



## GEORGE GILLESPIE

George Gillespie grew up in Fife in Scotland. He had an older brother and sister as well as a younger brother called Patrick. Patrick seemed to be a bit more lively and he was his mother's favourite. She could be very hard on George because she said he was "soft and dull". Perhaps he was quiet and more interested in books than playing. Sometimes parents can have favourites but this should not happen and it causes trouble.

Their father John (who was a minister) did not like her saying this and it annoyed him. He had a different view because while he had been praying he believed God gave some special promises about George. He said, "Though Patrick may have some respect given him in the Church, yet my son George will be the

great man in the Church of Scotland." Both boys grew up to be ministers and things turned out exactly as their father thought they would. Even before he was a minister, everyone was going to be amazed at the unconquered mind of George Gillespie. But John never saw this for himself because he died when the boys were teenagers. As he lay dying he said, "George, George, I have received many precious promises for you."

### 1. GODLY LEARNING

George was very clever and got a scholarship to pay for him to go to university where he worked hard. After finishing he became chaplain for a rich man called Lord Kenmure. This happened a lot at this time. Men who were very busy could have a minister to teach the Bible

to their family and servants. The bishops were also stopping those who were faithful to the Lord Jesus from becoming ministers. George could not become a minister, but teaching the family was another way of serving God. It also meant that he could study the Bible a great deal, along with books that would help him to understand it better.

George became friends with a godly minister in that place called Samuel Rutherford. They often prayed and talked together. They agreed that they would always pray for each other. George continued to study a lot. He was able to write a very important book. The king and his bishops had changed the way that the Church was ruled and how God was worshipped. This book showed that these changes did not come from the Bible; they were just the ideas of men. The king and bishops were punishing people who spoke out against the changes. George had to get the book printed in Holland without his name on it. He was only twenty-four years old but he had written a book that everyone respected and no one could argue against. The only thing the government could do was to try to get all copies of the book and burn them. But this would not answer his arguments.

### 2. THE NATIONAL COVENANT

The king wanted to make even more changes in the Church now. The ministers and people would not accept them. 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. The king and bishops could not force them to do what they wanted any more.

George was now able to become a minister when the bishops were no longer ruling the Church. The Church was free to follow the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Bible. George had other important work too. He had to preach to the soldiers in the Army because this was a time of war. He also went with other ministers to speak to the king. He was still very young but he had studied so much and he was able to speak so clearly that they could not do without him. Someone said that they thought he would be one of the greatest minds in the whole of Britain.

### 3. THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY

George went to London to join a special meeting of ministers who were agreeing on how all churches in Britain should worship, and what they should believe. This was called the Westminster Assembly. He was the youngest man there but George was also one of the most clever and he had to make a lot of speeches.

One or two others wanted the government to control the Church, but George showed that only the Lord Jesus can tell the Church what to do. He showed how the Bible gives us all we need to know in obeying God and that it was wrong and dangerous to think that men were wiser than God.

One time a very clever lawyer spoke called John Selden. Someone said that he was the most clever man in the whole country. He began to use all of his learning to argue that the government must control the Church. He used all kinds of ancient writers in Hebrew and Greek to back up his reasons. People tried to answer but

they found it difficult. George's friend Samuel Rutherford said to him "Rise, George, man, and defend the Church which Christ has purchased with His own blood." George rose and gave seven powerful arguments that could not be answered. John Selden was amazed and said, "That young man, by this single speech, has swept away the learning and labour of ten years of my life!"

Where did George get his help? Was it just from all his learning? No, he was praying for God to help him. He said himself that no one should fear the most difficult work that God calls us to, because God will help us. He said that this is what happened to him at the Westminster Assembly. "If I were to live a long time in this world," he said, "I would not desire a more noble life than the life of complete dependence on God." He said that though he had been gifted with clear thinking and being able to learn a lot, he got more from looking to God for help than from all his gifts. He studied hard but he depended on God rather than himself. This meant he was as much on his knees praying as he was studying.

He had a little notebook when these important discussions were going on and he recorded things that were being said. One time John Selden and others gave long speeches in favour of government control of the Church. George Gillespie was busy writing in his notebook. The Chairman asked who should give a speech to answer them. Everyone said that George should do it. He was embarrassed and went red and said that the older men would be better, but they wanted him to speak. He

spoke very clearly and answered all the arguments. People wondered what he had been writing in his notebook. Amongst the notes he made was a constant prayer repeated over and over: "Give light, Lord. Give light!" His prayers to God for help were fully answered. With God's help, his arguments could not be answered.

#### 4. THE END OF A SHORT LIFE

But George was not going to live a long time in this world. He preached before Parliament and wrote more books. He worked so hard at this important work that he became weak in his body and ill. He went back to Scotland and it was not long before he died even though he was still quite young. He was very ill and weak with coughing all the time but he longed for heaven.

People tried to encourage him with all that he had done in his short life. "You have been very faithful", someone said, "and the Lord has honoured you with very much service, and now you are to get your reward." George was not going to see things in this way; he replied: "I think it reward enough that ever I got leave to do him any service in truth and sincerity." The truth is that, as George said another time: "the more truly great a man is the more humble he is in his own eyes".

He was not trusting in all his Bible study or serving God to save him. "What are all my righteousnesses but rotten rags", he said. "Christ is all things and I am nothing." We all need to trust the Lord Jesus Christ alone and serve him as much as possible with our lives and depend on his help.

## GEORGE GILLESPIE WORD SEARCH



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

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

CHAPLAIN  
COVENANT  
BISHOPS

UNIVERSITY  
HOLLAND  
GOVERNMENT

SPEECHES  
HEBREW  
NOTEBOOK

WESTMINSTER  
PRAYER