well as some others, many passages of God's Word opened to my soul with divine clearness, power, and sweetness, so as to appear exceedingly precious and with clear and certain evidence of its being the Word of God. I enjoyed considerable sweetness in religion all the following winter. In January of 1740, the measles spread much in college, and I, having taken the illness, went home to Haddam.

But some days before I was taken sick, I seemed to be all alone and deserted, and my soul mourned the absence of the Comforter exceedingly. It seemed to me that all comfort was forever gone. I prayed and cried to God for help, yet found no present comfort or relief.

But through divine goodness, a night or two before I was taken ill, while I was walking alone in a very retired place and engaged in meditation and prayer, I enjoyed a sweet, refreshing visit, as I trust, from above, so that my soul was raised far above the fears of death. Indeed, I rather longed for death than feared it. Oh, how much more refreshing this one season was than all the pleasures and delights that earth can afford.

After a day or two, I was taken with the measles, and was very ill indeed, so that I almost despaired of life, but had no distressing fears of death. Through divine goodness I soon recovered, yet owing to hard study and to my being much exposed to interruptions on accounts of my first-year status, I had but little time for spiritual duties, and my soul often mourned with longing for more time and opportunity to be alone with God. In the spring and summer following, I had better advantages for retirement and enjoyed more comfort in religion, though my ambition in my studies greatly wronged the activity and vigor of my spiritual life.

It was, however, usually the case with me that, in the multitude of my thoughts within me, God's comforts principally delighted my soul. These were my greatest consolations day by day. One day, I think it was in June, 1740, I walked a considerable distance from college in the fields alone at noon, and in prayer found such unspeakable sweetness and delight in God, that I thought, if I must continue in this evil world, I want it always to be there to behold God's glory.

My soul dearly loved all mankind, and longed exceedingly that they should enjoy what I enjoyed. It seemed to be a little resemblance of heaven. Sometime in August following, I became so reduced in health by excessive attention to my studies, that I was advised by my tutor to go home and disengage my mind from study as much as I could, for I was grown so weak that I began to cough up blood.

I took his advice and endeavored to lay aside my studies, but being brought very low, 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, and particularly October 13th, I found divine help and consolation in the precious duties of secret prayer and self-examination, and my soul took delight in the blessed God. The same happened on the 17th of October. October 18th.

In my morning devotions, my soul was exceedingly melted and bitterly mourned over my great sinfulness and vileness. I never before had felt so pungent and deep a sense of the odious nature of sin as at this time. My soul was then unusually carried forth in love to God, and had a lively sense of God's love to me, and this love and hope at that time cast out fear.

Lord's Day. October 19th. In the morning I felt my soul hungering and thirsting after righteousness, while I was looking on the elements of the Lord's Supper and thinking that Jesus Christ was now 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. I felt at the same time an exceeding tenderness and most fervent love toward all mankind, so that my soul and all its powers seemed as it were to melt into softness and sweetness.

But during the communion there was some abatement of this life and fervor. This love and joy cast out fear, and my soul longed for perfect grace and glory. This inner delight continued till the evening, when my soul was sweetly spiritual in secret duties.

October 20th. 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. October 21st.

I had likewise an experience of the goodness of God in shedding abroad His love in my heart, and giving me delight and consolation in religious duties. And all the remaining part of the week my soul seemed to be taken up with divine things. 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 interests the year past, I could not but be grieved, and thought I had much rather die, for it distressed me to think of getting away from God.

But before I went I enjoyed several other sweet and precious seasons of communion with God, particularly October 30th and November 4th, wherein my soul enjoyed unspeakable comfort. I returned to college about November 6th and, through the goodness of God, felt the power of religion almost daily for the space of six weeks. November 28th.

In my evening devotion I enjoyed precious discoveries of God, and was unspeakably refreshed with that passage Hebrews 12, verses 22 through 24. My soul longed to wing away the Paradise of God. I longed to be conformed to God in all things.

A day or two after I enjoyed much of the light of God's countenance, most of the day, and my soul rested in God. December 9th. I was in a comfortable frame of soul most of the day, but especially in the evening devotions, when God was pleased wonderfully to assist and strengthen me, so that I thought nothing should ever move me from the love of God in Christ Jesus my Lord.

Oh, one hour with God infinitely exceeds all the pleasures and delights of this lower world. Toward the latter part of January 1741 I grew more cold and dull in religion by means of my old temptation, ambition in

my studies. But through divine goodness a great and general awakening spread itself over the College, about the end of February, in which I was much quickened and more abundantly engaged in religion.

This awakening was at the beginning of that extraordinary religious commotion which then prevailed through the land, and in which the College shared largely. For thirteen months from this time Brainerd kept a constant diary containing a very particular account of what passed from day to day, making two volumes of manuscripts. But when he lay on his deathbed he gave orders, unknown to me till after his death, that these two volumes should be destroyed, inserting a notice at the beginning of the succeeding manuscripts that a specimen of his manner of living during that entire period would be found in the first thirty pages next following, ending with June 15th, 1742.

Except that he was now more refined from some imprudences and indecent heats than before. A circumstance in the life of Brainerd which gave great offense to the rulers of the College and occasioned his expulsion, it is necessary should be here particularly related. During the awakening in College there were several religious students who associated together for mutual conversation and assistance in spiritual things.

These were accustomed freely to open themselves one to another, as special and intimate friends. Brainerd was one of this company. And once it happened that he and two or three more of these intimate friends were in the hall together, after Mr. Whittlesey, one of the tutors, had engaged in prayer with the scholars.

No other person now remained in the hall but Brainerd and his companions. Mr. Whittlesey, having been unusually pathetic in his prayer, one of Brainerd's friends on this occasion asked him what he thought of Mr. Whittlesey. 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, and though he heard no name mentioned and knew not who was thus censured, informed a certain woman in the town, also telling her his own suspicion, that Brainerd said this of some one of the rulers of the College. Then she informed the rector, who sent for this freshman and examined him. He told the rector the words which he heard Brainerd utter, and informed him who were in the room with him at that time.

Upon this the rector sent for them. They were very backward to inform against their friend respecting what they looked upon as a private conversation, especially as none but they had heard or knew of whom he had uttered those words. Yet the rector compelled them to declare what he had said and of whom he said it.

Brainerd looked on himself as very ill-treated in the management of this affair, and though that it was injuriously exhorted from his friends and then injuriously required of him, as if he had been guilty of some open notorious crime, to make a public confession and to humble himself before the whole College in the hall for what he had said only in a private conversation. He did not comply with this demand. Also against him was that he had once went to the separate meeting at New Haven, when forbidden by the rector.

He was further accused by one person of saying concerning the rector that he could hardly believe the rector did not expect to drop down dead for fining the scholars who followed Mr. Tennant to Milford. There was no proof of this last statement, and Brainerd ever professed that he did not remember saying anything to that purpose. Yet for these things he was expelled from the College.

How far the circumstances and exigencies of that day might justify such great severity in the governors of the College, I will not undertake to determine. It being my aim not to bring reproach on the authority of the College, but only to do justice to the memory of a person who was, I think, eminently one of those whose memory is blessed. The reader will see in the sequel, particularly under date of September 14th and 15th of 1743, in how Christian a manner Brainerd conducted himself with respect to this affair, though he ever as long as he lived supposed himself mistreated in the management of it, and in what he suffered.

His expulsion was in the winter, 1742, while in his third year at College. Chapter Two From Brainerd's Private Diary, except for any explanations added by President Jonathan Edwards. April 1st, 1742 through July 29th, 1742.

From about the time when he began the study of theology till he was licensed to preach. In the spring of 1742, Brainerd went to live with the Reverend Mr. Mills of Ripton, to pursue his studies with him for the work of the Ministry. Here he spent the greater part of time until he was licensed to preach, but frequently rode to visit the neighboring ministers, particularly Mr. Cook of Stratford, Mr. Graham of Southbury, and Mr. Bellamy of Bethlehem.

The following are extracts from his diary at this period. April 1st, 1742. I seem to be declining with respect to my life and warmth in divine things.

I have not had so free access to God in prayer today as usual of late. Oh, that God would humble me deeply in the dust before him. I deserve hell every day for not loving my Lord more, who has, I trust, loved me and given himself for me, and every time I am unable to exercise any grace renewedly, I am renewedly indebted to the God of all grace for special assistance.

Then what becomes of boasting? Surely it is excluded. When we think how we are dependent on God for the existence in every act of grace. Oh, if ever I get to heaven, it will be because God pleases and nothing else, for I never did anything of myself but get away from God.

My soul will be astonished at the unsearchable riches of divine grace when I arrive at the mansions which the blessed Savior is gone before to prepare. April 2nd. In the afternoon I felt, in secret prayer, much resigned, calm and serene.

What are all the storms of this lower world if Jesus, by his Spirit, does but come walking on the seas? Some time past I had much pleasure in the prospect of the heathen being brought home to Christ, and desired that the Lord would employ me in that work. But now my soul more frequently desires to die, to be with Christ. Oh, that my soul were wrapped up in divine love, and my longing desires after God increased.

In the evening was refreshed in prayer with hopes of the advancement of Christ's Kingdom in the world. Lord's Day, April 4th. My heart was wandering and lifeless.

In the evening God gave me faith in prayer, made my soul melt in some measure, and gave me to taste a divine sweetness. O my blessed God, let me climb up near to him, and love, and long, and plead, and wrestle, and stretch after him, and find deliverance from the body of sin and death. Wretched man that I am, my soul mourned to think I should ever lose sight of its beloved again.

O come, Lord Jesus, amen. April 6th. I walked out this morning, had an affecting sense of my own vileness, and cried to God to cleanse me, to give me repentance and pardon.

I then began to find it sweet to pray, and could think of undergoing the greatest sufferings in the cause of Christ with pleasure, and found myself willing, if God should order it, to suffer banishment from my native land, among the heathen, that I might do something for their salvation, in distresses and deaths of any kind. Then God gave me to wrestle earnestly for others, for the kingdom of Christ in the world, and for dear Christian friends. April 8th.

Had raised hopes today respecting the heathen. O that God would bring in great numbers of them to Jesus Christ! I cannot but hope that I shall see that glorious day. Everything in this world seems exceedingly vile and little to me.

I appear so to myself. I had some little dawn of comfort today in prayer, but especially tonight I think I had some faith and power of intercession with God. I was enabled to plead with God for the growth of grace in myself and many of the dear children of God, then lay with weight upon my soul.

Blessed be the Lord! It is good to wrestle for divine blessings. April 9th. Most of my time in morning devotion was spent without sensible sweetness, yet I had one delightful prospect of arriving at the heavenly world.

I am more amazed than ever at such thoughts, for I see myself infinitely vile and unworthy. No poor creature stands in need of divine grace more than I, and none abuse it more than I have and still do. Lord's Day.

April 11th. In the morning I felt but little life, yet my heart was somewhat drawn out in thankfulness to God for His amazing grace and condescension to me in past influences and assistances of His Spirit. Afterward I had some sweetness in the thoughts of arriving at the heavenly world.

Oh, for the happy day! After public worship God gave me special assistance in prayer. I wrestled with my dear Lord and intercession was made a delightful task to me. In the evening, as I was viewing the light in the north, I was delighted in the contemplation of the glorious morning of the resurrection.

April 12th. This morning the Lord was pleased to lift up the light of His countenance upon me in secret prayer and made the season very precious to my soul. Though I have been so depressed of late, respecting my hopes of future serviceableness in the cause of God, yet now I had much encouragement.

I was especially assisted to intercede and plead for poor souls and for the enlargement of Christ's kingdom in the world, and for special grace for myself, to fit me for special services. My faith lifted me above the world and removed all those mountains over which of late I could not look. I wanted not the favor of man to lean upon, for I knew that Christ's favor was infinitely better, and that it was no matter when, nor where, nor how Christ should send me, nor what trials He should still exercise me with, if I might be prepared for His work and will.

April 14th. My soul longed for communion with Christ and for the mortification of indwelling corruption, especially spiritual pride. Oh, there is a sweet day coming wherein the weary will be at rest.

My soul has enjoyed much sweetness this day in the hopes of its speedy arrival. April 15th. My desires apparently centered on God, and I found a sensible attraction of soul after Him many times today.

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. Lord's Day, April 18th. I retired early this morning into the woods for

prayer.

Had the assistance of God's Spirit and faith in exercise, and was enabled to plead with fervency for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world, and to intercede for dear, absent friends. At noon, God enabled me to wrestle with Him and to feel as I trust the power of divine love in prayer. At night, I saw myself infinitely indebted to God and had a view of my failures in duty.

It seemed to me that I had done, as it were, nothing for God, and that I had lived to Him but a few hours of my life. April 19th. I set apart this day for fasting and prayer to God for His grace, especially to prepare me for the work of the ministry, to give me divine aid and direction in my preparations for that great work, and in His own time to send me into His harvest.

Accordingly, in the morning I endeavored to plead for the divine presence for the day, and was not without some life. In the forenoon, I felt the power of intercession for precious, immortal souls, for the advancement of the kingdom of my dear Lord and Saviour in the world. I experienced the entire time a most sweet resignation, and even consolation and joy in the thoughts of suffering hardships, distresses, and even death itself in the promotion of God's kingdom.

I felt a deep love in my heart in pleading for the enlightening and conversion of the poor heathen. In the afternoon, God was with me of a truth. Oh, it was blessed company indeed! God enabled me so to agonize in prayer that I was quite wet with sweat, though in the shade and the cool wind.

My soul was drawn out very much for the world. I grasped for multitudes of souls. I think I had more love for sinners than for the children of God, though I felt as if I could spend my life in cries for both.

I had great enjoyment and communion with my dear Saviour. I think I never in my life felt such an entire weanedness from this world, and so much resigned to God in everything. Oh, that I may always live to and upon my blessed God.

Amen, amen. April 20th. This day I am twenty-four years of age.

Oh, how much mercy have I received in the year past! How often has God caused His goodness to pass before me, and how poorly have I answered the vows I made one year ago to be wholly the Lord's, to be forever devoted to His service. The Lord helped me to live more to His glory for the time to come. This has been a sweet, a happy day to me.

Blessed be God! I think my soul was never so drawn out in intercession for others as it has been this night. Had a most fervent wrestle with the Lord tonight, for my enemies, and I hardly ever so longed to live to God and to be altogether devoted to Him. I wanted to wear out my life in His service and for His glory.

April 21st. Felt much calmness and resignation, and God again enabled me to wrestle for numbers of souls, and gave me fervency in the sweet duty of intercession. I enjoy of late more sweetness in intercession for others than in any other part of prayer.

My blessed Lord really let me come near to Him and plead with Him. Lord's Day, April 25th. This morning I spent about two hours in secret duties, and was enabled more than ordinarily to agonize for immortal souls.

At night I was exceedingly melted with divine love, and had some apprehension of the blessedness of the upper world. Those words from Psalms 84.7 hung upon me with such divine sweetness. They go from strength to strength.

Every one of them in Zion appears before God. Oh, the near access that God sometimes gives us in our addresses to Him! These experiences may well be termed appearing before God. It is so indeed, in the true spiritual sense and in the sweetest sense.

I think that I have not had such power of intercession these many months, both for God's children and for dead sinners, as I have had this evening. I wished and longed for the coming of my dear Lord. I longed to join the angelic hosts in praises, wholly free from imperfection.

Oh, the blessed moment hastens! All I want is to be more holy, more like my dear Lord--oh, for sanctification! My very soul pants for the complete restoration of the blessed image of my Savior, that I may be fit for the blessed enjoyments and employments of the heavenly world. Farewell, vain world, my soul can bid adieu. My Savior taught me to abandon you.

Your charms may gratify a sensual mind, but cannot please a soul for God designed. Desist to entice, cease then my soul to call. Disfixed through grace, my God shall be my all.

While He thus lets me heavenly glories view, Your beauties fade, my heart's no room for You. The Lord refreshed my soul with many sweet passages of His Word. Oh, the new Jerusalem, my soul longed for it! Oh, the song of Moses and the Lamb, and that blessed song that no man can learn but they who are redeemed from the earth.

Lord, I am a stranger here alone, earth no true comforts can afford. Yet, absent from my dearest one, my soul delights to cry, My Lord! Jesus, my Lord, my only love! Possess my soul, nor from there depart. Grant me kind visits, heavenly dove.

My God shall then have all my heart. April 27 I arose and retired early for secret devotions, and in prayer God was pleased to pour such ineffable comforts into my soul that I could do nothing for some time but say over and over, Oh, my sweet Savior, whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. If I had a thousand lives, my soul would gladly have laid them all down at once to have been with Christ.

My soul never enjoyed so much of heaven before. It was the most refined and most spiritual season of communion with God I ever felt yet. April 28 I withdrew to my usual place of retirement in great peace and tranquility, spent about two hours in secret duties, and felt much as I did yesterday morning, only weaker and more overcome.

I seemed to depend wholly on my dear Lord, weaned from all other dependencies. I knew not what to say to my God, but only leaned on His bosom, as it were, and breathed out my desires after a perfect conformity to Him in all things. Thirsting desires after perfect holiness and insatiable longings possessed my soul.

God was so precious to me that the world, with all its enjoyments, was infinitely vile. I had no more value for the favor of men than for pebbles. The Lord was my all.

That He ruled over all greatly delighted me. I think that my faith and dependence on God scarce ever rose so high. I saw Him such a fountain of goodness that it seemed impossible I should distrust Him again, or be any way anxious about anything that should happen to me.

I now had great satisfaction in praying for absent friends and for the enlargement of Christ's kingdom in the world. Much of the power of these divine enjoyments remained with me through the day. In the evening my heart seemed to melt, and I trust was really humbled on account of my indwelling corruption, and I mourned like a dove.

I felt that all my unhappiness arose from my being a sinner. With resignation I could bid welcome to all other trials, but sin hung heavily upon me, for God showed me the corruption of my heart. I went to bed with a heavy heart because I was a sinner, though I did not in the least doubt of God's love.

Oh, that God would purge away my dross and take away my sin and make me ten times refined!

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