

## *David Brainerd*

### *Fasting, Praying, Dying*



He lived only 29 years. He had a public ministry of only 4 years. Yet he has influenced deeply a great many influential Christian leaders and missionaries. Among those who acknowledged a great spiritual debt to David Brainerd are John Wesley, Robert Murray McCheyne, Henry Martyn, and William Carey.

The picture is of David Brainerd kneeling in his own blood in prayer and fasting in the bitter snows pleading with God to lead hundreds of his pagan Indians to Himself and of his Christian Indians to wonderful revival. Over the years God may have used it to draw millions around the world to Himself in devotion, revival, or personal salvation.

David came from an influential and religious New England family. Early he sought after God, but trusted not Christ, but his own works for his salvation. At age 21 he said, "I was walking again in the same solitary place where I was brought to see myself lost and helpless . . . In the dark, thick grove, unspeakable glory seemed to open to my view. The way of salvation opened to me. I was amazed that I had not dropped my own contrivances, and complied with this lovely way before."

John Wesley was asked, "What can be done to revive the work of God where it has decayed?" He replied, "Let every preacher read carefully, *The Life of David Brainerd.*"

His life was often in danger. Many times he slept on straw, or under the stars, lived in cabins, or teepees, had no adequate food. He was slowly dying of tuberculosis, frequently painfully coughing up blood.

His journal was full of comments like these:

"God enabled me to wrestle for numbers of souls."

"Spent about 2 hours agonizing for immortal souls."

"Spent much time in prayer and seemed raised above the things of the world."

"Spent this day in secret fasting, and prayer, from morning till night."

"After public worship was over, I went to my house, proposing to preach again after a short intermission. But they soon came in one after another; with tears, asking what they should do to be saved. . . . It was an amazing season of power among them, and seemed as if God was about to convert the whole world."

The great Jonathan Edwards said that wonderful spiritual results seemed always to follow Brainerd's special times of fasting and prayer.

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