

# David Brainerd: A theologian after God's own heart

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[ 0 : 00 ] David Brainerd To my mind, in my experience, it is very, very difficult not to have your heart enlarged with a desire to be more like Jesus.

So, straight away, probably the best thing that could come of this morning is that you would know the name David Brainerd and that you would look for opportunities to read what he wrote and what was written about him.

And we'll talk more about that in just a second. But let's begin in prayer, if we may. Father, over the course of the centuries, you have called people to yourself.

You have called people and given them the gift of faith. And you have caused their memory to be preserved at different times in order, in part at least, for those of us in later generations to look to their example and be encouraged and edified.

And Father, you called David Brainerd to yourself and you preserved in him a memory, or by him you preserved an example for us to follow.

[ 1 : 56 ] Grant that as we consider his life and his thought and his example, grant us not to be distracted by the man, but rather to grant that our eyes might look toward the God of the man.

Grant us to see Jesus more clearly. We ask this in your name and for your glory. Amen. One of the questions that is always very high in my mind, and I think in most people's mind, is if there's some sort of activity that we're involved in, we want to know what does it mean to be good at it.

When I was in high school, I ran cross-country and track, and I was part of the wrestling team. And so in high school, as I was involved in sport, I was always asking the question, what does it mean to be a good wrestler?

So what does it mean to be a good runner? What does it mean to be a good, you know, mile runner or two mile or whatever the race is that I was running? And when I was in banking and mortgage companies and those sorts of things, I wanted to know what it meant to be a good at my profession. And when I came to Regent, well, before I came to Regent, but when I began to think about being involved in ministry, being involved in the pursuit of theology and the understanding of God, a very important question in my mind was, what does it mean to be a good theologian?

[ 3 : 40 ] A similar question could be, what does it mean to be a good pastor? But when we think about the question more specifically, what does it mean to be a good theologian?

There's lots of different ways that you can answer that question. I found that it's not a question that's explicitly asked very often. At least I didn't hear it explicitly asked very often.

But implicitly, it seems that there would be some who would say that to be a good theologian means to be doctrinally correct.

That if you can articulate things well and accurately and correctly with precision, then that means you're a good theologian. There would be others that it seems when you read what they write, when you read how they do their theology, it would seem that they might give another definition.

And the definition that they might give is that to be a good theologian means that you are creative intellectually. That you say things in a new and fresh way, in a way that hadn't been spoken of before.

[ 4 : 52 ] Another solution that it seems like some people give to the question of, what does it mean to be a good theologian? It's that you articulate theology in such a way that it is useful to ministry.

So if you're articulating theology and it's not useful to ministry, then that's bad theology. If you're articulating theology that is useful to ministry, then that's good theology. And there's different ways I could go on and on.

But the question that's up for me this morning is, what does it mean to be a good theologian? Not so much in the academic sense.

Not so much, what does it mean to be a good professor at Regent? But rather, what does it mean to be a good theologian in the sense that we are all called to be theologians?

To be a Christian, to be a follower of Jesus, is to be a theologian, in the sense that we have to be people who come to good understandings about who God is. What does it mean for a regular Christian to be a good theologian?

[ 5 : 57 ] Now, that's the question. The title for this morning's talk is, David Brainerd, A Theologian After God's Own Heart.

And what I want to do this morning is, in a sense, take that title and consider it backwards. First of all, I want to think about, what does it mean to be a theologian after God's own heart?

And then I want to look at the life of David Brainerd as an exemplary figure. And so the first part of the talk will be, what does it mean to be a theologian after God's own heart?

And to answer that question, I'm going to talk a little bit about the theology of a guy called Jonathan Edwards. How many people have heard of Jonathan Edwards? Okay, more people have heard of Jonathan Edwards than David Brainerd.

Does that make sense? So we'll think a little bit about how Jonathan Edwards opened up for me the definition of what it means to be a theologian after God's own heart.

[ 6 : 59 ] And then we'll look at David Brainerd and how he exemplifies that. Does that sound good? Is that clear? Okay. The first point there, God is his own best theologian.

One of the things that you get in Jonathan Edwards, Jonathan Edwards, for those that do not know, was a pastor in the 1720s up until the 1740s.

And then for a very short time he was the principal or the president of Princeton College.

The College of New Jersey it was then called. But he was a pastor and a theologian in the time of the Great Awakening. And he was a very, very deep and profound theologian.

And he considered, he asked the question, how does God understand himself? How does God come to his own understanding of himself?

[ 8 : 14 ] And as he considered that question, and as he came to some conclusions about that, he then said that for a human to understand God, the human will understand God in a way that is analogous to the way God understands himself.

So look for a moment at this diagram that I have there. Do you see Edwards' view of God's delighted self-understanding?

Jonathan Edwards, when he thought about God, and particularly when he thought about the Trinity, he made a couple observations, a couple biblical observations. The first is that God, God's thoughts, are occupied with the highest, best subject imaginable.

And God's thoughts, and if that's true, God's thoughts are to a large extent concerned with the highest and the best subject imaginable.

That means that God is thinking about God's self to a large extent of the time. Because God himself is the best and the highest and the greatest subject that can be thought about, therefore God thinks about himself a good bit of the time.

[ 9 : 44 ] And then he began to, he thought, he made some observations about the Trinity. He made some observations about God the Father, about God the Son, and about God the Holy Spirit.

And he observed that scripturally, you'll see there that the Father is the eternal source of the Godhead. The Father makes the plans for salvation.

God the Father plans out the creation of the world, the plan of salvation, and so forth. That God the Father is the eternal source of the Godhead.

But then, Jonathan Edwards also observed that God the Son, in scripture, is specifically and uniquely associated with God's own self-understanding.

Let me see if I can explain this. You know how John chapter 1, in the beginning was the Word.

[ 10 : 47 ] The Word was with God, and the Word was God. Nothing was made, but through the Word, by the Word. The concept of the Son of God being the Word of God, in Greek, the logos.

In church history, following, in the early church, in the early church fathers, Augustine spoke of this a fair bit. the church has always recognized that the Son is uniquely the member of the Trinity that embodies and rather expresses the truth about God in a way that is unique amongst the Trinity.

So, similarly, Paul, in Colossians chapter 1, verse 15, says that He is the image of God. The image so that when you look at the Son, you come to the understanding of who God is.

Hebrews chapter 1, verse 3 says that the Son is the exact imprint of the nature of God. So that when you look at the Son, you come to understand who God is.

So, if God the Father is the eternal source of the Godhead, and God the Son is the perfect expression, embodiment, image of God's truth, then Jonathan Edwards also observed that in Scripture the Holy Spirit is in a unique way associated with God's own self-love.

[12:34] So that in Galatians chapter 5, verses 13 through 24, Paul talks about that he makes an interesting connection between the desires of the Holy Spirit and walking in love.

You can look at that later, you can ask me about that later. But that there's a connection between God's love and God's Spirit.

So Jonathan Edwards talks about how 1 John 4, 8, when John says God is love, Jonathan Edwards says that what he means by that is more specifically that the Holy Spirit is the embodiment, is the expression, is the person of the Trinity that is responsible for expressing the love of God.

God. Now, Jonathan Edwards then sat back for a second and following St. Augustine said, let's think about how God understands himself.

And what he said is that when God considers the truth of himself, in a sense, when God does theology, theology, it happens like this.

[13:58] The Father looks at the Son. God the Father looks at God the Son. And God the Father considers, as he looks at the Son, he considers all the truth about who God is.

It's not that he learns new things about himself, but he considers, he ruminates, he meditates, so to speak, upon what it means to be God by looking at God the Son.

But then, the Holy Spirit comes and ignites that understanding, God's understanding ignites with love.

So that when God the Father looks at the Son, he not only says, this is the perfect expression of what it means to be God, but he also says, this is my Son and I love him.

He is filled with delight. in what it means to be God. And that's the Holy Spirit coming in and doing that work. So that, Jonathan Edwards says that when God considers himself, it's a Trinitarian work.

[15:05] I summarize it there at the bottom of the box. God the Father considers his own truth by looking at his Son. And then the Father delights in the Son through the Holy Spirit.

Now, what Edwards then says is that something similar happens in the human being. That the human being is designed, according to 2 Peter 1-4, to participate in God's nature.

And one of the things that that means is that when we consider God, we do it in a way that's kind of analogous to the way God thinks about himself.

So Jonathan Edwards says that the human being has two faculties for understanding things or for coming to a knowledge of things. On the one hand, there's our understanding.

So this is the second box. And that's our ability to cognitively perceive something and apprehend reality. So, you know, you think about a car. You think about how a car works.

[16:09] You come to a cognitive understanding of that. Jonathan Edwards says that that's our faculty of understanding. But then there's also a second piece and that's what he calls our inward sense.

Sometimes he calls it our will. And that's the inward faculty within the human being that either loves something or hates something, either delights in something or dislikes something, either is attracted to something or is repulsed by something.

And Jonathan Edwards says if we are to know God well, both of these aspects of the human understanding needs to be in place.

So what happens is that the human being, Jonathan Edwards says that when a saint comes to truly know God, it happens with both our understanding and our inward sense.

The saint considers God's truth in much the same way that God himself does. A saint considers God's truth by looking at the Son. A saint looks at Jesus and as the saint comes to understand who Jesus is, he's filled with his understanding about the nature of God.

[17:24] His mind is filled with truth concerning who Christ is. But according to Jonathan Edwards, that's not enough.

our mind is filled with the understanding of who Christ is. And then in that context, God, by his spirit, comes into the human soul and ignites our heart.

So not only do we cognitively understand Christ, but our hearts are filled with love towards him. We delight in that truth. So we see Jesus dying upon the cross, for instance.

And not only do we come to understand that yes, God loves us and sent his son to die for us. Not only do we come to understand that cognitively, but through the spirit, we look at that and we say, that was right.

That was good. That is a true and wonderful thing. Our hearts are filled to overflowing with love and delight. And that is the sign that the Holy Spirit is coming and working in our hearts.

[18:35] So that a good theologian, according to Jonathan Edwards, is one who understands who God is and delights in him.

A true saint is one, a true theologian, there at the bottom, a true theologian will be someone who both cognitively apprehends the truth of Christ and also inwardly delights in him through the Holy Spirit.

Let me read a quote briefly from Jonathan Edwards in which he talks a little bit about this. This is from a sermon entitled A Divine and Supernatural Light.

Jonathan Edwards writes this, He that is spiritually enlightened does not merely rationally believe that God is glorious, glorious, but he has a sense of the gloriousness of God in his heart.

There is not only a rational belief that God is holy and that holiness is a good thing, but there is an inward sense of the loveliness of God's holiness. There is not merely a speculative judging that God is gracious, but an inward sense of how amiable God is upon that account.

[19:53] Or, to put it differently, there is a sense of beauty in this divine attribute. There is a difference between having an opinion that God is holy and gracious and having an inward sense of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace.

It is one thing to have a rational judgment that honey is sweet. It is something else to savor that sweetness. And a true theologian will be one who understands the truth of Christ and through the Spirit savors the sweetness of that reality.

Does that make sense? Oh, good. Okay. And we can talk about that more in a bit, but I want to go on and hopefully it will become a little bit more clear when we think about David Brainerd.

David Brainerd. You know, Jonathan Edwards is called the Augustine of America. He's probably the greatest theologian that ever came out of North America. And, you know, he's this brilliant man, but by his own account, a guy called David Brainerd was one of the greatest saints and exemplars that Jonathan Edwards ever knew.

There's a sense to which Jonathan Edwards said, Jonathan Edwards did the big thinking and he pointed it to David Brainerd and said, this is the guy to emulate. David Brainerd was born in Haddam, Connecticut, which is just outside Hartford.

[21:29] Both of his parents in 1718. Both of his parents died by the time he was 14 years old. He was converted in 1739, which those of you who know the history of the Great Awakening that's just as the Great Awakening is about ready to break upon the New World.

He attended Yale College from 1739 to 1742, but then he was expelled for insulting the rector. You never want to insult the rector.

It never turns out well for you. Just briefly, the Great Awakening and swung into New Haven, Connecticut. The students at Yale were caught up in Whitfield's preaching and Tennant's preaching and several others, and there was a great work of God amongst the students, but the faculty didn't think much of it at all.

The rector and the leadership of Yale College began to suppress the revival, and David Brainerd did not think much of this, and at one point commented privately to one of his friends that he did not think one of the trustees of the college had any more saving grace than this chair I'm sitting on, which was probably not a wise thing to say.

It was a very unwise thing to say. Somebody overheard him say that in the hall, went to the rector, told on him, and he was brought before the leadership.

[23:07] He was told to make a public apology, and he was eventually expelled, and he was never allowed to come back, and he tried, and he wrote long letters of penitence.

He got lots of influential graduates of the college interceded for him, but he was never forgiven, and he was never allowed back in, and that meant he could not be ordained as a pastor in New England because he hadn't graduated from the right college.

So it meant that the only ministry available to him was missionary work amongst what we would call the First Nations peoples of New England and New Jersey.

So he began missionary work in 1743. He suffers profoundly, unimaginable suffering. He suffered from consumption, eventually died of it, but he went into the wilderness by himself, and the sufferings he endured were almost unimaginable.

He was eventually ordained by the New Jersey Presbytery, which the New Jersey Presbytery was pro-revival, and they thought he was treated unjustly at Yale, and so they ordained him in 1744.

[ 24 : 29 ] He worked amongst different First Nations tribes with very little success, outward success, until 1745 and 1746, and he had one year of wonderful ministry and revival.

And the accounts of it that he writes are just energizing. I mean, it's just amazing to hear the conversions that God granted under his ministry amongst the First Nations community at Cross Weekson in New Jersey.

Then his sickness became profound. He arrived at Northampton, which is where Jonathan Edwards was pastor, in May of 1747, and he stays with Jonathan Edwards' family until October 9th, when he died at age 29.

And Jonathan Edwards then edited his diary and published it, and it became the most widely read work of Jonathan Edwards, of any of his, of Jonathan Edwards' published materials, and has never gone out of print, and was substantially, he had, the life of David Brainerd, the book, his diary, had an absolutely massive impact on the world Protestant missions movement.

Almost every missionary, great missionary of the Protestant movement since this time, has said that David Brainerd, next to the Bible, has been the most important, one of the most important works.

[ 26 : 04 ] Okay, so how is he an exemplar of Jonathan Edwards' notion of a saint delighting in Christ's truth? Well, before his conversion, if you read his diaries, before his conversion, he had a cognitive understanding of theology.

He was raised a good Puritan, he was raised in a Puritan church, and so he knew the doctrines of God like the back of his hand, but he talks about, as a young adult, being repulsed by the doctrines of the gospel.

He didn't like the notion of the severity of God's law or divine sovereignty. He just hated it, and he felt the weight of it, and it was a very negative notion to him.

He tried to be good in his religious observances before his conversion, but the key mark is that he tried to obey God, but there was no sense of joy, no sense of delight, and he thought about God, and it was kind of a repulsion, and an anger, almost.

All that changes at his conversion. And the key thing to listen for, I'm going to read you his account of his conversion here, and what I want you to listen for is that inward sense, the moment that the Holy Spirit comes into his heart and takes the truths of Christ and transforms them from being repulsive to being delightful.

[ 27 : 37 ] Okay? So listen for that as I read. this is in 1739, and he's struggling with God.

He's been struggling with God for days and days. I continued, as I remember, in this state of mind from Friday morning until the Sabbath following. And during that time, I was walking again in the same solitary place where I was brought to see myself lost and helpless as before I mentioned. Here, in a mournful and depressed state, I was attempting to pray but found no heart to engage in this or that or other duty. My former concern and exercise and religious affections were now gone. So he has a kind of deadness in his soul. I thought that the Spirit of God had quite left me, but still was not distressed, but as if there was nothing in heaven or on earth that could make me happy. Having thus endeavored to pray, though as I thought very stupidly and without sense, for nearly half an hour, then, as I was walking in a dark, thick grove, get this, unspeakable glory seemed to open to my view and apprehension of my soul.

[ 29 : 01 ] I do not mean that I saw any external brightness. I saw no such thing, nor do I intend to say that I had any extraordinary imagination of a body of light.

But it was a new and inward apprehension or view that I had of God, such as I had 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 I had ever had of God or of things divine. I had no particular apprehension of any one person in the Trinity, either of the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit, but it appeared to me all divine glory.

My soul rejoiced with joy unspeakable to see such a God, such a glorious divine being, and I was inwardly pleased and satisfied that this God should be God over all forever and ever.

[ 30 : 12 ] 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 at first about my own salvation and scarce reflected that there ever was such a creature as myself.

Thus God, I trust, brought me to a saving disposition to exalt Him and to set Him upon the throne and principally and ultimately to aim at His honor and His glory as the King of the universe.

God and the God is the kind of theologian that Jonathan Edwards would be looking for and that I think we should be looking for.

and then in His ministry, it's what you see for the next years, for the next eight years of His life, it's that delighting in who God is that drove Him in His ministry and I could read any number of quotes about that and I don't have time.

Okay, you will know a good theologian by their fruit and I want to point out three areas, three aspects, three observations that I make about David Brainerd's work and theology, well, his work that grows out of his theology that I am very impressed with.

[ 31 : 55 ] First of all is his intellectual rigor. I mentioned that he was expelled from Yale and that he always yearned to study and to be readmitted but he was never allowed to.

I understand that he was actually officially the first, I couldn't find this in the literature, I heard somebody lecturing on this say this but according to the lecture that I heard he was the first student at Princeton which is kind of interesting but it was kind of an honorary thing.

They started Princeton, the College of New Jersey and they said we want David Brainerd to be our student but he never actually studied there. So he yearned to study but he was never allowed to finish a degree and yet he was constant in study throughout his ministry.

Let me read a couple quotes. March 2nd, Friday 1744. Was most of the day employed in writing on a divine subject?

I wish we knew what that subject was and I wish we had that writing but we don't. Was frequent in prayer, enjoyed some small degree of assistance. Okay, Tuesday, November 1, 1743.

[ 33 : 11 ] Was very much disordered in body and sometimes full of pain in my face and in my teeth. He's out in the woods by himself, no one to look after him and he's very ill.

Was not able to study much but had much and had not much spiritual comfort. Alas, when God is withdrawn, all is gone. And yet, I had some sweet thoughts which I could not help but write down on the design, the nature, and the end of Christianity.

Now I write that because here's a guy who's sick. Things are not well for him and yet he's contemplating God and he's moved in his sickness by the sweetness of God and he's got to go write it down.

He's got to articulate intellectually. The sweetness of his thoughts upon God. Other times, you read about how he was probably clinically depressed for a lot of his life.

And you read about how in the midst of his depression, he'll study, he'll write, and he'll find strength from his studies.

[ 34 : 21 ] I could give you quotes about that but I don't have time. But also, his intellectual rigor impacted his ministry. He had a total confidence that God's spirit would honor a clear articulation of the truth of Christ.

So what you see in his sermons, he writes in his journal about his ministry strategies. and what you see as he's doing his evangelism, he's always trying, he says at times this was just unavoidable.

I just couldn't help it. I'd try to preach about morality and then it would always end up here. And the here is that he would always try to make Jesus as clear as possible.

with the deep conviction that if he made Jesus clear, that the Holy Spirit would break into people's hearts and ignite their hearts with delight in Christ.

And that that would be conversion. And so you see him doing that during the revivals. And he writes to those who were supporting him in the mission that like I said, I tried to preach about something else, but before long it would always end up about Jesus and I would tell them more about the truth of who God is by looking at Jesus.

[ 35 : 45 ] And as that happened, he says remarkable power would occasion that type of preaching and the First Nations people would be converted in that context.

So again, you see his theology. You look at Jesus, get clear on Jesus, God's Spirit comes in, ignites your heart to love him. But then he also in his intellectual rigor throughout his ministry, he gained increasing clarity on certain subjects of theology, in particular what we would call spiritual theology. He gained deep insights on how the Spirit works within the heart of an individual. And you see in his writing, he's kind of like a theological anthropologist. He has this long section where he analyzes the spiritual development of his interpreter.

He talks about how, it goes on for several pages, it's wonderful. He talks about how his interpreter had a good knowledge of doctrine, but no inward sense of delight in Christ.

And so that wasn't enough. So he began to work with his interpreter. And he said, you know, he would preach, his interpreter would only half interpret, because he wasn't interpreting that inward delighting in Christ.

[ 37 : 07 ] And so he traces, he makes an account of step by step what happens in this guy's heart as the Lord begins to come and bring the cognitive doctrines of God and make them drop into his soul.

And it happens first by the interpreter coming to a sense of his sinfulness and the way to the sin, and then eventually he breaks through to delight in who God is.

And so what you see in Brainerd is that he was this very astute mind that would watch somebody's soul with the Bible and match it up.

Where are we at in this process? And he had this very disciplined mind to do that. Okay. Part of the reason that I point out his intellectual rigor is to make this point.

if the goal of our theology, if the bedrock of our theology is to gain a clear perception of Christ's truth, and if the clear perception of Christ's truth becomes the object of our greatest desire, then we will find great motivation to rigorous study in order to clarify that vision.

[ 38 : 24 ] Does that make sense? if the goal of our theology is to make Jesus clear, and in making Jesus clear, we are filled with delight in him, then that's going to motivate us to study, and to study hard.

And I found this helpful because I think Brainerd helps us critique two pitfalls that you see often times.

You'll find people who are what I call a spiritualized anti-intellectual. Somebody who doesn't really care much for the intellectual life, but really wants to emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit and practical religion and things like that.

You've got one kind of person over here, and then on the other side, you have, sometimes you find people who are just kind of dry cerebral orthodoxy-ists. You know, it's just kind of all a scholastic academic exercise.

I think David Brainerd helps us critique both ends. I think he would critique the spiritualized anti-intellectuals by saying, you actually don't understand how the Holy Spirit works.

[ 39 : 43 ] You don't understand how the Holy Spirit works because you don't understand that the Holy Spirit actually comes and fills us as we get clearer and clearer about who Jesus is.

If you were clear on how the Holy Spirit worked there, you would not be anti-intellectual. You would dig deeper into the Word of God. But on the other hand, I think he critiques the dry cerebral mere cognitive orthodoxy camp by saying, you don't understand the Word of God.

you don't understand that the Word of God is to be the occasion, is to lead us to a place of being filled with the Spirit so that we delight in the truth of Christ.

So I think Brainerd gives us helpful critiques on both sides of that. We've got his rigorous intellectual life.

Secondly, he was prayerful and missional in his engagement. He was ministry-oriented. He was a churchman.

[ 40 : 51 ] Brainerd's approach to theology led him inevitably towards a prayerful passion for ministry. Let me read you from Saturday, September 19th.

This is one month before he dies. Near night, while I accepted a walk to walk in the woods for a little bit, my thoughts turned thus.

How infinitely sweet is it to love God and be all for him. Okay, so you see the theme coming up again, his delighting in God. Oh, that God might be glorified in the whole earth.

Oh, let thy kingdom come. I longed for a spirit of preaching to descend and rest upon ministers, that they might address the consciences of men with closeness and with power.

I saw God had the residue of the spirit, and my soul longed that it should be poured out from on high. I could not but plead with God for my dear congregation that he would preserve it and not suffer his great name to lose its glory in that work.

[ 42 : 03 ] My soul still longed that God might be glorified. Now, do you see two themes weaving in there? He's walking in the woods and he goes, my heart began to enjoy God.

He just says, I longed that God might be glorified. He's thinking about God. He's thinking about the truth of Christ and the spirit is filling him with delight in who Jesus is. And then, without skipping a beat, he goes, therefore, I began to think about my congregation.

And I began to pray for my congregation that they might continue to experience the same thing I'm experiencing now. Do you see about his way of doing theology, considering Christ being filled with the spirit and delighting in him, inevitably moves him to ministry.

But one of the things that is helpful here is that the ministry was not an end in and of itself. The ministry, his passion was not first for ministry, his passion was first for God and that led him to ministry.

And I think here again, it helps us by critiquing two different pitfalls. When you consider theology and when you read theology, at least my experiences, you find sometimes you find what I call ivory tower theology.

[ 43 : 34 ] theology, and on the other hand, you find theology of the trenches. Ivory tower theology is theology that never positively impacts the pew, never positively impacts the church.

I don't know if you've read a lot of this kind of theology, but every now and then I'll be reading a commentary or whatever, and there's this conversation going on, and I think to myself, I cannot conceive about how any of these conclusions will ever positively impact the church.

I just have a hard time seeing that. But then on the other hand, you get people, sometimes you read theology that is what I call theology of the trenches, and it's theology that is so focused on ministry being the goal that it ends up just being a kind of mere pragmatism.

So that it ends up short-cutting truth, short-cutting hard, rigorous thinking, in order to just give us a bottom line that is easy to take away.

David Brainerd's approach, I think, critiques both of them. Because David Brainerd first considered God, looked at Jesus, and all his delight, you know, his theology was, the end of his theology, the purpose of his theology was just to enjoy God, was to glorify God, was to consider the truth of God.

[ 45 : 02 ] In a sense, the purpose of his theology was to love God as its own end. But, you can't do that without going from there into ministry.

For the same reason, you can't, you know, with, an example, when I first met my wife Amber, I did not like classical music.

I just didn't care, frankly. But then I met a pretty girl, and she loved classical music, and she did classical music, and I found great motivation to go to her concerts.

Now, at the beginning, I didn't really, I still didn't care about the music. I cared about her. Later on, I actually developed a love for classical music, partially because I could not love Amber without at least taking some interest in the things that she loved.

And I think that's what happened with David Brainerd. He loved God, but he couldn't love God without soon loving the objects of God's love. He couldn't love God without loving the people that God loved.

[ 46 : 16 ] And that led him to ministry. And that meant he was, his theology was always highly intellectually rigorous, but also ultimately practical. Does that make sense?

And you can see that actually in his prayer life. I could have a whole talk on the prayer life of David Brainerd, but I'll leave that for you to go and read his life and think about that.

But what you see in his prayer, when he prays, and he's always praying, when he prays, you see that bridge. He prays to God and he just praises who God is.

He loves God. But then, before long, his prayers move over very naturally into praying for his people. And so there's a sense to which prayer, I think, is the bridge between Christ delighting theology on the one hand and practical ministry and mission.

As we delight in Christ, that will lead us to pray for the world, and through prayer, will lead us to positive mission. Okay, last thing.

[ 47 : 24 ] His theology was proved by suffering. A whole other talk is worthy here. But Brainerd's theology of delighting in Christ, his theology that was motivated by a delight in Christ, he was very

tested and refined in the crucible of really, for most of us unimaginable suffering.

Let me read some more quotes. And in these quotes, listen to how his suffering, in the midst of his suffering, was where he demonstrated that he preferred Christ over everything else.

Thursday, June 14th, 1744. I was much exercised with pain in my head today. However, I determined to set out on my journey towards Delaware in the afternoon.

But in the afternoon, my pain increased exceedingly, so that I was obliged to betake myself to the bed. And the night following, I was greatly distressed with pain and sickness.

I was sometimes almost bereaved of the exercise of reason by the extremity of my pain, continued much distressed till Saturday when I was something relieved but was still unable to walk until Monday.

[ 48 : 50 ] So this was like five days in the afternoon and still remained very feeble. Okay, so this is a bad week, really bad week. I mean, horrible. But then, listen, I have often admired the goodness of God, that he did not suffer me to proceed on my journey from the place where I was so tenderly used and to be sick on the way among strangers.

God is very gracious to me, both in health and in sickness. And he intermingles much mercy with all my afflictions and toils.

I enjoyed some sweetness in the things divine, in the midst of my pain and weakness. Oh, that I might praise the Lord. Do you see how in the midst of his sickness, he's still, he's still delighting in Christ?

It's bizarre. To me, at some level, I wish I was like him more. This is the day before he died. This is Jonathan Edwards. He died at Jonathan Edwards' house.

This is Jonathan Edwards describing the day before he died. October 8th, 1747. Jonathan Edwards writes, He manifested much concern, pain of his body continued and increased.

[ 50 : 16 ] He told me that it was impossible for any to conceive the distress he felt in his breast. He manifested much concern, lest he should dishonor God by impatience under his extreme agony, which was such that he said that the thought of enduring it one minute longer was almost insupportable.

He desired that others might be much in lifting up their hearts continually to God for him, that God would support him and give him patience. The man is dying and suffering to such an extent that he said one minute longer, and he couldn't even let himself think about the fact that he might have to endure this pain one minute longer, and yet his concern is that he might dishonor God.

You only get that way if you delight and love God above and prefer Christ above all other things. suffering is one of the crucibles for theology.

Martin Luther, when he talks about what it means to be a good theology, one of his three big things is that the third thing, there's different ways that you become a good theologian, but suffering is critical to becoming a good theologian, according to Martin Luther.

Listen to what Martin Luther writes. Thirdly, there is trials. This is the touchstone which teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right and true and sweet and how lovely and how mighty and how comforting God's word is.

[ 52 : 02 ] things. Thus, you see how David, in Psalm 119, complains so often of all the different kinds of enemies, arrogant princes, tyrants, false spirits and factions, which he must tolerate because he meditates because he meditates because he is occupied with God's word.

So David's talking about how he suffers all this injustice because he's focused upon God's word. Luther continues, for as soon as God's word takes root and grows within you, the devil will harry you and will make a real theologian of you.

By his insults, he will teach you to love God's word more. I myself, if you will permit me, a mere mouse dirt, to be, there's Martin Luther, mere mouse dirt, he says, he is, I myself am deeply indebted to my Roman Catholic persecutors that they, through the devil's wrangling, have beaten, oppressed, distressed me so much.

That is to say, they have made me a fairly good theologian. So Martin Luther says that it's through his own sufferings that he ended up being a good theologian. David became a good theologian through his sufferings.

David Brainerd, his theology was proved in the crucible of his pain and his suffering. Show me a theologian who has suffered faithfully and I'll show you a theologian that really matters.

[ 53 : 38 ] So, conclusion. The question was, what is a good theologian? The answer from Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd is a good theologian is one who sees Christ's truth clearly, delights in him entirely, and teaches others to do so as well.

And if that's what a good theologian is, then I think David Brainerd is one of the best I know of. I think we can say a theologian is, David Brainerd is a theologian after God's own heart, primarily because he mirrored God's own delight in himself.

Let me end with another quote from David Brainerd because his words are better than mine. this is one of his last letters that he wrote to his brother. His brother was going to continue his pastoral ministry.

Dear brother, I am now just on the verge of eternity, expecting very speedily to appear in the unseen world. I feel myself no more an inhabitant of earth, and sometimes I earnestly long to depart and be with Christ.

I bless God that he has for some years given me an abiding conviction that it is impossible for any rational creature to enjoy true happiness without being entirely devoted to God.

[ 55 : 02 ] Under this influence, I have in some measure acted. Oh, that I had done more so. I saw both the excellency and necessity of holiness in life, but never in such a manner as now, when I am just brought to the sides of the grave.

Oh, my brother, pursue after holiness. Press after this blessed mark, and let your thirsty soul continually say, I shall never be satisfied until I awaken thy likeness.

Although there have been a great deal of selfishness in my views, of which I am very ashamed, and for which my soul is humbled at every view, yet, blessed be God, I find that I have really had, for the most part, such a concern for his glory, and the advancement of his kingdom in the world, that it is a satisfaction to me to reflect upon these past years.

And soon after that, he died. But from the moment of his conversion to the moment of his death, his great pursuit was motivated out of his delighting in Christ's truth.

And that, I think, is a good way for us to think about what it means for us to be theologians, for regular Christians, to be the kind of theologian that God desires.

[ 56 : 27 ] That's all. Maybe we have a few minutes for thoughts or questions, anything that was unclear. I skipped a bunch of stuff. Hopefully I didn't muddy the waters too much.

Yeah? What was his brother's name? He had a few brothers. The brother that continued on the ministry was called John.

John Brainerd. He also had a brother called Israel Brainerd. I think he had a few more siblings, but I think John was the one he was closest to. Yeah?

Thank you for introducing us to a great model. Thank you for the inspiration of his life, and it makes him really ashamed of the last 41 years of his life he never experienced.

We've had so much more opportunity. But let me just ask one thing which I thought was a little unclear. Okay. his emphasis on intellectual rigor.

[ 57 : 34 ] Yeah. We all know that intellectual rigor in itself does not do this to the right goal.

I was listening for something like holism or something like an intellectual perspective that was sympathetic rather than family.

Okay. and I thought he did a good job of demonstrating the analytical side of his intellectual rigor. He also told us that he pulled these things together.

It seems to me that the virtue of intellectual rigor on its own is not something that one would particularly want to admire. Sure. I think what I was intending to get at is that I think we can say that working hard to think well about God is a good thing.

Now, if you do that, what that means, how we define what it looks like to work hard at thinking rightly about God, I think in that we can say that if we're thinking hard and doing our work well, we'll end up with a holistic view of things and whatnot.

[ 59 : 10 ] not. But my point was mainly that, first of all, he worked hard, and we can commend him for that. He worked hard with his thinking.

But then secondly, the motivation for that was not that the intellectual conclusions were an end in and of themselves.

his motivation was in order to think hard, to get clear on Jesus, in order that he might delight in God more entirely.

Now, I'm not sure if that's exactly the point you're wanting to make. That's the point I was trying to make. And if you want to come back, that's fine. Okay.

That's what I was trying to communicate. Yeah? Maybe this is an extension of just the ideas that you and all of have been expressing, but the thing that occurred to me as I looked at Jonathan Edwards' model of inward understanding and inward sense, we've got mind and spirit here and human beings, we've got cognitive understanding, we've got emotions.

[ 60 : 21 ] The Church has managed to separate these two things quite successfully. In fact, we have whole groups of churches that believe that what is needed is that you give your heart to Jesus.

I'm quoting. And others, including our own, I think, that do not emphasize an emotional response to God.

In fact, our own rector has expressed a distrust of religious expression here that there's too much emotion in it, and I have an opinion down as to what is too much emotion.

But Jonathan Edwards seemed to get it right, and we are not getting it right in the way that this goes from perhaps the point of conversion on.

There are churches that are very good about emotional responses to God and to Jesus and to the Holy Spirit that don't contain the intellectual rigor that we expect and enjoy here, and I think the reverse is also true, that there is a distrust in a way that emotions, they're kind of shaky.

[ 61 : 32 ] You know, that's how you feel today, but tomorrow you might feel different. But the truth as you understand it or apprehend it cognitively is much more trustworthy. Now, I don't know how we got to that state, but I'm wondering if you could comment on how can we get it together again.

A couple comments. Both of those realities, you mentioned the, in a sense, falling off the wagon in two ways.

One is that you're, what I've kind of, if I could coin a word and call it cerebralist, cerebralism, where it's all about just thinking, thinking hard, but that's it.

Getting precise, you know, being satisfied with mere correcting, with being merely correct. If that's one pitfall. The other pitfall is a kind of emotionalism.

And Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd both were battling those two sides at every moment. Even David Brainerd, in his early life, right after he's converted, later on he readily admits that he fell victim or fell prey to the emotional side of things.

[ 62 : 56 ] And so you read, you know, one day he's on cloud nine, the next day he's in profound depression, and he's upside and downside, left-wise, you know, just very unstable in one sense.

Jonathan Edwards, commenting on David Brainerd, said he grew on that point. He grew over the course of his life to have a better sense of things and a better sense of looking at his emotions. But what you get with Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd both is really bringing these two together in very helpful ways.

you do see in them a that there's a certain suspicion of mere emotionalism. Because emotions can go up and down.

Brainerd later in his life, David Brainerd, the entirety of his life struggled with depression. But his delighting in Christ was not, I don't want to call it mere emotion, it was deeper than that.

[ 64 : 03 ] So there are times where he's very depressed. Emotionally he's flat. he's almost despondent in terms of his feelings. And yet even there he says, yet I honor Christ.

Yet I love Christ. So Jonathan Edwards actually talked about, when he talked about that inward sense or the will, sometimes he called it our affections, he was talking about something even deeper than the experienced emotions.

They can include your experienced emotions, but they're even deeper than that. So you can feel emotionally very down or very high, and that doesn't necessarily, that's neither necessarily a sign that God's really up to stuff.

They can be helpful or not helpful or whatever. But in both, when your emotions are high, when your emotions are low, you can have an inward delighting in Christ, irrespective of that.

But that comes as your focus is not looking at your heart or thinking about your emotions, it comes as you look at Jesus, and as you meditate upon the truth of the gospel, as you continually fix your eyes upon Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith.

[ 65 : 15 ] That's where both our intellectual and our will, our heart come together helpfully. And I'll also mention just very briefly that our good rector would love, actually, Jonathan Edwards, and

would find Jonathan Edwards' writings on this to be spot on.

I think. So I encourage you, if this is something you're thinking about, read Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections*, or any number of other books that he wrote are great on this point.

Yeah, Harvey? I couldn't be if I'm wrong. They're both Augustinians, aren't they? Oh, yeah.

Affection means the gospel order is your desires.

Good. That's a great way to put it. That's a great way to put it. Very helpful. Affections are, the religious affections, good affections, is when the gospel orders our desires.

Yeah. Very helpful. Yes. Did he write anything about creation? Did he write about nature and acceptance of his own nature?

[ 66 : 32 ] That's a good question. David Brainerd, to my knowledge, said very little about creation. Jonathan Edwards wrote much about it, or reflected a lot on it.

He has whole essays on spiders, and how interesting spiders are. And he would go off in the woods and observe nature and reflect on how nature helped him think about God more clearly.

Are we good? Go. in the trial that he went through, where he had to leave the college, did he recant from saying what he said, or did he recant from the belief?

That's a good question. I think he repented from the uncharitableness of doing so, and the lack of wisdom.

I mean, later on, if I remember correctly, he talks about, or Edwards talks about, I don't remember much, that part of the problem was that he was presuming to know whether or not the leaders of the college were saved.

[ 67 : 53 ] I mean, that's a very presumptuous thing to say. And so he repented of that presumption and of the uncharitableness that drove him to make those comments.

So there's a sense to which, yeah, I mean, does that make sense? Yeah. So the leaders weren't exonerated? No, no, no, no, no. No, no, no. No, and, and, and, and, uh, uh, no, I, I think to his, to the end, he thought that, A, the call, the leaders of the college were wrong to try to suppress the revival, um, uh, even though there, there were lots of excesses in the revival that should have been resisted, but nonetheless.

Uh, and B, they were wrong to, uh, make such a public issue of a private statement. that was also part of the problem. So, and Jonathan Edwards tried to get him reinstated and things like that, but didn't work.

I think we're done. Yeah. Very good. Well, thanks. Thank you. Thank you.