



DONALD CARGILL

1. ABERDEEN AND ST ANDREWS

Donald Cargill was born in 1627 and grew up in Perthshire. When he was nine or ten he went to school over seventy miles away in Aberdeen. He was going to live with a relative called Patrick Blair who was a trader there. Donald arrived there at a time when there were important events happening in the nation.

The king and bishops were forcing changes in the Church. They were trying to force the people to worship God in

the way that they wanted, but faithful believers knew that the king's ideas were not what the Bible taught. The people would not accept the changes. They signed a special document called the National Covenant, promising to God that they would keep to what the Bible taught about what we should believe and how God should be worshipped.

People in towns and villages all across Scotland were swearing to the National Covenant. Usually there would be a

service after which all the people lifted up their hands to swear their promise. Some preachers came to Aberdeen to tell people about the Covenant and why they too should swear to keep this important promise. Some people in Aberdeen were against it at first but soon most agreed to it. Donald's teacher was one of those who signed the Covenant and probably many of the fathers of his classmates did too.

You can imagine that Donald and his friends talked about these things, especially when war broke out. By the age of fifteen or sixteen Donald stayed in Aberdeen to go to university there. But Aberdeen became a dangerous place when an army invaded it and created a lot of destruction and ordinary people were killed by the soldiers too. Donald decided to study in St Andrews instead. It was here that he signed a Covenant himself. It was called the Solemn League and Covenant and made promises like the National Covenant. But this was a promise that people all over Britain made. Sadly many of them later broke their promise. It was going to cost Donald a lot to keep his.

2. CONVERSION AND MINISTER IN GLASGOW

After Donald left university he was staying with relatives not too far from Glasgow. At this time he came to be very deeply troubled by his sins and what they deserved. It was a very big burden of sadness and fear. He could not talk to people about it. Finally he could not stand his deep trouble any more. He decided to do something very wrong. He felt that he did not deserve to live any more and he should take his own life. As we know, murder is against God's law

and this includes murdering ourselves. This is what Donald planned to do. He stood by the river ready to jump in but every time he tried to jump someone came along. He should have seen that it was good to be prevented from doing something so awful. But he decided to find somewhere else.

Very early one morning he set out for a pit where he knew no one would go to. He took off his coat and stood on the edge. Just as he got ready to jump a Bible verse suddenly came into his mind. "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee". All his sorrows, fears and doubts vanished immediately. Instead he was filled with such peace that he never ever doubted again. He believed that God had rescued him.

Soon afterwards he felt the call to preach God's Word and he went back to St Andrews to study for this. He was invited to preach in Glasgow for a trial period. But he found it very discouraging because the people did not listen properly to his sermons. He was supposed to preach again on the Thursday. But instead he set off to leave Glasgow altogether. "They are a rebellious people," he told the ministers when they asked him to stay. The ministers replied that this was all the more reason to stay. Then a lady called Isobel Boyd said, "Sir, you were appointed to preach, and give a meal to a poor starving people. Will you go away and not give them it? The curse of God will go with you." Donald Cargill sat down in a chair with a sigh. "Then, Isobel Boyd, pray much for me," he said. He stayed to preach and later became the minister there.

3. IN HIDING

After about five years Charles II became king. He started to make lots of changes, trying to force the Church to do what he wanted, never mind what the Bible said. Although Charles himself had sworn to keep the Covenants he now passed laws against them and even had them burned in public. People who were going to keep faithful to their promise would suffer a lot. The king said that the day on which he had become king should be celebrated every year and ministers should preach at a special service. When the day came around, it was a day that Donald Cargill usually preached. What was he going to do? If he did not preach he would get into trouble but it would not be right to celebrate someone who was doing such harm to Christ's Church. Donald decided that he would preach.

When he got there lots of people had gathered. He told them that they were not going to celebrate the day and if anyone wanted to celebrate it they should leave. It was going to be a day that people would curse, not celebrate. The only reason he was preaching was because it was his usual day. The authorities were very annoyed and Donald had to hide. Not long afterwards, all the faithful ministers were forced to leave their churches by the government. Donald carried on preaching wherever he could in houses and places other than churches.

The government sent soldiers to hunt down Donald Cargill and other preachers. People were being fined and put in prison, or being sent to other countries. Some were even being put to death. It was all because they would

not change from their special promise to God, the Covenant that they had sworn to keep. This is why they were called Covenanters. Cargill later preached that the Covenants that people in that land had made with God would "rise up in judgment and condemn this corrupt generation".

For twenty years, Donald preached wherever he could, in fields, woods and lonely places in the hills. Often the weather was not good; it was cold and raining, but if Donald Cargill did not find somewhere to shelter he endured the harsh weather in preaching just the same as the people listening. He also had to hide from the soldiers in secret places. One time some people said to him, "we think that your praying and preaching is best when you face the greatest danger". He certainly was not afraid of danger. But what did he preach about? He told people of the Lord Jesus Christ and his free salvation from sin to those that trust in him. He wanted to see people trust the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life. Many people were truly converted. He said he wanted to be mostly in the main things. That meant suffering for and preaching about the most important things.

Not everyone wanted to be faithful – they were not prepared to suffer. One time some people told him of a minister who had accepted some of the government's changes to the Church. "Why suffer?" said this minister. "We will get to heaven just the same as people like Donald Cargill – they will not get any more or anything better." "We will get something more," said Donald, "we will get God glorified here on earth."

4. CAPTURED

The soldiers kept chasing after Donald; they were desperate to find him. The government had promised lots of money to anyone who would capture him. There were many times that they almost caught him but he escaped. One time he stayed with friends in a mill. He saw soldiers coming and went to hide. Nearby was a large chimney with an oven called a kiln. It was used for drying corn but there was no fire on. Donald crawled in to where there were lots of ashes. He was able to stand up and his head was against a beam which supported the floor above where the corn was dried. After searching in the house, the soldiers went up there and started to look everywhere and throw about the straw which lay on the floor. They thrust their long sharp swords down each side of the beam under which Cargill was crouching. The sword came so close that it was just at his shoulder. Donald prayed silently to God who kept him safe and the soldiers left.

But some time afterwards he was again at the mill and this time the soldiers came suddenly while he was sleeping in bed. They captured and arrested him. It was the day after he had preached what would be his final sermon.

5. EXECUTED AND HEAVEN

The time had come when Donald Cargill's faithful service to the Lord must come to an end and he would glorify God by being put to death for his sake. He walked calmly through the great crowds. When he got to the place he took out his Bible that he had carried with him

through all of his difficult times. He sang joyfully his favourite song of praise and triumph from Psalm 118, from the 16th verse to the end. He spoke to everyone listening about the main things – their need of salvation and their need to serve God even if it meant suffering rather than sinning. He said, "I am at peace with God through a crucified Mediator, and I believe that there is no salvation but only in Christ;" "all my sins are freely pardoned and washed thoroughly away through the precious blood of Jesus Christ."

He urged them to know and believe the Scriptures which are the truth of God: "I have preached these, and firmly believe them." The soldiers beat the drums to stop him speaking. He set one foot on the ladder to go up to be put to death. "The Lord knows", he said, "I go up this ladder with less fear than ever I entered the pulpit to preach." When he reached further up the ladder he began to pray with his hands lifted up to heaven. "Farewell, all relations and friends in Christ: farewell acquaintances and all earthly enjoyments: farewell reading and preaching, praying and believing, wanderings, reproaches, sufferings. Welcome joy unspeakable and full of glory. Welcome Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; into thy hands I commit my spirit." These were his last words.

For Donald Cargill nothing was more important than salvation in Christ and living for the glory of God no matter what might happen. What is most important to you?

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WORD SEARCH



CAN YOU FIND ALL THE HIDDEN WORDS IN THIS WORD SEARCH?

O L N D X S W O G S A L G L T
Q Y N S D I G Z V H Z P Y L W
S D C Z S G N I H C A E R P Z
M V U W M B B G H U R X O G E
B I Y S R E I D L O S M Q O Y
L S R E T N A N E V O C O V S
N I U D H R V V O G A O Y E L
P E R T H S H I R E A V I R H
S Z E R C K E S Z Z O E Q N V
M V G D C K E L B I B N V M J
J L D O R U A G W D Y A K E V
M U A X S E V S Q V A N I N S
A M Z S J O B N A U V T N T F
U D O Y P E R A C C Z X G D S
H X M Q Y G S A U E H H V E D

GLASGOW
COVENANT
GOVERNMENT

PREACHING
SOLDIERS
KING

BIBLE
PSALM
COVENANTERS

ABERDEEN
PERTHSHIRE