

## The Great Plague

John Evelyn kept a diary. Do you keep a diary? On 8<sup>th</sup> August 1665 John Evelyn wrote in his diary. This is what he put:

Died this week in London, 4,000.

How terrible! 4,000 people dead. How did it happen?

1665 was the year of the great plague. The plague was an illness. It killed many people who caught it. How many houses are there in your street? Are there 100? then in your street 15 houses would be empty. The plague killed 15 people out of every 100.

Did rats spread the germs? Perhaps. When homes are not clean there can be lice. Perhaps the lice spread the germs.

Rich people could go away from London. They could afford to stay somewhere else. They thought they could run away from the plague. Sometimes they took the germs with them. Then the plague spread more. Even the ministers ran away. The poor people were dying. Was there no one to preach the gospel to them?

Yes, there were some preachers. They were good men. They did not run away. They were the ministers that the government did not like. The government tried to stop their meetings. They had to meet in secret. Now they were the only ministers in London!

They looked after the dying people. They helped them.

There were other preachers like them in the country too. They held meetings in lonely farm houses. They held meetings in barns. They even held meetings in caves. They heard of the plague in London. They knew that the government's ministers had run away. They came to London. They were not afraid of the plague. They visited the sick. They preached the gospel. They helped everyone they could.

At last, the plague was over. People came back to London. The government came back too. Were they pleased with the kind preachers? Did they thank them? No. They were angry. They made it harder than ever for them. If they found their meetings, they put them in prison. They made a law. It said that the brave preachers could not even come near any town. But God was pleased with the preachers. He took care of them.

