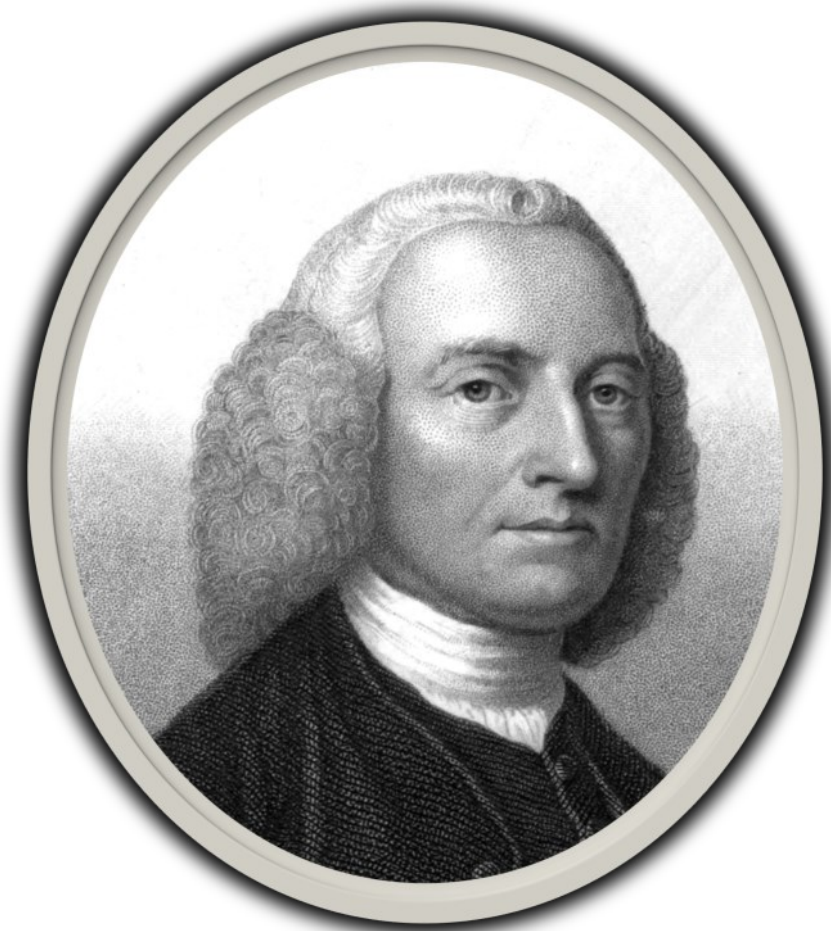


The Story of
Alexander Cruden
(1699-1770)



The Author of
Cruden's Concordance
Retold by Christina Eastwood

Parents:

This is a long story but we have decided to leave it in its entirety.

It reads very simply.

Read it in small parts for younger children.

It is a good reading book for child who has a good grounding in basic phonics - building stamina in reading. Have the child read a small portion each day.

Are you en-thu-si-a-stic? Enthusiastic means “keen” or “eager” about something. If you like trains you are a railway enthusiast. But a long time ago this word meant something else. It meant “too keen.” It meant “too keen about being a Christian!” If men preached in the open air they were called enthusiasts. People laughed at them. They called them mad. But this was good enthusiasm wasn't it? Once there was a man who was an enthusiast.



People said he was mad and put him in prison. Here is his story:

Alexander Cruden (pronounced Crooden) (1699-1770) was born in Aberdeen. He was very clever. He had a careful mind. His memory was very good. When he started something he never gave up. He made a book that we still use today.

It is called a concordance. This is a big list of all the words in the Bible. You can use it to find a text in the Bible. You can look up the main word in the text. The concordance tells you where the text is in the Bible. What a useful book!

How did Alexander Cruden make this book? He did not have a computer. He did not have a typewriter. He had his Bible. He had lots of long strips of paper. He put lists of words on the long strips of paper. He had no one to help him. He had to earn his living during the day. He only worked at his concordance in the evenings. He worked and worked at his concordance. Late into the night he

worked. Words, words, words... He read every word in the Bible over and over and over again. Every word went into the lists in the right place. Did it send him mad? No, God had given him a very strong mind.

Alexander Cruden was a small man. At school the big boys had bullied him. He was smaller than them. "You are no good!" they said "You are too small." He was small but he was tidy, quiet and clever. Alexander Cruden became a Christian. He wanted to be a preacher. He went to college to learn. The head of the college was an important man called Doctor Blackwell. Doctor Blackwell was not a good man. Something bad was happening in his family. He did not stop it. He covered it up. "No one will know," he said, "I am still an important man." But Alexander Cruden accidentally found out. "Suppose Alexander tells other people," thought Doctor Blackwell. "I will stop him. I will say he has something wrong with his mind. I will say he has gone mad. Then he will be locked up. No one will listen to a mad man."

Poor Alexander Cruden! He was locked up in a cold damp prison. It was called the Tolbooth.

Doctor Blackwell went to see Alexander Cruden's parents. "Poor Alexander has gone mad," he said, "I have had him put in the Tolbooth. He will be safe there."

Doctor Blackwell was a very important man. Mr and Mrs Cruden believed him. In the Tolbooth it was cold. It was dirty. There was not much food. There were other prisoners who were wicked men. Some of the men really had

something wrong with their minds. There were many, many of them. Alexander was crowded in with them. There was hardly any room. He was not a criminal. He was not mad. But he was the only one. Did the Tolbooth send him mad? No, God had given him a very strong mind.

Doctor Blackwell thought, "I will send Alexander away. He must leave Aberdeen. I will find him a job in London.

London is far away from Aberdeen. He will be glad to go."

Alexander Cruden was sent away on a ship to London. The job was to be a teacher. He lived with a rich family and taught their child. He was a very good teacher. The family loved him. He could not be a preacher now. But he had another idea. Soon the family did not need him any more. He went to work for a man who printed books. His job was to find all the mistakes before the books were printed. It is not good to print lots of copies of a book if it has mistakes. All the mistakes have to be found first. Cruden worked hard.

Now Cruden began work on his idea. It was to make a concordance. He could not preach. He would make something to help other preachers instead. Soon Alexander Cruden's concordance was nearly ready to be printed. He took over a bookshop. He became the Queen's bookseller. You can see the queen in the picture, her name was Caroline. She was a good queen. Cruden put her name on the front page of his concordance to thank



her for being his patron. A patron is someone who encourages you.

Alexander Cruden went to the palace. He took a copy of his new concordance. He was able to see the queen. He gave the concordance to her. She was pleased and said she would give him some money. This was good news. Alexander Cruden had no money left. All he had was used up printing the concordance. He did not know that the queen was very ill. Soon she died. She had not told anyone about the money. Alexander Cruden got nothing after all. Alexander Cruden decided he would like to marry a widow lady at his church. He did not know that another man wanted to marry her too. He was not a good man. He wanted the widow's money. He looked at Cruden and thought, "This man is kind and godly. The widow might like him more than me. Then I will not be able to marry her. What shall I do?" He found out about the Tolbooth. He found out that Alexander Cruden had been put there. "Cruden has gone mad again," he told everyone, "Did you know he has been in the Tolbooth? He is dangerous." The man tricked Alexander Cruden and carried him off to a madhouse. This cannot happen today. No one can be locked up just because someone else says they are mad. But in Alexander Cruden's day they could. Poor Alexander Cruden!

He was tied up. He had to take nasty medicine. He was chained to his bed. He tried to tell the other people there about the Lord Jesus. "Aha!" said the madhouse keeper,

“you are an enthusiast! That is what enthusiasts do! You are dangerous.”

“There is nothing wrong with my mind,” said poor Alexander Cruden.

“That just shows how mad you are,” said the keeper, “you do not even know!”

Alexander Cruden's friends wanted to see him. They did not think he could be mad.

“You cannot come,” said the keeper, “visitors upset him.”

Did the mad-house send him mad? No, God had given him a very strong mind.

“I must get away,” thought Alexander Cruden. “They will never let me out. I must escape.”

He made a plan. Every night he was chained to the leg of his bed. He decided to cut through the bed leg. Every day he was brought his dinner. He was given a knife and fork to eat with. The keeper went away. While he was away Alexander Cruden used the knife. He sawed away at the bed leg with it. He stopped before the keeper came back and he ate his dinner. Sawing wood with a dinner knife does not work very well. But it does work a little bit. Every day the cut got a little deeper. One day the leg was cut right through. Now the bed was wobbly. Alexander Cruden wedged it so that no one would notice.

That night he took away the sawn-off leg. Now he could take the chain off the leg of the bed. He was free. He jumped out of the window and escaped. How pleased

Alexander Cruden's friends were to see him! They helped him. Together they went to see the Lord Mayor of London. Cruden showed the Lord Mayor that there was nothing wrong with his mind. He did not have to go back to the mad-house. Every day in the mad-house Alexander Cruden had kept a diary. He wrote down all the unkind things that were done to him. Now that he was free he wanted to help other people. He was a kind man. He knew what bad things were happening in mad-houses. He knew people were suffering. He had his diary printed. "People will read it," he thought. "Then they will be angry about what happens in mad-houses. They will change the law."

Alexander Cruden wrote letters. He wrote to the king. He wrote to all the important people. "Please find out what is going on in mad-houses. He wrote. It is cruel. It should be stopped." People listened. They were polite. But nothing much was done.

Alexander Cruden's concordance was such a useful book. Soon all the copies were sold. "I must print some more," said Alexander Cruden. He needed money to do this.

He worked as a teacher. He worked for a printer. He earned his living this way. He got ready to print more copies of the concordance. But now everyone knew he had been in the mad-house. "Perhaps he really is mad," some people thought to themselves.

Alexander Cruden's sister, Isabella, came to stay. She was a chatterbox. She liked parties. Alexander was quiet. He

did not like parties. Soon poor Alexander Cruden wished he could have some peace. Isabella liked talking. She talked to the lady whose house Alexander Cruden lived in. Chatter, chatter, chatter... They became good friends. They thought Alexander Cruden was dull. "And what about the mad-house!" they said. Chatter, chatter, chatter.

One afternoon Alexander Cruden saw some soldiers. They were fighting. One had a shovel. He was beating the others with it. They were punching him.

"Stop!" shouted Alexander Cruden.

The soldiers were punching and shouting. They were shouting bad words. Alexander Cruden grabbed the shovel. He began to beat the soldiers. "You must not swear!" he said. Thwack went the shovel! "You must not swear!" Thwack! "You must not swear!" Thwack! It was a rumpus. Gradually the soldiers stopped.

"Good!" said Alexander Cruden. "You must not swear." and he walked home.

But someone had seen him. Someone who knew he had been in the mad-house.

"Dear me," they thought, "Alexander Cruden has gone mad again!" And they ran off to tell his sister, Isabella.

"Alexander is a peaceful man," said Isabella.

"Very peaceful," said the lady whose house he lived in.

"Did you say he was fighting?" asked Isabella.

“Yes, with some soldiers.”

“He must have gone mad again,” said Isabella

“He must,” said the lady whose house he lived in. “I can't have him here any more.”

“No,” said Isabella. “We will take him to a mad-house.”

And they did. Poor Alexander Cruden! This time, he was not there for so long. The mad-house keeper had a kind wife. She could see that Alexander Cruden was not mad. The doctor thought she was right. Alexander Cruden was allowed to go home.

He was free! Alexander Cruden got some more copies of his concordance printed. There was a new king now, George III. Here is his picture.



Cruden was able go to the palace. He gave the king a copy of the concordance. The king talked to Alexander Cruden for a long time. “This is a wonderful book,” the king said. He was kind to Alexander Cruden. He gave him some money. This time the money was paid. Cruden was not poor now. He spent his time well. He tried to stop people swearing. He tried to get people to keep the Lord's Day. He

had some good friends. One was a lawyer.

“I am worried,” said the lawyer, “a young sailor is going to be put to death. He is guilty of a crime. It is only a small crime. He was tricked into doing it. He does not deserve to die. How I wish I had not been the lawyer who proved he did the crime!”

Alexander Cruden set to work. He wrote to everyone he could. “Go and ask at this office,” said one official and told him where to go. Off he went.

When he got there they said, “We cannot help; go to this office instead.” Off he went.

When he got there they said, “We cannot help; go to this other office instead.”

Off he went again. In the end he went all over London.

Eventually he was told, “We will look at this again. Maybe the young man should be sent away to Australia instead.”

Alexander Cruden did not stop. He worked and worked. He did not want the young man to die. That would be unjust. Meanwhile he visited him. The young man was in prison. It was noisy, dirty and cold. The young man got very ill.

Alexander Cruden nursed him. He fed him. He preached the gospel to him.

“You will get ill yourself. Prisons are full of illnesses,” people told him. “You may die.”

But Alexander Cruden knew this was the Lord's work. It did

not matter if he died! He tried to help the other prisoners. He preached the gospel to them too.

Then there was good news. The young man was not going to die. It was decided he could be sent to Australia for fourteen years instead.

For the rest of his life, Alexander Cruden worked for prisoners. He saw misery in prisons. He saw it in mad-houses. He knew the poor people there needed the gospel. "You are an enthusiast!" said people. They tapped their heads. But they were wrong. God had given him a very strong mind and he used it for God's glory.