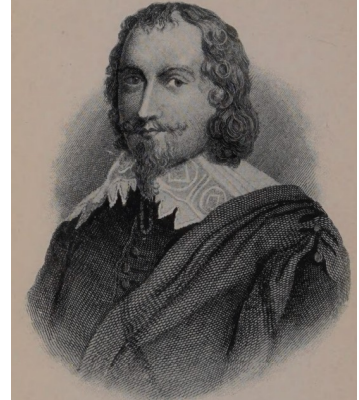


Robert Bruce

Everyone has heard of Robert the Bruce and his famous spider. Not many have heard of his great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great grandson. He was called Robert Bruce too. He was a brave preacher who lived in troubled times.

When he was young, Robert Bruce was able to hear some of Scotland's great preachers. He did not forget what he heard. His family gave him a good education because they wanted him to be a lawyer. But something happened that changed all that.



One night Robert Bruce was lying in bed in his family home. His conscience was troubling him. He was not a specially bad young man but he knew he was a sinner. Everyone is a sinner. In his mind he began to hear a voice telling him of all the wrong things he had done. It sounded just like the devil himself. It was like being in a court of law. But Robert Bruce was not the lawyer now: he was the criminal. Sometimes the voice told him of things he knew he had done and then Robert Bruce confessed and asked God for mercy. Sometimes the voice told him of things he knew he had not done (for the devil is a liar) then Bruce felt his conscience disagreeing. Robert Bruce prayed and cried out to God for forgiveness. God heard his prayer.

After that Robert Bruce was determined to be a preacher. His mother was angry. She did not want him to be a preacher. She made him give up a big part of his inheritance. Robert Bruce gave it up joyfully. Now he was not a very rich man. He sold his fine clothes. He even sold his horse.

Robert Bruce was a shy man. How could he be a preacher? His teacher helped him to start step by step. Soon everyone could tell that God had given him a special gift for preaching.

The most famous church in Scotland at this time was St Giles in Edinburgh. It was called the High Kirk. Kirk is a Scottish word for church. This was the church where the King of Scotland went. Bruce was asked to become the minister there.

!How can I do this?" he said to himself. "The King will be there. He will sit right in front of me. I must tell the truth always. Sometime the King will not like what I say. Then there will be trouble!"

But he had to do it. Every Sunday Bruce now had to preach with the King sitting in front of him. King James VI of Scotland still young. He was proud. He thought he was very important. He talked all through the service in church. He even stopped the preacher to ask his own questions. They were not good questions. Often they were silly questions. One Sunday Robert Bruce could not stand it any more. He stopped preaching. He looked at the King and said: "When the lion roars all the beasts of the forest are silent. When the King of Kings is speaking, earth's little princes must keep silent." Robert Bruce knew he was speaking God's word: the King should listen, not talk.

Was the king angry? Not at first. He even put Robert Bruce in charge of Edinburgh when the king was away. Then it happened.

The king wanted a notice read out from the pulpits of all the churches. "The Lord tells me what to say in the pulpit," said Robert Bruce, "not the King of Scotland." He would not read out the King's notice. The King was angry. He sent Robert Bruce away. He sent him to In-ver-ness, far, far from Edinburgh across the mountains. He was not allowed to come back until the King said so.



Travel was hard in those days. There were no cars or buses or trains. Robert Bruce had to go by horse all those many miles. Now he was far from his friends. Everyone in Inverness was unkind to him. No one would even give him a house to live in. Someone in the town tried to

shoot him. Why had God sent him there?

He managed to get somewhere to live. He began to preach in the house. He preached on Sundays and on Wednesdays. Then he was asked to preach in other places where there was more room. More people began coming to hear him. They came from all over

the area. They came from far and wide until there were hundreds. This was why God had sent him to Inverness!

In 1624 Robert Bruce's daughter got married. The King said he could go home to the wedding. James VI died the next year. The new king let him stay in his own house.

Now Robert Bruce was still preaching. Not in St Giles Kirk but all over Scotland. Young and old all wanted to hear him. Some were young men who became leaders in the Scottish church later on. They learned to live lives of prayer and faithfulness to God's because of Robert Bruce's example. The meetings were crowded. Robert Bruce's preaching was powerful. Many people came to faith in Jesus Christ. Hard times were coming to the church in Scotland. God was getting his people ready to face them.

But Robert Bruce was now a very old man. He came down to breakfast one morning as usual. He enjoyed an egg that his daughter gave him. Suddenly he called out: "Hold on, daughter, hold on; my Master is calling me." then he said, "God be with you, my children. I have breakfasted with you, and shall sup with my Lord Jesus this night..." Then he was with his Saviour at last!