



JAMES RENWICK

James Renwick was born to poor but godly parents in the south west of Scotland. This area was very faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ in a time when that meant a lot of suffering. All the other children born to James's parents had died at a very young age. Like Hannah in the Bible, his mother continued to seek a son from the Lord. Like Hannah, too, they prayed that it might please the Lord to make their son a preacher. They longed for the Lord to give Scotland a preacher whom God could use to strengthen the suffering Church.

James was drawn to God when he was still very young. Even at the age of two he wanted to pray to God on his own and later by the age of six to read the Bible for himself. Children should never think that they are too young to seek God. He grew up and went to university. But he wasn't allowed to finish his studies because he wouldn't swear an oath to the king. The oath made the king ruler over the Church, but only the Lord Jesus Christ is king over the Church.

James Renwick's life changed one day. The godly preacher Donald Cargill was going to be put to death for being faithful to the

Lord Jesus Christ. The soldiers tried to stop people from hearing what Cargill was saying by beating their drums loudly. Donald Cargill was full of faith, peace, and joy. This made James want to be like him. He was going to be a preacher too. But there was nowhere he could study in Scotland. He had to go to Holland. He was twenty-one years old when he arrived back in Scotland.

There were no church buildings open to James to preach in. Instead he would preach to people on the hillside under the open sky. They were places in the middle of the countryside which were more secret. Many people travelled long distances to hear him.

The government were not happy with this. They wanted people to worship in the churches they controlled instead. They made people pay lots of money if they didn't worship in these churches. The king's soldiers were always on the lookout for James Renwick. If they caught him, he would be put to death.

Once he was riding on a horse with three friends. They met a group of twenty-two soldiers. The only thing they could do was to

turn around and flee for their lives. The other three were captured but James was still chased by the soldiers up a high hill, 1600 feet (500 metres) in height. The soldiers behind shot bullets at him but they were not close enough to have a good aim. Other soldiers went round the other side of the hill to catch him when he came down again.

James fired a shot back at the soldiers. When he tried to get back onto his horse, it would not hold still for him. Perhaps it was scared and upset. What could he do? He only had one bullet left. The soldiers would close in on him and catch him before long. He had to think quickly. He sent the horse away hoping it would escape. He then ran to the top of the hill which was flat ground.

Where could he go or even hide in such a wide open place? There was a pile of stones at the very top. Behind this there was a pit in which he could hide. Would the soldiers find him? He could do nothing else but wait there and pray to God to hide him. There he lay praying a verse, Psalm 6:8, over and over again: "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity". Also Psalm 91:2, "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust." The hiding-place that he was really sheltering in was God's power and goodness.

He stayed in the pit until sunset. James then went across the moors and found someone who would let him stay in their house. The next night he had a meeting. But even then the soldiers were still hunting for him like ferocious lions. Renwick escaped from them twice that night – as he says "even out of their very paws".

You might think that James had an exciting life full of adventure. But it was hard having to travel at night, not getting sleep when you needed it, and having no shelter from bad weather. Yet James was willing to suffer anything for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The government were very determined to arrest him and put him to death. In Edinburgh one time his voice was recognised as he prayed in a house. The next morning troops broke in to arrest him. He managed to escape through several streets but was eventually caught and brought to the captain of the city guard. The captain was amazed to find that this forceful preacher was so young and thin. "Is this boy that Mr. Renwick whom the nation has been so troubled with?", he asked.

James wasn't scared to die because he was trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though this time he had been captured and was in the hands of his enemies he knew that it was God's time. His work on earth was complete. People tried to get him to change his mind and be unfaithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. He would not change in any way. Even his enemies said that "he was of old Knox's principles".

He even had joy when he faced death because he would be with his Lord whom he had served faithfully. "Welcome scaffold, for precious Christ", he said. He tried to speak to the crowd, but his voice was drowned out by the constant loud beating of the soldiers' drums. He still said that Christ was "the Prince of the Kings of the Earth, who alone must bear the glory of ruling his own kingdom – the Church." He sang from Psalm 103, able to praise God even in such a terrible death.

He was the last of those who would be put to death in public at this time. Within months the persecution, which had lasted for twenty-eight years, ended. One of his friends said about James Renwick that he was not only "heroic in spirit" but "he learned the truth and counted the cost, and so sealed it with his blood". We need to know the truth and love the Lord Jesus Christ above all other things.

KEY DATES



1662

James Renwick is born.



1675

James goes to university.



1679

Battles of Drumclog and Bothwell Bridge.



1680

The young preacher Richard Cameron is killed.



1681

James sees Donald Cargill put to death.



1682

Lanark Declaration is published. James goes to Holland to study and be ordained as a minister.



1683

James comes back to Scotland to begin preaching.



1685

James 7th of Scotland (James 2nd of England) becomes king.



1688

James Renwick is arrested and put to death.



1688-89

The Glorious Revolution and persecution is ended.

WORD SEARCH

COVENANTER
HOLLAND
PREACHER
ORDAINED
SCAFFOLD

CARGILL
SOLDIER
PSALM
BULLET
ARRESTED

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

