

Monologue: Phineas F. Bresee

Hello. My name is Phineas F. Bresee. I served as your first general superintendent. The story of the Church of the Nazarene is the story of many dedicated men and women of God. And mine is but one of those stories.

I was born on December 31, 1838, in a log cabin in Franklin, New York. My parents taught me about God, the Bible, and took me to church every week. I became a Christian when I was 18 years old. My family moved to Iowa in 1857. That same year I received a preacher's license and was ordained an elder in the Methodist church.

Life as a circuit rider was challenging. But by the end of my first year 140 people had received membership in the church. My ministry in those early years was defined by two ideas: First, I loved to fill the song services with popular choruses, and, second, I recognized that a large, beautiful building was unnecessary to the success of spreading the gospel.

I wish I could tell you that year by year my ministry and walk with the Lord became sweeter. But I cannot. The winter of 1866 was the beginning of a long and anguished time of soul searching. It seemed as though I doubted everything. However, one snowy evening as I knelt at the altar, I experienced the infilling presence of God's perfect love.

If only I had allowed God's perfect love to guide my life I could have avoided so much pain to myself and my family. However, I allowed the pursuit of riches to replace what should have been a deepening relationship with God and a complete commitment to Christ.

Sadly, I became involved in an ill-fated gold mining business. I even went so far as taking a smaller church so that I might have more

time to work on my get-rich-quick enterprise. I even sold shares in the mine to my church members. It took an explosion in the mine, destruction of all the tools and machinery, and complete financial ruin and disgrace to me and my family to teach me a lesson.

I determined that the rest of my life would be devoted to God and preaching of his Word. At the age of 44, my wife, seven children, two grandparents, and I boarded an "immigrant railway car" for California for a new beginning.

On the Sunday following our arrival in Los Angeles, I was invited to preach at the First Methodist Church. Soon I was installed as pastor to this wonderful congregation. In that church I encountered many people who understood the concept of allowing God to fill their lives with the Holy Spirit and perfect love. "I instinctively, in spirit, allied myself with them."

During a revival service in 1884, I settled once and for all the question of complete commitment to the cleansing love of Jesus Christ. "There came into my heart and being a transformed condition of the life and blessing and unction and glory, which I have never known before."

In the years following, I moved to pastor a church in Pasadena and then was appointed presiding elder of the Los Angeles District. I also had the opportunity to hold many camp meeting services. I determined that, "By the grace of God, I am going to make a fire that will reach heaven." That vow

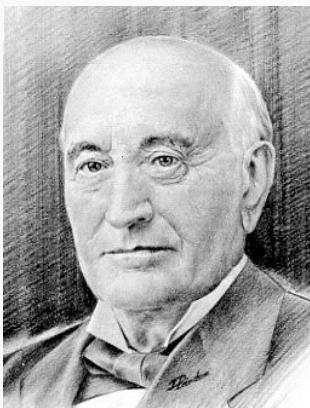
resulted in growth, excitement, and enthusiasm in all the churches we ministered.

During those years, I developed a passion and dream to establish an inner city mission to the poor. In 1894, thinking that a non-denominational church would allow me to start a full fledged church for the poor, I left the Methodist church and joined the Peniel Mission. This did not work out, and at the age of 56, I found myself without a church, pulpit, a place to minister, or denomination.

At the urging of a friend, Dr. Widney, we established a new church dedicated to reaching the poor. On October 6, 1895, 82 persons united as charter member of the Church of the Nazarene. We

were determined our mission would be "that everyone upon whom the battle of life had been sore and to every heart that hungers for cleansing from sin" would be welcome. By the end of the first year the church had grown to 350 members. Within eight years, there were 1,500 members in churches as far away as Illinois.

Over the next few years many Christians across the country gave their lives completely to God and were sanctified by the Holy Spirit. They were called "holiness people." I began to sense that God was calling me to a special task—an international holiness church. After much work and prayer over 4 years, a union took place in Pilot Point, Texas, forming the Church of the Nazarene. ♡



CLT 2006
Denomination-Wide Study
Welcome to the
Church of the Nazarene
Handout Number Three